Intellectual montage in
Journey into the Fantastic

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that *Journey into the Fantastic*, by Boris Kossoy, is an exemplary case of montage working as a creative process in photographic books. The work is an important contribution to the world of photobooks. Full of experimentation, it relates exercises of photographic expression to the exploration of conventional aspects of the support. By using Eisenstein's theory and typology, we describe how combinatorial patterns can be observed acting as meaning-making processes in this photographic book. We observe that juxtaposition types known as *intellectual montage* are the main processes regulating the relations established between its parts, scaffolding it as a whole.

KEYWORDS

montage; photobook; artist's book; *Journey into the Fantastic*; Boris Kossoy.

RESUMO

Neste artigo, demonstramos que *Viagem pelo Fantástico*, de Boris Kossoy, é um caso exemplar de montagem como processo criativo em livros fotográficos. A obra é uma importante contribuição para o panorama mundial dos fotolivros. Vasta em experimentações, ela relaciona exercícios de expressão fotográfica à exploração de aspectos convencionais do suporte. Utilizamos a tipologia eisensteiniana para descrever e analisar de que maneira padrões combinatórios podem atuar como processos de produção de sentido neste livro fotográfico. Observamos que justaposições conhecidas como *montagem intelectual* consistem nos principais processos reguladores das relações que se estabelecem entre as partes do trabalho, sendo responsáveis por sua constituição como um todo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

montagem; fotolivro; livro de artista; *Viagem pelo Fantástico*; Boris Kossoy.

I.INTRODUCTION

*J*ourney into the Fantastic, by Boris Kossoy (1971), is an important contribution to the world panorama of photobooks (Fernandez, 2011). 50 years after its publication, it is a work that remains emblematic for contradicting photographic representation paradigms. Vast on experimentation, it relates exercises of photographic language and expression to the exploration of material elements and conventional aspects of the book. As the theatrical and cinematographic fictions, most of its photographs are scripted and staged. Ordinary situations are contextualized in unusual ways because of the treatment given to everyday spaces and objects. Brides, harlequins, mummies, minotaurs, naked bodies, mannequins, and regents are some of the characters arranged on overpasses, train stations, cemeteries, parks, bridges, and airports.

It is a book of 22x31,3cm dimensions, printed on three kinds of paper: offset (the first and last pages), craft (technical information, introduction, and a prologue illustration), and thick and shiny couché (photographic sequences). The material distinction between its parts produces specific interruptions on the handling of pages, which interferes with the ways each book section is interpreted. In this photobook, the verbal text occurs only in the titles and in the foreword written by Pietro Maria Bardi, however, it is a work presented by its author as a tales book (Fernandez, 2011). This term choice made by Kossoy to describe his photographic sequences is not a trivial one. An analogy between the literary genre and the photographic medium can be observed, for example, in Julio Cortázar's essays, who observes that, like a photograph, "the tale is based on the notion of limit, and, first, physical limit"[1] (Cortázar, 1971: 406). Kossoy's photographic sequences also resemble the literary tale described by Bosi (2006: 39) as "sometimes almost a folkloric document, sometimes almost a chronicle of urban life, sometimes almost a bourgeois daily drama, sometimes almost a poem of the imaginary around."[2]

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1 [el cuento parte de la noción de límite, y en primer término de límite físico] (Cortázar, 1971: 406).
2 [ora quase-documento folclórico, ora quase-crônica da vida urbana, ora quase-drama do cotidiano burguês, ora quase-poema do imaginário às voltas] (Bosi, 2006: 39).
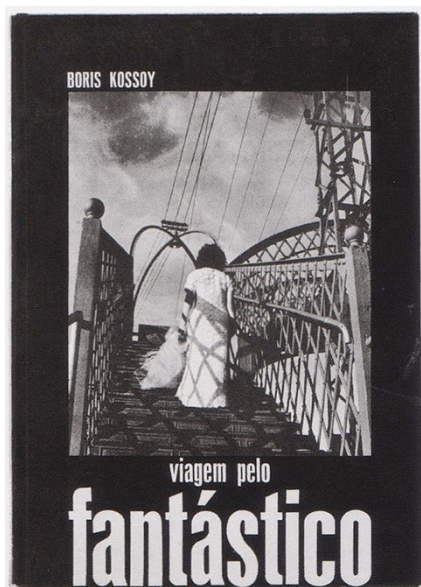
Figure 1. *Journey into the Fantastic*'s cover (Kossoy, 1971).

Mostly formed by a small number of pages (between two and twelve), the photographic tales of *Journey into the Fantastic* are incisors. They are built by relating *fragments*[3], a process that depends both on the photography and book. In this work, the characteristic sequentiality of the support is explored to constrain photographs, until then dissociated, to compose the same narrative, acting on each other's interpretation. As suggested in the title, Kossoy's tales are of the order of the fantastic. They happen as strangeness experiences funded on the testimony status of photography. In the photobook, literary resources and procedures frequently identified in works of authors as Edgar Allan Poe, Julio Cortázar, Jorge Luis Borges, and Bioy Casares, are transmediated[4] (Wolf, 2009) into photography, substantiating the development of photographic sequences.

This paper argues that *Journey into the Fantastic* is an exemplary case of montage working as a creative artifact (Queiroz and Atã, 2019) in photographic books. We demonstrate how juxtaposition processes regulate the

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3 In sum, a fragment is an element of montage, according to Eisenstein (2016). This notion will be further discussed in the next section.

4 Cf. Werner Wolf (2009: 137), transmediality can be described as a phenomenon in which "a quality of cultural signification appears, for instance, on the level of ahistorical formal devices that occur in more than one medium". Later, he also says that it "can occur, for instance, on the level of content in myths which have become cultural scripts and have lost their relationship to an original text or medium (notably, if they have become reified and appear as a 'slice' of [historical] reality)" (Wolf, 2011: 5).

relations established between its parts, scaffolding it as a whole. By describing this photobook as a montage phenomenon we analyze how the conditions in which photographs are organized in a book constrain their interpretation, altering their relations with their own referents. When part of a photobook, photographs do not only represent the visible cutout of what originated them, but become part of a process in which their interpretation depends on the relationship with other sign[5] systems[6] present in the book, such as photographs, verbal text, graphic design, etc. This occurs mainly because when a photographic image is explored as a montage fragment, it becomes part of a whole whose sense, more than in each element alone, is developed through meaning-making processes taking place over the sequence of pages.

We are not the first ones using the term *montage* to address semiotic processes involving photographs in a book or to evoke some cinematographic theory to describe photobooks. Patrizia Di Bello and Shamoon Zamir (2012), for example, suggest that Eisenstein's notions are a guiding thread for the articles gathering in *The Photobook: From Talbot to Ruscha and Beyond*. However, what we propose here is a more radical and systematic investigation of montage in photobooks. We apply Eisenstein's theory and typology to the description of how combinatorial patterns can be observed acting as meaning-making processes in a photographic book. In the case of *Journey into the Fantastic*, regarding the Eisensteinian categories, we observe that "intellectual montage" (Eisenstein, 1977: 82) occurs as a predominant creative method. Since it is a type of juxtaposition that explores symbolic aspects of montage elements, it is through it that *Journey into the Fantastic* relates photographic testimony and fiction, and refers to fantastic literature.

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5 We take advantage to inform the reader that some definitions proposed by Peirce are used in this research. According to him (EP 2:411), *semiosis*, or *semiotic process*, can be described as the action of a sign. It concerns a relation constituted by three irreducibly connected terms (sign-object-interpretant, S-O-I) (CP 2.228). In its turn, "a sign is anything which determines something else (its interpretant) to refer to an object" (CP 2.303). Peirce characterizes as iconic, indexical, and symbolic, the relations between S and O in the triad S-O-I. Icons are signs which stand for their objects through similarity or resemblance (CP 2.276). If S is a sign of O by reason of "a direct physical connection" between them (CP 1.372), then S is said to be an index of O. An indexical sign communicates a habit embodied in an object to the interpretant as a result of a direct physical connection between the sign and its object. Finally, in a symbolic relation, the interpretant stands for "the object through the sign" by a determinative relation of law, rule or convention (CP 2.276).

6 As in Jakobson (1959: 233), "sign systems" are considered here as processes of relations between signs.

II. EISENSTEIN'S THEORY OF MONTAGE

Historically, the term *montage* refers to an operating mode observed, mainly, in artistic productions of the first half of the 20th century (Phillips, 1992; Lavin and Teitelbaum, 1992; Nemchenko, 2018). Despite it being frequently considered a "meaning-generative principle" (Nemchenko, 2018: 118) characteristic of the avant-garde (Aumont and Hildreth, 1983; Lavin and Teitelbaum, 1992; Amiel, 2007), montage precedes these productions. It can be observed, for example, in the haikus of Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694), Takarai Kikaku (1661-1707), and Morikawa Kyoroku (1656-1715), in which verses works as juxtaposed independents elements; and in the literary works of Charles Dickens (1812-1870), Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), and Machado de Assis (1839-1908), in which fragmentation is an important feature (Eisenstein, 1977; Franco, 2014; Lourenço, 2017; Riedel, 2017).

Montage, as it is proposed in the Eisensteinian theory, can be understood as an artifact of intellectual operation in which juxtaposition, its fundamental procedure, works as a creative method. As a process in which meaning is generated as a synthesis, the juxtaposition (or conflict-juxtaposition) has as its effect a "creation" (Eisenstien, 1957: 7) of something qualitatively different from any separated element. What emerges from it is not something fixed or pre-established, but something that results from contact with a work. It concerns a creative process involving both who produces and who accesses it. The sense developed from these combinatorial phenomena is described by Eisenstein (1957) as "concept" (Ibid.: 31), "third something" (Ibid.: 9), or even "image" (Ibid.: 31).

It is important to note that for Eisenstein "meaning is communicated by putting *each* fragment into a relationship with those that surround it" (Aumont and Hildreth (1983: 51 [emphasis added]). So, montage and fragment are connected notions. A fragment is, initially, a frame, and framing concerns the choosing and the evidence of what integrates a work. A frame is a selection of what will become a fragment when it is involved in a juxtaposition process (Eisenstein, 2016). A fragment only exists when it is part of a system, when there is some relation, when there is a juxtaposition. We can say there is no fragment without montage.

During the production of a photobook, the acts of photographing and selecting photographic images for a work, for example, can be described as framing. Before it is related, a photograph is a frame. Its formal characteristics and cultural relevance are important for the work, however, its main function in the photobook is that of the fragment, since in it the photographic image is intended to function as part. Each photograph revealed through handling the book starts to be perceived as a fragment capable of

being spatial and temporal extended to the next fragment and being an extension and, therefore, part of the previous one. Because of this, as an isolated entity, a photograph matters less than its relationship with other photographs and with the other sign systems present in the book.

In Eisensteinian typology, the conflicts into the fragments and/or between the fragments are related to the montage categories classified as metric, rhythmic, tonal, overtonal, and intellectual (Eisenstein, 1977). They are creative methods possible to be observed in artistic productions and communication practices in a gradation scale from formal to symbolic aspects.

In the first one, metric montage, the "absolute *lengths* of the pieces" (Eisenstein, 1977: 72 [emphasis added]) is considered as a fundamental criterion for the construction of a work. This method relates the parts according to their measures. It concerns a "formula-scheme" developed through the "repetition of these 'measures'" (Eisenstein, 1977: 72). In this category of montage, the relations between the components of a work preserve a stipulated formula, they are constant and proportional.

Contrasting to it, in the rhythmic method, the internal patterns of the parts are which determine the relations between these parts. The specifics of the piece constrain the structure and the organization of the work. Eisenstein (1977) describes it as a formal category of montage in which "the content within the frame" determines the "lengths of the pieces" (Ibid.: 73).

Tonal montage is a method based on what Eisenstein (1977) calls "the characteristic *emotional sound* of the piece - of its dominant. The general *tone* of the piece" (Ibid.: 75[emphasis added]). In this category, the juxtapositions explore predominant features of the fragments, as "light tonality" (Ibid.: 75) (the degree of light vibration), and "graphic tonality" (Ibid.: 76) (predominant characteristics of shape-elements within the frame), for example.

Following a pattern based on collision, the overtonal montage emerges "from the conflict between the principal tone of the piece (its dominant) and the overtone" (Eisenstein: 1977: 79). This type refers to the sensation provoked on who accesses the work as a synthesis of relations between methods and between tones.

Last level of montage proposed by Eisenstein (1977), the intellectual method essentially differs from the previous ones. It works as a pictorial writing, such as the hieroglyphics, for example. Described as conflict-juxtaposition of "intellectual effects" (Eisenstein, 1977: 82), this kind of process is one in which montage works as an articulation of thinking and concept exhibition, as a fusion or synthesis activity. This category does not emphasize a particular characteristic of a fragment, but the intellectual processes that occur during its interpretation.

If according to Peirce (EP 2:274), a symbol is a sign that is understood in certain ways because of some habit or convention, we could say in the intellectual montage, symbolic aspects of the fragments are related for the construction of meaning. And as juxtaposition processes, these relations occur as conflict. Here is one of the most important characteristics that differentiate this method from the others. Intellectual montage happens at the level of the symbols. It explores it, putting the symbolic features of parts in conflict with each other to constrain the interpretation of a work.

An emblematic example of intellectual montage working as a creative artifact can be found in a sequence of one of Eisenstein's films, *October* (1928). By juxtaposing images of Alexander Kerensky, head of the Russian provisional government, to the takes of a mechanical peacock, the scene explores symbolic aspects of both characters to construct as interpretation 'the vanity of the military man seduced by power' (Figure 2). Since intellectual montage is a method that also involves the other ones, it is a case of a symbolic relation endowed with formal sophistication, which can be described as rhythmic and tonal procedures. The peacock moves by sweeping the frame from the center to the left. Movement in the same direction is prioritized by the angle of the camera, which shows the right portion of the ornate door, of the cabinet of power, which is open to the general's entrance.

Figure 2. Example of intellectual montage – "peacock sequence" in *October* (Eisenstein, 1928).

In *Journey into the Fantastic*,[7] conflicts between symbolic processes are what mainly characterize the relations between the photographic images'

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7 In this article, the identification of Eisensteinian categories of montage as creative methods in *Journey into the Fantastic* does not depend on verification of what may be considered as the intentional or conscious use of them by the photobook's author. The

components, and between the photographic images themselves. We describe it as a process of montage in which Kossoy's fantastic photographic is produced as a concept, in the Eisensteinian sense. As a case in which intellectual montage predominates as a creative method, the photobook develops itself as sequenced syntheses obtained through clashes between conventions underlying usual interpretations of what is observed as narrative elements in each photograph.

III.INTELLECTUAL MONTAGE AS A CREATIVE METHOD IN *JOURNEY INTO THE FANTASTIC*

Before becoming a fragment, each photographic image develops itself as montage, as a system of relation between its parts. Most of the photographs seen in *Journey into the Fantastic* are scripted and what we see on the surface obeys a previously stipulated arrangement. This organization of the photographic scene establishes unusual relations between its elements (as characters, spaces, objects, etc., for example). In cases like that, the conflict-juxtaposition between photographs' components besides being also formal, are predominantly symbolic. A tale entitled *The Maestro* is an example. In its only photographic image (Figure 3), a man dressed in a tuxedo holds a baton in his hands. He gestures to a set of poorly kept tombs, as if he were in front of an orchestra. Conventions that substantiate what we usually interpret as a conductor, his function and characteristics, and what we usually understand as a cemetery, its functions and uses, are conflict-juxtaposed in order to generate restlessness and surprise in who observes it. As an effect of this intellectual montage process, the photographic image proposes questions like 'what defines a maestro, an orchestra, or a cemetery? What is the role of a regent who conducts silence instead of the relationships between intervals of sound?', and so on. The photograph is constrained to work as proof of the occurrence of the unthinkable, of the nonsense. In this case, intellectual montage also explores the indexical nature of photography to refute habits regulating the ways we usually interpret people, objects, spaces, and even the photographic image.

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types were used, in this research, as analysis tools. According to Eisenstein's theory, these methods are proposed as montage procedures possible to be identified in several artistic productions, even in those that precede his theoretical model.

Figure 3. Photographic tale *The Maestro*, of *Journey into the Fantastic* (Kossoy, 1971).

In addition to be a montage process, each photographic image (as a whole) works as a fragment in the whole of the book. Constrained to act on each other's interpretation, these photographs, in *Journey into the Fantastic*, integrate narratives that oscillate between the factual and the imagined. Once it is part of a diptych, a tale, and a book, a photographic image participates in specific semiosis that only occur by the constraint of the relations that are established in that work. The photograph that in the book is called *The Maestro*, for example, in another context like being alone in a wall gallery or in another book related in another sequence will remain the same photograph but it will be interpreted in different ways imposed by its new context. If it will be with or without its title, if it will receive a different title, if it will be in an exhibition and/or a book with different photographs and titles, these are all conditions for how it will be interpreted - and note that we say this without considering the specificities of the reception that would be enough for another article.

Beyond the specificities imposed by the photobook medium, which we understand here as montage principles, *Journey into the Fantastic* presents other important features like the fact that it is produced using technical resources common to the photojournalism of the time to create fictional images juxtaposed in photographic tales. *Other times...* is a sequence that exemplifies how, in this book, photographs work as a documentation of the fiction. In this tale, it is possible to see captures of situations as a harlequin at the turn of a road (Figure 4), a mummy posing on shallow waves on a beach, and a baby stroller alone by the sea (Figure 5). The photographic record acts as a testimony of delirium, of uncertainty. The way these photographs are made and related make them contradict conventional understandings of the photographic image as a result of a fact - and of the photography as an objective system of representation. Once it is caught by

the camera lenses, what is registered becomes a proven event, however un-
likely the scene may be. Based on an objective indexicality, the photographic
image works as proof of a non-objective reality.

Figures 4 and 5. Pages of *Other times...* in *Journey into the Fantastic* (Kossoy, 1971).

In *Journey into the Fantastic*, by exploring the "mediation" (Elleström,
2010: 17) of the photographic image by the book, photography takes on a
narrative role characteristic of fantastic literature, in which the time can be
"eternal or present or cyclic" (Calvino, 1988: 119). The photobook develops
itself in an aspheric way. It can be observed in each tale and in the book as a
whole, but the relationship that is promoted between the first and the last
diptych is an exemplar case. The convergence of beginning and end con-
strains the photographic image to represent the duration instead of the in-
stant. Before the tales sequence, in the diptych formed by the first guard of
the book and the cover sheet, there is a photograph of a baby crib, printed
in a circular shape. It is juxtaposed to a photograph of a clock striking six
forty-four (Figure 6), printed in the same shape and size. In the last diptych

of the book, formed on the back of the last sheet and the inside of the fourth cover, there are two other juxtaposed photographs. They are also circular. One shows a medium plane of a mannequin in front of the wreckage, while in the other are observed distorted clocks that refer to Salvador Dali's surrealist representations (Figure 7). We can say the relationship between these two diptychs synthesizes the work as a whole, as well as its proposal and development. At the beginning of the journey, the timing is accurate, the image is clear, and the photograph can be interpreted as an indexical representation of the instant, of the chronological cut. In the end, notions of time still can be interpreted as a "record object" (Kossoy, 2002: 22), however, accuracy is refuted. The image is grainy and the contrast is tenuous. The photographic image presents itself as a record of a fluid time that runs and extends across the surface. Constrained to refer to temporal progression, the photograph becomes a sign of its contrary.
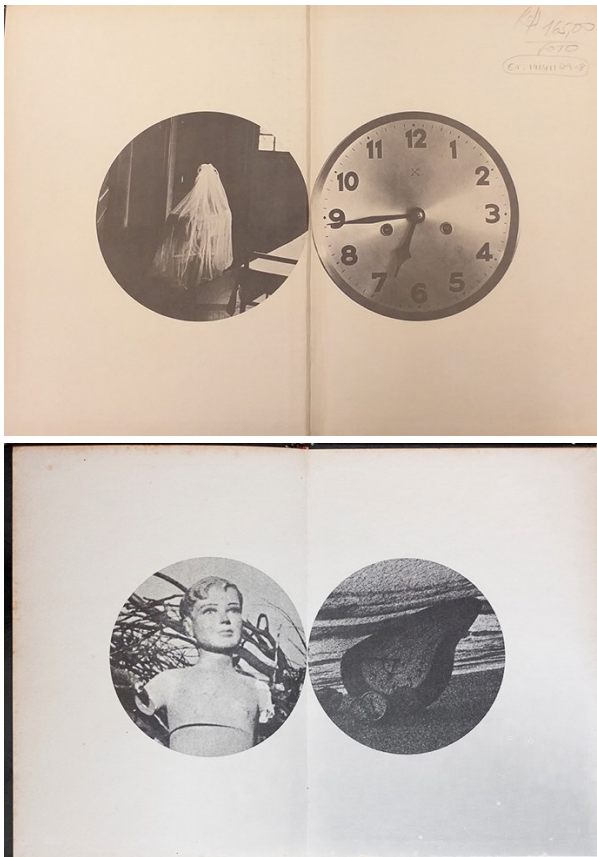
Figures 6 and 7. Diptychs formed by the first guard of the book and the cover sheet, and by the back of the last sheet and the inside of the fourth cover, respectively, in *Journey into the Fantastic* (Kossoy, 1971).

According to Eisenstein (1957 [emphasis added]), "the image[8] enters the consciousness and perception through aggregation" (Ibid.: 16), but "every detail is preserved in the sensations and memory as part of the whole" (Ibid.: 16). He also states that, in the montage process, "the series of ideas is built up in the perception and consciousness into a whole image, storing up the separate elements" (Ibid.: 17). *Journey into the Fantastic*'s photographic tales develop themselves as an *image*, in the Eisensteinian sense. They work as a whole but also as a succession of juxtaposed discontinuous moments. Their creative processes are based on the fact that a book, at least a codex form, is a space-time sequence, in the fact that it functions as a sequence of spaces perceived at different times. If this book feature can be considered less relevant when talking about literary prose, for example, when it concerns a photographic sequence it is a book property that becomes an elementary one. It is what can be observed in *Scenes in a house* (Figures 8, 9, and 10), for example.

Composed of three parts (of two pages each), the photographic sequence is a "medial transposition[9]" (Rajewsky, 2005) of the mythological tale of Minotaur. Also, it refers[10] to the literary works of Jorge Luis Borges (see 1949) and Julio Cortázar (see 1949) in which this myth becomes an important element of fantastic realism. The first part of *Scenes in a house* relates two photographic images, one of a poster attached to a grid that reads "vagas para moças [vacancies for girls]", printed on a black page, another of two upset women sitting on a bed (Figure 8). In the second part, juxtaposed to a black page, there is a photograph of a man sitting in a vertex of a wide room with no apparent openings (Figure 9). The last one presents, related to an empty page, a photographic image of a naked woman lying on the floor in front of a man with bullhead (also sitting on the vertex of a room) (Figure 10).

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8 It is important to remember that Eisenstein (1957) proposes a notion of *image* in which it concerns a meaning-making process. He relates it to what he describes as a "concept" (Ibid.: 31) and as a "third something" (Ibid.: 9).

9 It concerns an intermedial phenomenon described by Rajewsky (2005) as a "transformation of a given media product (a text, a film, etc.) or of its substratum into another medium" (51).

10 It means that it works as an intermedial "reference" (Wolf, 2002: 21).

Figures 8, 9 and 10. Photographic tale *Scenes in a house*, of *Journey into the Fantastic* (Kossoy, 1971).

As montage, the photographic tale interpretations are developed through handling and observation of the entire page sequence. We indicate it on the diagram below (Figure 11) in which it is possible to observe it is a process entirely dependent on the book structure.
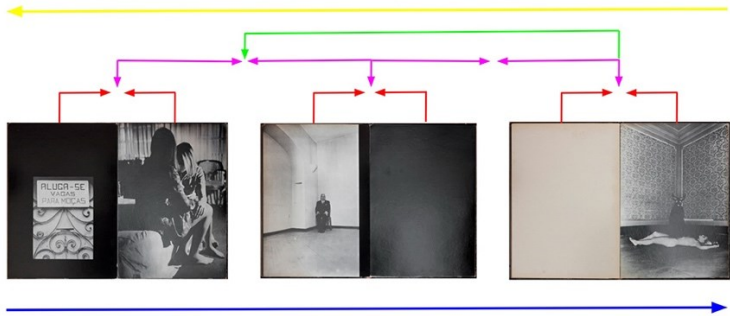
Figure 11. Diagrammatic representation of juxtaposition processes in *Scenes in a house*.

When the book is accessed according to western reading conventions, its pages are handled from left to right (blue arrow) – and in this case, the tale's components are unveiled as described above. Each double-page works as a juxtaposition in which the parts act on each other's interpretation (red arrows). As a process in which the meaning is added as the photographic sequence is seen, the page doubles act on the next one(s) and vice versa (lilac arrows). Thus, the photographic tale develops itself as a continuum of juxtapositions (related to each other), and, through it, its interpretations are generated as syntheses. *Scenes in a house* only becomes an *image* of the Minotaur's myth when the third part of the photographic sequence is accessed. Once seen, the last photograph of the sequence constraints (green arrow) the interpretation of the other two double pages already observed, and the interpretation of the whole tale. Even though the photographic tale is handled from left to right (blue arrow), its interpretations are developed in the opposite direction (yellow arrow), from the last double of pages to the first one, through intellectual montage.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Eisensteinian theory proposes an understanding of montage in which it is considered as a principle capable of being unrestricted explored in creative processes happening in different segments of the arts. As a method of

heuristic capacity, montage enables and regulates productions not only cinematographic but in all possible forms of artistic expression, including those that existed long before cinema, as evidenced by the author himself, when he writes about Bashô's haiku, Dickens' novels, the Kabuki theater, Da Vinci's painting and so on. In this paper, we demonstrate it also applies to photographic books and montage is a creative process wherewith a work like *Journey into the Fantastic* develops itself. The montage, capable of overcoming the indexical nature of film both in Eisenstein (montage as creation) and in Vertov (montage as revelation), works in the photobook as a method of overcoming the indexicality of photography.

When using Eisenstein's typology to describe and analyze *Journey into the Fantastic*, we observe that it is a photographic book in which juxtapositions occur, mainly, as intellectual montage. Collisions involving symbolic aspects of the parts characterize the main relations established in the photographic images and between the photographic images integrating the book. The notion of fantastic photographic developed in the work is produced as an *image*, or as a *concept*, in the Eisensteinian sense. It happens as a synthesis obtained through the clash of conventions underlying usual interpretations of what is observed as narrative elements in the photographs.

In a photobook like *Journey into the Fantastic*, the juxtaposition, as a way of the relation between parts, can be observed on several levels. An important one is that in which the photographic image works as montage. It develops itself through experimentations not only of its iconic and formal features but also and mainly of constitutional and symbolic aspects of the photographed objects and of the photographic medium. Another important level of montage that happens in a photobook, like the one we analyzed here, is that one in which photographic images become fragments in juxtapositions happening in the pages, diptychs, and tales. In these processes, constituent and representative parts of the photographic image come to be predominantly considered in function not of the interpretation of that image as an entity, but of its relevance as a related part, as an element that participates in juxtapositions. It concerns relations happening by the action of the material and constitutional aspects of the book on the parts (whether photographic or not). Even if the interpretations resulting from the relation of these photographs in the pages, diptych, and sequences are open, unpredictable, and dependent on the observer's experiences, the action of these relationships on their own interpretation processes is undoubted. This is because the arrangement of two or more photographic images juxtaposed on a diptych will produce, certainly and inevitably, interpretations that result from the influence of one on the other. When, in turn, these pages, diptychs, and sequences are constrained, by the structure of the book, to work not

only as montage processes but also as montage fragments, they function as juxtapositions of other juxtapositions, acting on each other's interpretations successively.

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