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## Photo-Literary Strategies in Three Collaborative Projects (*I Spy Pinhole Eye*, *Co Robi Łączniczka* and *Áladerrida*)

### Abstract

Collaborative photo-texts are not only experiments with page layout and the material aspect of the book. Such complicated and demanding projects employ various intermedial strategies of co-creating meaning, but they are not necessarily harmonious. This article presents an analysis of three photo-textual strategies: filling the frame, cut and paste technique and creative transformation of absent images/texts in photo-textual exchange. Three post-millennial works (*I Spy Pinhole Eye* by Philip Gross and Simon Denison, *Co robi łączniczka* by Darek Foks and Zbigniew Libera and *Áladerrida* by Tadeusz Różewicz and Jerzy Olek) serve here as representative examples of those photo-textual strategies.

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The idea of combining texts and photographs within one publication is not new. Books of this type have been put in to print from the second half of the nineteenth century and we can observe a growing presence of such projects especially since the 1980s<sup>1</sup>. To highlight the basic feature of the bi-mediality of these objects many researchers describe them with compound terms as realisations of “photo-textuality” or “photo-literature”<sup>2</sup>. However, specific examples of the use of the above terms reveal many discrepancies with respect to the scope of notions behind them.

Taking into account various definitions of photo-literature, it is vital to point out that not every publication that uses both texts and photographs will be regarded in my article as genuine photo-text. This is because I intend to follow the stricter definition of photo-literature, according to which this term refers only to those intermedial objects that match the theoretical model of verbal and visual components’ co-equality and inseparability — of their specific union that creates new multimodal perceptual rules<sup>3</sup> and new expressional possibilities. What it means practically is that books in which photographs serve as mere illustration (e.g. many travelogues), as well as volumes in which verbal elements play a definitely minor part (photo-books with captions) or even realize the purely descriptive aspect of rhetoric figure of *ekphrasis*, should be excluded from the field of interest. In photo-literature, as I will understand it, images and texts co-create meaning, although it is not necessarily a harmonious process, but rather an agonistic one (Mitchell 1995b: 301), and this is why a reader/viewer of such intermedial project always has to face an interpretational challenge. As Andy Stafford puts it: “We must decide whether the photograph fights, works with, undermines, complements, destroys, controls, is controlled by, or runs parallel with the written text accompanying it” (Stafford 2010: 53). He also adds:

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<sup>1</sup> A wide range of such works is catalogued on the website of a photo-literature project supervised by Jean-Pierre Montier *Photolittérature: Répertoire de la Photolittérature Ancienne et Contemporaine*. [www.phlit.org](http://www.phlit.org).

<sup>2</sup> The term “photolittérature” was probably first used in the title of a monographic edition of journal „Revue de sciences humaines” (*Photolittérature*)1988, no. 210. Many dissertation titles make use of these terms (e.g. *Photo-Textualities: Reading Photographs and Literature* 1996; *Phototextualities: Intersections of Photography and Narrative* 2003; Pal 2010; *Fototesti: Letteratura e cultura visuale* 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Photo-literature can be perceived as a subgenre of „multimodal printed literature”, where „different modes of expression (...) constantly interact in the production of narrative meaning” (Gibbons 2012: 2).

“All photo-texts — by virtue of photographs «hijackability» and of the viewer’s suggestibility — are «unstable»” (2010: 53), pointing up the inevitable tension between two media, a kind of miniaturized “mediamachia” (Cosgrove 1995), or “paragone” struggle (much more intensive than in the case of classical *ekphrasis* — see: Krieger 1967, Mitchell 1995a; Heffernan 2004: 6–7) that might turn a reader’s/viewer’s interpretation into an endless work-in-progress.

We can distinguish several subgenres within the domain of photo-literature: among them the well recognized genre of a photo-essay, a roman-photo or photo-story, books where photographs appear alongside poems, as well as Sebaldian “autofiction”<sup>4</sup> and other examples of fiction in which photographs are “nested” in text, create a kind of “braid” or “weave” with verbal elements (see: Fjellestad 2015). Due to this diversity of photo-textual collaborations, the typology of all recurrent practices, that are connected with the publications’ materiality and at the same time are part of establishing meaning within intermedial play, appear to be a difficult task. Such strategies will become the main subject of this article. However, it is necessary to narrow the field of investigation. The inquiry will focus on three fundamental strategies that seem to be predestined to match both media: filling the frame, cut and paste technique and creative transformation of absent images/texts in photo-textual exchange. For each strategy one representative example is selected from the domain of post-millennial collaborative<sup>5</sup> photo-texts: *I Spy Pinhole Eye* by Philip Gross and Simon Denison, *Co robi łączniczka* by Darek Foks and Zbigniew Libera and *Aladerrida* by Tadeusz Różewicz and Jerzy Olek. In these projects images and texts are intended to operate similarly, in a non-contrapuntal mode. Moreover, they are presented in corresponding pairs with an uncomplicated, symmetrical style of layout<sup>6</sup> so the reader/viewer faces here a seemingly transparent situation and becomes a witness to a kind of a laboratory experiment, which sometimes consists of many trials (in first two works mentioned above the pairs are consistently repeated in cycles).

The idea of the maximal limitation of a photographer’s role in creating images and of providing a set of frames that are simply “cut off” from reality was the starting point for the collaborative intermedial project *I Spy Pinhole Eye* (2009) by photographer Simon Denison and poet Philip Gross. This volume will serve in the article as an example of a photo-textual strategy of filling the frame. The book contains thirty equally sized colour photographs that are taken with a homemade pinhole camera and present supposedly unattractive, mundane objects: the foot of electricity pylons. The role of the pinhole camera operator is humble and it requires enormous patience due to a very long exposure time and no option to influence the process. Images emerge almost automatically not only as a kind of objective, indexal imprints but as photographic — that is “light-drawn” and created with Talbotian “pencil of Nature” — counterparts of *acheiropoieta* (“Icons Made

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Brunet 2009: 138. The way Sebald treated photographs as integral part of his works has been the subject of many articles (Searching for Sebald 2007; Duttlinger 2004; Martin 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Andy Stafford divides photo-texts into three types: collaborative (a joint project by two artists), retrospective (writer uses photographs from the past) and self-collaborative (the project is created by one artist) (see Stafford 2010: 6–7).

<sup>6</sup> The experimental style of page-layout, involving variable ways of weaving photographs into the text, turns the layout into project’s “privileged third space” (the first is the text and the second is the image), which according to Lise Patt occurs in Sebald’s books (Patt 2007: 41).

Without Hands” — cf. Trilling 1998). Denison had no guarantee what kind of image he would finally achieve by pointing the camera at the same distance towards the foot of the pylons thus the borders of frame corresponding with the shape and size of the pinhole aperture were the only constants. Each of the series of square reproductions in the book, put in brackets of dark edges that create a kind of a natural oval vignette, also has a predictable frame. We might wonder whether it is possible for a poet to follow this practice and find equally evident frames for texts planned to mirror particular photographs and to fill the space of printed pages next to those containing the original images. Philip Gross was expected to find an adequate solution — to “spy a pinhole eye”.



phot. S. Denison

In the broader sense, every framework of a literary work can be regarded as a frame a writer is always meant to fill: the actual length of the text, its segmentation into paragraphs (in prose) or into strophes or stanzas (in poetry), as well as all other features that determine the material shape of words and phrases within the page layout. Phillip Gross chose a compact form of a *quasi*-sonnet: almost all texts consist of 14 diversely grouped lines. As a sophisticated and demanding genre with strict patterns of rhymes, verses and stanzas, a sonnet has been traditionally treated as a proof of writer’s artistry. What has to be highlighted here is an important difference between the verbal and the visual element in the project: every author of a sonnet, in contrast to the author of a “transparent” photograph taken with a pinhole camera, manifests his or her presence and obviously turns out to be a decision-maker. Even when — like in Raymond Queneau’s *One Hundred Million Million Poems* (1983) — the reader has to finish the work begun by the poet and complete his or her own sonnet/-s using certain possible combinations which are, by the way, almost countless, the author remains a skilful creator of the initial matrix of verses. Therefore, we might start to think that traditional stereotypes concerning both media govern this photo-textual collaboration (photography is usually treated as a provider of impersonal and truthful copies of things; literature is often claimed to be a domain of human creative

power, perfect masterpieces and artistic freedom — cf. Cunnigham, Fisher, Mays 2008: 1). In fact, however, these conventional roles do not determine the character of the entire publication. First of all, from the very beginning of the project Denison assumed that his pictures (just like any other photographs) would “elevate and transform” their objects by making them look beautiful in some way and that those images would be characterised by many “suggestive possibilities” (Denison 2009: 78). Secondly, the generic framework of sonnet freely reorganized by Gross is not actually that artful — it is only meant to allude to the sonnet (and Gross deliberately puts the stress on “ludic” part which he associates with ludic convention — Gross 2009: 79). Such a framework not only cuts the text into strophes and lines without consideration for the traditional sonnet structure (there are also verses consisting of a single word), but it also causes enjambments and surprising intersections inside the words resulting from the broken rhyme technique. The end of the line cuts a word into pieces just like every camera that remains a lot outside the field of vision (especially when it is pointed only to a little fragment of a bigger object). As David Kennedy explains, this is a “graphical reproduction of the pinhole camera «blink»”, and the breaks “catch the moment of becoming” and “mimic for the reader Denison’s attempt to remove himself from the process” (Kennedy 2012: 154).

So we might assume that both artists had a certain frame to fill, although the photographer was dependent on the outside world and his equipment properties while the poet, apart from obeying the 14-line scheme and enigmatic task of “spying” the “pinhole eye”, was free to choose his inspiration. Poems by Philip Gross are not examples of classically understood *ekphrasis*; they are only written “around, about pictures” (Gross 2009: 79) while they were meant “to respond to the pictures in order to tease out some of their suggestive possibilities” (Gross 2009: 79). Still, some attempts to simply imitate particular photographs, or at least objectively register their details, could be observed in a few *quasi*-sonnets, for example in almost rectangular-shaped, not divided into the strophes poem *Materials* (Gross, Denison 2009: 43), which fills the “frame” densely with the long, and partially random enumeration of all visible and invisible elements or factors that have influenced the photographic process and helped the ready images to arrive at the poet’s mailbox:

High tensile steel; L-section and T-section girders;  
flat struts; twenty-four two-inch bolts, twenty-four  
nuts, ditto, in four rows of six; heavy-duty poured  
rough-moulded concrete; cement; gravel; water;  
time; oxides of iron; undercoat rustproof ochre,  
topcoat battleship grey; grey lichen; yellow lichen;  
pennywort; spiderweb; sheep’s wool; snail-slime;  
meadow-grass in clumps; moss; loose stones;  
bird droppings; rabbit droppings; urine, sheep and fox;  
wind; rain; black box; photographic paper; God’s  
impartial sunlight; time; stamps; padded envelope;  
black fibre-tip (0.5mm); A4 folded to A5; time; lap-  
top; plastic socket; 4,500 miles of the National  
Grid; substation; power station; many pylons, maybe this.

Even though this literary mimicry alludes to many levels of photograph presented on the neighbouring page (objectivity and thoroughness, continuity of representation without privileging any of the elements or even graphical contour), it seems to be affected with traces of mockery, just like in many other of Gross's poems. He wrote verses filled with erudite allusions (e.g. references to history, mythology, philosophy or the Bible), wordplays and unusual metaphorical descriptions, which indeed explore many "suggestive possibilities" of Denison's rather surprising or even exotic photographs. Through the prisms of those poems certain essential elements of photographic process appear to be the objects of many metaphorical transformations, for example, electricity pylon's foot resembles the foot of a colonist who enters the new world (*First Footing*), while the interior of the camera is compared to Plato's cave or dark cinema hall (*Seeing*). The reader is invited to look at the pictures again and thanks to the sonnet-like poems the audience can discover the inner richness of the meaning of these supposedly simple and plain photographs which are claimed to present only no man's gaze. Certain literary vision can additionally permeate the pictures so that some of their elements might start to resemble other objects. For example, Babeth Bruijn proposed the following re-interpretation of Denison's photograph: "The metaphor in «Long Exposure» (...) that depicts high art as comparable to nourishing home-made food may perhaps be specifically inspired by the photograph the poem is coupled with, since the pylon foot conceivably resembles an aluminium moka pot" (Bruijn 2014). The specific photo-textual hermeneutical circle may be set in motion: the picture helps to understand the accompanying text, while the text in turn encourages a reinterpretation of the picture and so that texts coupled with the photographs start to function like pairs of (not very reliable) mirrors facing each other.

Despite the fact that both artists chose a rigid frame for their works, literature appears intrinsically loquacious and predestined to dominate the picture. If Gross's poems were meant only to confirm photographs, they would have to be ever more condensed and this poignant thought is hidden in *Parable*:

It is easier  
 for a pylon to walk  
 through the eye  
 of a pinhole

than for a man  
 with a camera  
 to capture the kingdom  
 of heaven

or for a man  
 with a sonnet  
 to trust to the light  
 and say unto you:  
 Yea  
 verily.

The final exclamation purely asserts the accuracy of true-color, detailed pictures created by light that entered through the pinhole, but for “a man with a sonnet” such attitude seems to be beyond reach, probably because it is impossible to create a two-word sonnet. So the framework of 14 lines turns out to be an inadequate “equipment” to simply mirror Denison’s photographs, in other words, to create their verbal counterparts. Therefore the poet appears to be like a sinful rich man which Jesus talked about (“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God” — Matthew, 19:24) — he seems too greedy in collecting words and phrases and very quick to dazzle everybody or to guide reader’s reactions. In spite of the fact that the photographer (or “man with a camera” to follow Dziga Vertov’s expression, just like Gross did) is always hidden behind the picture and allows viewers to freely develop their own interpretation, his self-limiting is also treated ironically: Denison was interested only in the earthbound pylon’s feet (and not the whole pylons) so “the kingdom of heaven” would be unreachable for him. However, he does not seem to share this view since he proudly wrote in the *Endnotes* that photographs “tell part of the truth, never the whole of it; that’s their secret” (Denison 2009: 79). And probably it would be their intrinsic power as well. David Kennedy argues that fragmentary — even unreadable at first sight — photographs in *I Spy Pinhole Eye* are somewhat similar to examples of abstract art viewed through the prism of Lyotard’s concept of the sublime (Kennedy 2012: 155). A minimized, enigmatic picture would have a strong allusive power and it would prove that “unpresentable exists” (Lyotard 1984). Gross’s sonnet-like poems are evidently not akin to abstract art and this is where another mismatch between visual and verbal layer of the project is exposed. Therefore, “a man with a camera” and “a man with a sonnet” remind the readers/viewers that literature and photography have to cope with obviously different “equipment” and that they have to produce representations adapted to different frames. The layout of a collaboratively projected photo-book is the space where those two distinct worlds can meet.

The vital role of the elementary photo-book structure based on images paired with texts becomes equally evident in another collaborative project that will serve here as an example of a cut and paste photo-textual strategy: in *Co robi łączniczka (What Does the [female] Liaison Officer Do — 2004)* by Darek Foks and Zbigniew Libera. The volume created by Polish artists introduces complicated methods of gathering, transforming and collaging both visual and verbal materials. Although it seems that the photo-book features sixty-three single images coupled with equally numbered single short stories, in fact in every pair both elements of the intermedial encounter incorporate a multiplicity of shuffled ingredients.

Thanks to the fact that Foks and Libera cooperated closely through all phases of the project (from the moment of inventing the title and the volume structure) the book is strictly arranged in every detail and it represents a truly symbiotic relation between images and texts. Although the important number of sixty-three photo-textual couples corresponds with the number of Uprising days, *Co robi łączniczka* is not a typical commemoration of the Warsaw Uprising, mainly because it appears to be focusing on post-memory<sup>7</sup> and descendants’ inability to recoup the past, and definitely avoids a documental or glorifying approach. The belief that past always presents itself in accessible disguises

<sup>7</sup> In the context of this volume Marianne Hirsch’s term was used by Marek Zaleski (2012) and Katarzyna Bojarska (2014).



is reflected in the montage technique influencing both visual and verbal elements. Although the ultimate versions of texts were prior to photo-montages (*Co robiła łączniczka* 2006: 43), this strategy is more evident in case of images prepared by Zbigniew Libera, who was inspired by Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* project dealing with the diversity of women identities. The visual artist combined some elements taken from black-and-white documental war photographs (e.g. ruins in flames, portraits of female insurgents in their uniforms) with well-known pictures of beautiful sixties and seventies film-stars (original faces of female liaison officers are replaced with faces of Gina Lollobrigida, Claudia Cardinale, Lauren Bacall, Catherine Deneuve, Elisabeth Taylor and so on). He also used three nude photographs (with women's heads cropped), as well as fragments of colourful frames of film magazine covers ("Cahiers du Cinema", "Picturgoer"). What also plays an important role are film stills, for example from *Beggars of Life* (1928) and *Prix de beauté* (1930) with Louise Brooks who, according to both artists, is the perfect embodiment of a liaison officer. Another pivotal picture that recurs in the volume in many variations was extracted from *Kanał* (*Canal*, directed by Andrzej Wajda in 1957)<sup>8</sup>. It is a recognizable still presenting an officer Stokrotka (Daisy) and her lover, insurgent Korab, entrapped in a canal blocked off by Nazis with a metal drain grate. Andrzej Wajda's film, especially the way he portrayed Stokrotka, is permeated with erotic aura. As Foks (born in 1966) and Libera (born in 1959) claim, such post-war pictures shaped their image of the Warsaw Uprising (*Co robiła łączniczka* 2006: 47). Within those juvenile phantasies beautiful and fearless liaison officers are identified with famous sex-bombs and the series of photo-montages becomes a kind of pin-up girl's photo calendar (so it resembles an analogical experiment by Graham Rawle from his murder mystery novel *Diary of an Amateur Photographer*). As a result, in *Co robiła łączniczka* the erotic, pop-cultural clichés obscure or even cover up the picture of the past itself (see further: *Projekt Foks*: 190–192). Additionally, both artists claim that they created contemporary "cover versions" of earlier images or texts. Photo-montages by Libera have many layers and historical personages are actually erased from many of his works, even faces of original actors of *Canal* are replaced with images of Anita Ekberg and Marcello Mastroianni (picture 3), which make the tragic 1944 run for life resemble a city-tour with an underlying erotic adventure. These photo-montages undoubtedly evoke an uncanny aura of distance and desire which Susan Sontag believed to be photography's intrinsic property (1977: 16).

The cut and paste technique used by Libera, as a kind of camera-less practice, foregrounds many important issues to consider. First of all, the images pretend to be just a reflection of a not necessarily logical mixture functioning in Polish collective memory, literature and film. Secondly, the photography's commonplace truthfulness is obviously called into question because the past is disguised and swaps places with images from different moments and places. Sex-bombs play the role of Polish officers, while the actual Uprising heroines perform as celebrities on fake magazine covers. With its ruined buildings, the Polish capital in 1944 is shown only as an overlay: it appears in marginal glimpses as a blurred, distant and irretrievable place and the inhabitants of Warsaw often seem ghost-like. Documental no-men gaze flashes in the most hidden, faint strata of this "visual palimpsest" (see: Jarniewicz 2006: 36), giving way to dominating, erotic and

<sup>8</sup> Libera also used a famous still from *Popiół i diament* as an overlay for picture 15.

pop-cultural “male gaze” (Kowalczyk 2010: 370–371, cf.: Mulvey 1999). So in a sense post-memorial visions connected mostly with the sixties and seventies defeat the past, although this configuration is far from being stable because the artist juggles with the same images to create a series of shifty and surprising variations (just like in his earlier photo-montage series entitled *Positives*, created in 2002–2003). Libera’s works are complex visual metaphors that ghostly drift through time and it is hard to pin them down, especially that the whole book pretends to be a reprint of an earlier, and in fact non-existing, book (The Printing Museum in Cieszyn was responsible for manufacturing the cover and title pages on a special paper to imitate the austere style of underground publications).

Although both artists claim that they meant to develop parallel strategies, it is not easy to precisely pinpoint all dimensions of the intended correspondences. Short stories by Foks were a direct inspiration for Libera’s gallery of Uprising heroines, and therefore we should be able to reveal some textual traces of complementary montage technique and similar mystifications. All texts have identical length and almost square shape (matching the shape of montages shown on neighbouring pages) and embody the same pattern. The symmetrical, play-like beginning features the initial phrase “When the boys...” name their action and subsequently pairs it with supposedly correlated efforts of a liaison officer. Yet, the combinations are not really governed by causality. Furthermore, many of the characters’ doings seem to be absurd and unrelated with the actual Uprising events, which is why the phrases resemble grammatical or logical exercises with no concrete message. The documental and historical layer is hidden in the middle part of these one-paragraph stories and it functions as a kind of setting that always appears only in the main character’s flashbacks or dreams. The ontological status of city surroundings (barricades, ruins, squares or Warsaw districts) and war characters (major, messenger girls, the Germans and “boys”, as insurgents and partisans are called), evoked in this prose is unclear and phantom just like in Libera’s works. Instead of real fights, endangerment and tragedy, Foks’ texts present only the beginnings of dreamed or remembered actions. The writer offers just an exposition of a story that creates a background for a never fully developed plot: nothing important actually happens, nobody is killed and it is usually the insurgents who seem to be in the eye of a cyclone. Every relation describing an adventure or mundane reality becomes suddenly suspended and followed by an awkward final quotation from a lifestyle magazine for “Enemy Women” dealing with prosaic matters and love problems (the sentences were extracted from the readers’ letters published in fashionable periodical “Wysokie Obcasy”). A present-day motif of an extra-cheap special course for liaison officers functions as another cliché (Łukasiewicz 2006: 74). Therefore, the cut and paste technique is observable not only in works by Libera who used ready-made materials and mixed them to transform recognizable conventions and to create a kind of palimpsest. Foks also invented a unique pattern of multilayer verbal montage: he pasted original newspaper excerpts and activated well-known literary or pop-cultural clichés. Some fragments of his stories resemble Polish patriotic literature and allude to traditional, very detailed realistic descriptions, while others draw on the methods of psychological prose. Furthermore, the romantic theme is clearly signaled in a few texts, and so is the double agent motif and overused action movie and war movie scenes. This post-memorial and postmodern mixture of styles and recycled motifs seems to be suspended in a timeless void, which is characteristic also of

Libera's montages. Darek Foks recalls William S. Burroughs's works as his inspiration (*Co robila łączniczka* 2006: 75)<sup>9</sup> and the short stories published in *Co robi łączniczka* indeed seem to allude to the random cut-up technique developed by this American writer.

However, we can change the mode of analysis and search not only for similarities but also for discrepancies and gaps between the visual and the verbal. When we focus on images created by the text, we might ask why neither "boys" nor scenes from war adventures are pictured in Libera's photo-montages. The first possible explanation is that those absent images are partly derived from main protagonist's memory and dreams, and this is why they unveil their mental, and thus unobservable, character. Secondly, this decision helped to expose the main role of the liaison officer who is an archetype with many attractive faces and no name. It is essential that her full-face photo (picture 32 with Sophia Lorren) is an axis of reflection symmetry (or chiasm structure — Zaleski 2012: 159) of the volume. Moreover, this picture is surrounded by a kind of empty stage: two mirroring versions of the same picture showing a building's facade and half of a small woman's figure presented from behind and barely visible on the inside margin of the page.

On the other hand, the extravagant pseudo-historical collection of pin-up girls could play a role of a stimulus for somebody to create a completely different set of war stories, in other words: to give voice to mute objects (and this task is typical for *ekphrasis* — Hagstrum 1958: 18, Heffernan 2004: 6–7). So there is a kind of rivalry and an inevitable gap between the seemingly "twin" visual and verbal montages. When separated from each other, they evoke some absent images and absent stories, and therefore the reader/viewer has to decide which component of the volume to trust. *Co robi łączniczka* is undoubtedly an interesting example of a photo-textual cut and paste strategy whose authors avoided a simple and automatic juxtaposition of elements in a particular framework (like in a collection of quotes or in non-hierarchical photo-collage<sup>10</sup>). Instead, they tended to take advantage of both media's different capacity of transforming and combining input materials in order to create meaningful, multilayer visions that provoke the audience and paradoxically seem to be both disunited (just like an unstable post-memorial vision of the Warsaw Uprising) and artistically finished due to the mechanical rhythm of serial variations.

The above-mentioned issue of absent images and absent texts evoked in photo-textual works appears to be a vital problem as far as this type of intermedial cooperation is concerned. Many researchers interpreted this issue as the one of most puzzling in Sebald's word and image experiments (e.g. Patt 2007: 71; Kraenzle 2007: 138–141). It is also present in another interesting example of a Polish photo-text: *Áladerrida* (2008) by Tadeusz Rózewicz with a photograph by Jerzy Olek. This work could be treated as an intermedial co-parody of an absent text (*Restitution* section of Jacques Derrida *Truth in Painting*) and absent image ("famous painting" by Van Gogh recalled by Derrida and published in many editions of his book). A lot of Derridian phrases, characterised by both literary ambitions and serious, philosophical inclinations, and motifs (first and foremost the motif of old shoes) are travestied in a deliberately perplexing, ironic and irreverent poem by Rózewicz.

<sup>9</sup> Katarzyna Bojarska additionally associates Foks's stories with works by Raymond Quenau and Raymond Russel (Bojarska 2014).

<sup>10</sup> This is the case of photo-montages by Rodchenko created as the answers to Mayakovski's poem *Pro eto*, where pictures appear to non-hierarchically collide different objects mentioned by writer (Mayakovski 2009).

Furthermore, the writer explains his parodic intentions in the included foreword: “I wrote this piece, because I admire Derrida, but his backbreaking interpretations ask for parody. Derrida’s erudition surpasses the object he is processing” (Różewicz 2008: 98, my translation). Considering this declaration, it is easy to state that Różewicz’s text is predominantly ludic<sup>11</sup>. However, in his foreword the poet recalls the important tradition of Polish parody represented by *Słówka* (*The Words*) by Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński — a volume that contains, among the others parodies of Stanisław Jachowicz’s, children tales: *Dwa Kotki* (*Z Jachowicza*) and *Deszczowyk* (*Z Jachowicza*) (Żeleński [Boy] 1987: 266, 267). Those tricky parodies are in fact a veiled and rather serious polemic with Jachowicz’s educational ideas and thus we may suppose that the allegedly ludic parody of Derrida’s discourse is quite serious as well, or even that it uses the “contentious or «attacking» mode” of parodic writing (Dentith 2000: 9).

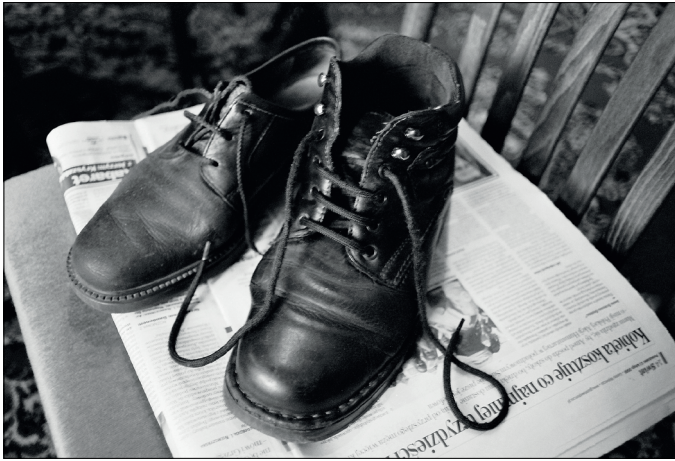
The photo-textual mode of perception obligates the interpreter to examine the role of image in this parodic strategy. In case of Olek’s photograph the polemic and travesty motivation is not that evident. The picture presents, as a facsimile of Różewicz’s handwriting caption assures, the old poet’s shoes and we may expect that it corresponds with Van Gogh’s picture of old shoes Derrida wrote about. The philosopher distinguished this work because earlier it had become the object of Martin Heidegger’s (2008) and Meyer Schapiro’s (1968) interest, and Różewicz also mentions the names of both of them. There is another difficulty because it was not established with certainty which painting Heidegger had chosen. Schapiro claimed that the author of *The Origin of Work of Art* discussed the painting entitled *The Old Shoes with Laces* from 1886 (its reproduction appears as an illustration in *The Truth in Painting*). The disagreement between thinkers that Derrida refers to is based on the question whether the shoes pictured on canvas belong to the painter or to the peasant woman. Derrida suspends the whole argument — “quite simply these shoes do not belong, they are neither present nor absent” (Derrida 1987: 274). He states that the painted shoes should not be tied to anybody’s legs, in other words: it is forbidden to pierce the canvas to stitch it with the reality (1987: 304). In this context the mere decision of choosing a different medium, of using photography instead of painting to create parody, seems to be a polemical gesture because a photograph is stereotypically documental and associated with representing reality. And Olek’s picture indeed appears to be very concrete, transparent and direct. Of course this photo is a staged image. It is easy to point to similarities to the 1886 picture because we see two, probably old shoes with untied laces again. But additionally the shoes are in fact unpaired and this seems to be a clear allusion to Derrida’s doubts expressed in an elaborated fragment of *Restitutions*<sup>2</sup> where he analyses all conditions that have to be fulfilled to consider any two shoes a pair. Still, this photograph represents a completely different visual style than Van Gogh’s work: the composition is simple, the image is perfectly sharp, and its black-and-white quality makes it resemble a documentary photo. Moreover, some elements attract the viewer’s attention and provoke further questions, for example, why the shoes were put on a chair covered with newspaper. On the one hand, we can search for sophisticated allusions to well-known pictures of hostages holding a daily magazine with visible date in their hands, which is usually treated as evidence of the photo’s reliability, and treated as yet more proof

<sup>11</sup> Such interpretation was put forward by Tomasz Mizerkiewicz in his review of *Kup kota w worku* (2008: 70).

of the mimetic nature of this medium. We might also ask whether using a sheet of printed newspaper (so common and multi-purpose artefact) is not simply a way of keeping the chair safe from dirt. We experience a mundane, intimate situation and we may even feel invited to look at the interior of the author's home but what is important here is that the boundary that separates the domain of artistic or non-artistic representation from reality is seemingly abolished. What is more, with his handwriting (which is a physical, somatic trace of the subject and in a sense rejects Derridian opposition of writing and speech) Różewicz provides an indisputable testimony so the reader can be sure whose limbs those shoes belong to. The term "phantom limbs", used by Derrida, is clearly inadequate here. The photograph's caption is at the same an intimate letter to the audience: "Dear reader, maybe you, (...) will fit into my old shoes and march on" (Różewicz 2008: 98). This phrase reveals another parodic allusion since Derrida used a similar expression to criticise the way Schapiro hastily attributed the painted shoes to particular owners ("So many sayings pass through here to speak of the dislocation of the inadequate, like when one is «*a cote de ses pompes*» [literally, «beside one's shoes (with fatigue)»], or the usurper's abuse: «to be in someone's shoes»" — Derrida 1987: 312).

In the end we find ourselves in a peculiarly arranged space of artistic communication. While the painting — within the framework of Derridian thought — is an autonomous world guarded by the frame (and to paraphrase the sentence the author of *Grammatology* is famous for — there is nothing outside the painting, with both the reader and the author excluded), Różewicz's handwriting and Olek's photograph ostentatiously show the linkage between representation and reality. So here the core of their polemic approach is exposed. Furthermore, both the author of the text (and at the same time the owner of the shoes) and the reader are taken into account; and the latter is even encouraged to continue the poet's doings. A question that still remains is: what kind of activity should be continued? The mode of reading of Derrida's work adjusted to the poet's intentions? Or perhaps the continuation of the parody? There is yet more confusion: if the author confirms the shoes' attribution, is he also a "usurper"? This chain of interpretational ideas can have no end but the parodic character of this photo-text demands that the reader remains vigilant and suspicious. Derrida repeatedly states that the laces are a loop that clenches around the subject so we might wonder whether Jerzy Olek's photo put in the middle of Różewicz parody poem is not a trap as well. What deserves attention is that when discussing the anamorphic picture of human skull in *Ambassadors* by Hans Holbein, Jacques Lacan used a similar expression — he called this surprising visual object "a trap for a gaze" (Lacan 1998: 89) whose goal is to imprison the viewer. What is the most striking, is that paradoxically in the case of *Aladerrida* a seemingly neutral, unembellished photograph may become a starting point for a tricky, polemical game. The photograph, which at first glance seems to be beyond any suspicion, turns out to be an advanced transformation of Van Gogh's painting. However, Olek's picture is not an optical anamorphosis *sensu stricto*; it is rather a hazardous parody or stylization, which transforms an output that is definitely artistic into a documentary picture. A dose of defiance is also noticeable when the whole structure of the photo-text is taken into account: the straightforward, modest photograph, which only ostensibly plays a minor role next to the long ironic poem, might be interpreted as a key element thoughtfully engaged in a parodic strategy.

What appears to be highly relevant is that *Aladerrida* with the accompanying photograph refers not only to the philosophical message of *Truth in Painting* and Van Gogh's picture, but also to the reception and practices of translators and editors of Derrida's work which clearly become the objects of Różewicz and Olek's parody. The poet includes characteristic translator's explanations in brackets (which recall the original glosses) to inform the audience about homonymy, for example "lace (*le lacet*)"; "trap (also *le lacet*)" (Różewicz 2008: 101). Moreover, the whole photo-text alludes to the practice of including reproductions of multiple pictures in subsequent editions of *Truth in Painting*. Also included are reproductions of other Van Gogh's pictures of shoes, as well as surrealist works by René Magritte that depict shoes or feet (in fact Derrida mentions those paintings in his text). As a result, Jerzy Olek's photograph becomes a surprising and seemingly non-artistic conclusion of a refined, artistic visual sequence.



Tadeusz Różewicz's shoes, phot. J. Olek

Summing up, the aim of this article was to discuss photo-textuality functions operating on different levels based on the examples of three collaborative intermedial projects. The above analysis proved that when photo-textuality is simply understood as a compositional rule and a mode of arranging the layout governed by "twin" photo-textual strategies (filling the frame, cut and paste technique or allusions to absent texts and images), it is quite easy to identify the points of convergence of both components. However, when all unique perception rules of such bi-medial tandems are taken into account, all their new expressional possibilities and all twists and turns that occur when the reader/viewer tries to decipher the coherent message, the inevitable gap or specific "echospace" (Sebald, Köhler 2002: 49) between the two media, as well as photo-texts' instability, reveal their presence. All six authors, whose works were analysed in this article, prove their profound knowledge about the complicated nature of both media. This is why the three selected collaborative works could be interpreted as containing indirect, artistically expressed elements of meta-photo-literature.

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