

„Are You Affected by Time?”. The Photo-graphemicality of a Text on the Example of Tomasz Różycki’s *Las tropikalny**

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The book of poems *Kolonie* by Tomasz Różycki contains the following poem:

Kiedy dla mnie zatańczysz? Skończyło się lato,
wielkie desanty dmuchawców, zielona fabryka,
wchodząca nam do łóżka, brudząca nam życiem
pościel, ubrania, palce. Było tak bogato

i dzieci nam urosły, i wojnę ze światem
prowadziliśmy znowu, tak, jak to wynika
ze zdjęć, będąc po stronie świata. Czy dotyka
cię czas? Ze zdjęcia na zdjęcie, czy przypadkiem

nie znika jakiś drobny szczegół? I czy w końcu
tylko już tło zostanie? Robione pod słońce
fotografie z wesela. Poprawiny były
i jutro będą znowu, chociaż puste wszystkie

butelki ze złym winem i na dnie kieliszka
zawsze coś pozostaje, jakies fusy, miłość¹²

¹ Tomasz Różycki, “Las tropikalny,” in *Kolonie* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2007), 66.

² When will you dance for me? The summer is over,/ huge landing operations of dandelion clocks, a green factory,/ coming to our bed, smudging us with life/ bed sheets, clothes, fingers. It used to be so rich/ and our children grew up, and a war against the world/ we were waging again, as can be seen from/ photos, being on the world’s side. Are you affected/ by time? From one photo to another, is not by any chance/ some minor detail disappearing? And eventually/ will there only be the backdrop left? Taken in full sunlight/ wedding photos. Champagne breakfast took place/ and will take place tomorrow as well, although empty/ are all the bottles with bad wine and at the bottom of a glass/ there is always something left, some grounds, love. [translation mine, PZ]

In *Poezja bliska*, which is an introduction to the book *Obroty liter. Szkice o twórczości Tomasza Różyckiego*, Magdalena Rabizo-Birek places Różycki's work in the context of the Polish literary tradition in the following way:

Różycki is defined by critics with metaphorical quasi-terms, such as *o'harist classicist* (Karol Maliszewski) or *romantic classicist* (Magdalena Rabizo-Birek). He has also been considered to be the leading representative of "the school of picture", "the poetry of vision", the "encouraged imagination trend" in the poetry of 1970s (Marian Stala, Jakub Momro, Karol Maliszewski)³.

Among the topics undertaken by Różycki, the issue of Kresy, which is directly connected to his family history (they were relocated from around Lviv to Opole), takes a special place. In Różycki's poetry, the experience of longing and the sense of a lack of bond with the gesture of "«creating possible worlds»"⁴ (as put by Magdalena Piotrowska Grot, inspired by – among others – Edward W. Said), as well as the awareness that often the only things left to our disposal are "false maps" (Różycki's expression) are seen. Deciphering them grants access to another space: both oneiric as well as full of loneliness and the sense of loss.

The well-thought-out (or even sophisticated) structure of his books of poems are another characteristic feature of Różycki's poetics. *Kolonie*, which contains the poem *Las tropikalny*, is an excellent example; it contains 77 French sonnets, across which the phrase „Kiedy zaczynałem pisać, nie wiedziałem jeszcze”⁵ reoccurs almost in a chorus-like fashion. Its developments, as observed by Justyna Tabaczewska, are "an attempt at a consciously indefinite, inconclusive answer"⁶.

In her text discussing translation-related issues, Magdalena Drzęźła highlights the fact that this book of poems is in a way subordinated to the strangeness category, which is evident, for example, in the titles of individual poems⁷. Likewise, in the case of *Las tropikalny*, the title clearly evokes the contexts of travelling⁸. However, at the same time, the issue of unity in *Las tropikalny* goes beyond simple geographical relations, reaching the very core of human identity. It is contained in the experience of the passage of time, puberty- and ageing-related transformations, and the awareness of one's own mortality. All these problems are evident in the confrontation with old photographs.

³ Magdalena Rabizo-Birek, "Poezja bliska," in *Obroty liter. Szkice o twórczości Tomasza Różyckiego*, ed. Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel and Magdalena Rabizo-Birek (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS, 2019), 12.

⁴ Magdalena Piotrowska-Grot, "Po kolei wszystkie warianty," in *Obroty liter. Szkice o twórczości Tomasza Różyckiego*, ed. Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel and Magdalena Rabizo-Birek (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS, 2019), 119.

⁵ "When I was starting to write I was yet to learn..." [translation mine, PZ]. Importantly, there are seven poems containing this phrase.

⁶ Justyna Tabaczewska, "Powtórzenia i ponowienia,/. Tomasz Różycki a kwestia oryginalności," in *Obroty liter. Szkice o twórczości Tomasza Różyckiego*, ed. Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel and Magdalena Rabizo-Birek (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS, 2019), 171.

⁷ Magdalena Drzęźła, "O problemach tłumaczenia," *Kwartalnik Opolski : organ Opolskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk.*, no. 4 (2010): 174.

⁸ See Mira Rosenthal, "Teraźniejszość jako niekończąca się chwila wahania," in *Obroty liter. Szkice o twórczości Tomasza Różyckiego*, ed. Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel and Magdalena Rabizo-Birek, trans. Tomasz Bilczewski and Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS, 2019), 277–84.

The way in which Różycki introduces the photography motif into his poem seems to be especially interesting. Neither the title nor the first stanza – despite their somewhat “pictorial” character, a characteristic feature of this type poetry (as indicated by Magdalena Rabizobirek, following other critics) – seem to suggest the topic of the poem, although the tone of the whole text relies on it to a great extent. A photograph appears only midway through the second stanza, and the moment when this medium is first introduced coincides with the transformation of optics, employed by Różycki in the first part of the sonnet.

In his research into the visual aspects of literary texts, Edward Balcerzan used the term *visualism*, which he coined – as he highlighted – “*per analogiam* to such linguistic terms as vulgarisms, poetisms, technicisms, etc”⁹. The term was supposed to refer to “words and expressions from the lexical-phraseological level — belonging to linguistic representations of human visual experiences”¹⁰. Taking a similar path, I would like to propose using the term *photographemicality* (understood as a collection of characteristics indicating similarities between a text and a photography) and *photo-grapheme* (their individual textual realization). If *photographemicality* would refer to the whole text (or some of its parts), *photo-graphemes* would be the basic elements in which the relationship between the text and the photograph is evinced. If the chiasmus indicated by Adam Dziadek as a figure highlighting the relations between visual arts and literature¹¹ is accepted, then a *photo-grapheme* would be the knot in its heart, the central place, determining a “point of contact” between the two media.

Both proposed terms are clearly inspired by the Derridean “grammatology” categories. Obviously, Derrida’s definition of *grapheme* is significant here:

Gramme or *grapheme* — even before being determined as human [...] or nonhuman — would thus name the element. An element without simplicity. An element, whether it is understood as the medium or as the irreducible atom, of the arche-synthesis in general, of what one must forbid oneself to define within the system of oppositions of metaphysics, of what consequently one should not even call *experience* in general, that is to say the origin of *meaning* in general¹².

Referring to Derrida allows us to stress the “literateness” of registering pictures through photography, immersing it in the semiotics space. *Of Grammatology* by Derrida decentralizes the “phono-centric” language model, redirecting attention to visual, material traces of texts.

Lee Edelman used Derrida’s categories in a similar way – although completely different from the conceptual perspective – in his *Homographesis*. When quoting a paper by Marie-Rose Logan, he observes that:

⁹ Edward Balcerzan, “Widzialne i niewidzialne w sztuce słowa,” in *Kulturowe wizualizacje doświadczenia*, ed. Włodzimierz Bolecki and Adam Dziadek (Warszawa: Instytut badań literackich : Fundacja „Centrum międzynarodowych badań polonistycznych”, 2010), 489.

¹⁰ Balcerzan, “Widzialne i niewidzialne w sztuce słowa.”

¹¹ See Adam Dziadek, *Obrazy i wiersze: z zagadnień interferencji sztuk w polskiej poezji współczesnej* (Katowice: Wyd. Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2011), 16.

¹² Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore; London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 9.

[...] Logan defines "graphesis" as the "nodal point of the articulation of a text", that "de-limits the locus where the question of writing is raised" and "de-scribes the action of writing as it actualizes itself in the text independently of the notion of intentionality"¹³. Following, that is, from Derrida's post-Saussurean characterization of writing as a system of "différance" that operates without positive terms and endlessly defers the achievement of identity as self-presence, the "graphesis", the entry into writing, that "homographesis" would hope to specify is not only one which "homosexual identity" is deferentially conceptualized by a heterosexual culture as something legibly written on the body, but also one in which the meaning of "homosexual identity" itself is determined through its assimilation to the position of writing with the tradition of Western metaphysics"¹⁴.

In the case of the photographic "graphesis", I am mostly interested in the issue of "de-scription", an inseparable element of registering an image. This value is encoded already in the etymology of the word denominating that medium, coined by John Herschel (*photo* – referring to light, *graphie* – writing). This also allows us to highlight the common "ancestry" of writing and photographic images, as well as demonstrate parallels between those two ways of recording reality, including in the context of technological transformations.

Lee Edelman described the relations between the notion of writing and the act of writing (of course, taking from Derrida):

[...] "writing", especially when taken as a gerund that approximates the meaning of "graphesis", functions to articulate identity only in relation to signs that are structured, as Derrida puts it, by their "non-self-identity". Writing, therefore, though it marks or describes those differences upon which the specification of identity depends, works simultaneously, as Logan puts it, to "de-scribe", efface, or undo identity by framing difference as the misrecognition of a "différance", whose negativity, whose purely relational articulation, calls into question the possibility of any positive presence or discrete identity. Like writing, then, homographesis would name a double operation: one serving the ideological purposes of a conservative social order intent on codifying identities in its labor of disciplinary inscription, and the other resistant to that categorization, intent on *de*-scribing the identities that order has so oppressively *inscribed*¹⁵.

Although in the case of photography the issue of (mechanical) record naturally comes to the fore, the transposition of this medium in the modern Polish poetry also carries some identity value, especially when considering the community-based aspect of the digital breakthrough. As Catherina Malabou observes, "according to the ontology of the graph, the source [...] can only be imagined in terms of a trace, i.e. its own inner difference"¹⁶ — with its primordially over form¹⁷. The physicality aspect is also interesting in terms of photo-graphemicality; after all, the *machines de vision* are only an extension of the eye or the hand (as Paul Virilio would like them to).

¹³Marie-Rose Logan, "Graphesis...", *Yale French Studies* 52, no. 4 (1975): 12.

¹⁴Lee Edelman, *Homographesis*. (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), 9.

¹⁵Ibidem

¹⁶Catherine Malabou, *Plastyczność u zmięczeniu pisma: dialektyka, destrukcja, dekonstrukcja*, trans. Piotr Skalski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2018), 109.[translation mine, PZ]

¹⁷Malabou, 25.

The aim of the proposed terms is to make it easier to define any kind of relationships – semantic, as well as formal or stylistic – connecting the way of expressing poetic thoughts and the creation of a picture (both analog and digital). Thus, by their very definition, they are broader than Balcerzan's *visualisms*.

The scope of the term *photo-grapheme* is not limited by directly expressed references (including those which are characterized by ekphrasis, especially clear in the case of texts referring to this medium already in their titles), or by using specific imagery related to photography (referring to the way of cropping the image or the game between the presence and absence of the photographed figure). Photo-graphemes can be found in all layers of a text (not to say: in all Ingarden's layers of a text) – also in those connected with its formal shape. They can emphasize the individual features of a photograph or a whole group of features, also combining terms which would seem to contradict each other.

However, not all photo-graphemes are equally clear. Some of them seem to be obvious already after a cursory reading, such as those which refer directly to specific photographs. Others become visible only during interpretation, being in a way dependent from others, and thus "stronger". This relation is especially clear in the formal layer of a text. For example, using an enjambment is not in itself a photo-grapheme. However, in some cases, when this stylistic device coexists with other, self-evident photo-graphemes, it also becomes one. Hence, I use the term "basic photo-grapheme", which channels the whole interpretation, putting the text in the right "light". Individual photo-graphemes interact with each other, creating networks of dependencies, comprising the photo-graphematicity of a given text.

In the case of Różycki's poem, the basic photo-grapheme appears midway through the second stanza, when photographs are first incorporated into the text. The aim of these photographs is to testify to a personal struggle with the world. What is important, Różycki does not define what exactly they show: there is no detailed information regarding the composition of the photograph or the identity of the people it shows¹⁸. The lack of a clear visual reference to the photograph makes us (according to the directly expressed declaration) see it first of all as a document, not an object that can be aesthetically evaluated. This picture, although it is not directly described, is the only record which could testify to the past. Such a textual presentation of photographs, in which the visual form of the picture is, in a way, put into brackets, paradoxically brings this medium closer to linguistic forms of expression. As Derrida stresses, "The first writing is thus a painted image. [...] The two were at first intermingled: a closed and mute system within which speech had as yet no right of entry and which was shielded from all other symbolic investment"¹⁹. At the same time, an "annulment" of the picture's visuality of a sort, which is conducted here by Różycki, highlights the schematicity of souvenir photos (he seems to be saying that it is so strong that there is no point in providing their literary characteristic).

¹⁸Only in the third stanza is the expression "photographs" (a photo-grapheme) described more precisely as "wedding photos", which – although still not very informative – allows us to understand the photos through some convention.

¹⁹Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 396.

Recognizing oneself in a photograph gives the photographic record a strong identity value, which is almost inscriptive. In the case of this medium, this identity is reduced to the recognition of a face. As noted by Hans Belting in *An Anthropology of Images*, "The analogy of the body and the picture, enhanced by the photography to the body index (Ch. S. Pierce) relied not only on the trust in the reality of the body, but also on the faith that the real body can represent the person whom it embodies"²⁰. Hence the expression "as can be seen from/ photos", which makes us see the photo first of all as one of the strongest possible ways of attesting to the past (becoming somewhat opposite to the human memory, which is unreliable and subjective almost by its definition), and at the same time, it makes the photographs legible signs of human presence, which – as Anna Łebkowska put it, "[...] in their immobility, in their function indicate *this is* and *that was* – they reveal a trace of what is completely beyond capturing"²¹.

The metaphor of a war against the world is interesting in the context of photography as a medium. Its dramatic tension is highlighted not only by using military vocabulary (for instance, "landing operations of dandelion clocks"), but also through the opposition of stability and dynamics, deeply rooted in the photographic vision of the world. Insofar as the vision described in the first stanza (despite some reservations²²) is marked with a natural movement, the appearance of photographs in the poem seems to stop the picture, transforming the text's character from clearly descriptive to an almost philosophical reflection²³ (highlighted by several rhetorical questions). Xavier Farré, while discussing (among others) another poem, *Zapach*, from Różycki's book of poems *Litery*, stressed that:

In Różycki, apart from freezing the image, which would be an example of an *ekphrasis* of a sort, the word sets the blind field in motion and starts living beyond the frame. That is where the reflection upon language is, where the past of the poet and his loved ones are connected, where the whole poetic world exists, where the path to self-determination among what is visible and invisible, among that is defined, and what is theoretically impossible to define²⁴.

The clearly photographic metaphor of frame (which Farré refers to also in the title of the quoted paper), allows for the definition of the literary game between what is available directly and what is hidden in an interpretative gesture. Likewise, in *Las tropikalny*, there is an opposition of motion and motionlessness. As Hans Finsler put it, "Photography is motionlessness. It stops the current of life"²⁵. The experience of this "stopped current" seems to be clearly encoded in this poem. Such a layout of text can also be considered a photo-grapheme.

²⁰Hans Belting, *Antropologia obrazu. Szkice do nauki o obrazie*, trans. Mariusz Bryl (Kraków: Tow. Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2007), 135. [translation mine, PZ]

²¹Anna Łebkowska, "Fotografia jako empatyczna mediacja," in *Intersemiotyczność: literatura wobec innych sztuk (i odwrotnie)*, ed. Stanisław Balbus, Andrzej Hejmej, and Jakub Niedźwiedź (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych "Universitas," 2004), 126, <http://books.google.com/books?id=EYAZAQAIAAJ>.

²²Also, the first verse of the poem is static. The opening question "When will you dance for me?" seems to be an attempt at setting a stagnate world in motion. The phrases "the summer is over" or "our children grew up" should be read in the same way, as they express the awareness of some *przesilenie*, *tożsame* with (to follow Różycki's rhetoric) the autumn of life.

²³The line of this division obviously belongs to the genre characteristic of a sonnet.

²⁴Xavier Farré, "Kilka kadrów z wierszy Tomasza Różyckiego," in *Obroty liter: Szkice o twórczości Tomasza Różyckiego*, ed. Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel and Magdalena Rabizo-Birek (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS, 2019), 115.

²⁵Hans Finsler, *Das Bild der Photographie* (Zurich: Conzett & Huber, 1964), 2–54. [translation mine, PZ]

The contradistinction of motion and motionlessness is related to the registered passage of time, and, as such, of evanescence. The war described by Różycki is a part of this issue, which takes the form of the daily fight with time (in which – as Wisława Szymborska wrote – „śmierć / zawsze o tę chwilę przybywa spóźniona”²⁶). In *Las tropikalny*, this has both existential and generational dimensions. Although the division into two “sides” of a conflict seems to be clear, there is an obvious paradox to it: “a war with the world/ we were waging again, [...] being on the world’s side”. The passage of time would be the change dividing the two ways of seeing reality, registered in a photograph; forcing one to take the side of young rebels only to set the rules for younger generations. The irreversible loss of youth is one of the major topics in *Kolonie*. „Zakopaliśmy nasze dzieciństwo / to już kwestia religii”²⁷, as he wrote in *Przylądek Horn* from the same book of poems. The title of the book of poems refers not only to faraway countries or the process of gaining new territories, but also to traveling on a micro scale, characteristic for childhood²⁸. The photographs which appear in *Las tropikalny* may testify to it.

Roland Barthes in his famous *Camera Lucida* wrote: “Each act of reading a photograph, and we have billions of them every day all around the world, each act of taking and reading a picture is a direct and suppressed contact with what is no more, i.e. death”²⁹. The problem of evanescence is also expressed *explicite* by asking “Are you affected/ by time?”. This sentence can be understood not only as a way of raising an existential question, but also as a photo-grapheme based on relating to the experience of communing³⁰ with a copy of a photograph. A slightly oxymoronic expression „the touch of time” would be the same as the touch of a person examining their own photos after many years³¹. This process – deeply rooted in the somatic experience – would have to be treated as analogous with the eyes meeting of the person watching a photo and the person that photo presents, as described by Barthes.

At the same time, this photo-grapheme introduces an aspect of materiality and a photographic picture, ascribed to a paper copy, but reduced in the case of digital reproduction techniques. In *Fotografia. Forma życia jako żałoby*, Marcela Kościańczuk interprets Barthes’s understanding of a strong relation between the physicality of a picture with the somatics of human existence, and at the same time the experience of death:

The form, i.e. the body of a photo, indicates, denotes one’s own frailty, fragility, imperfection. It proclaims its own emptiness, constantly prophesies the failure in the realization of the subject’s

²⁶Wisława Szymborska, “O śmierci bez przesady,” in *Widok z ziarnkiem piasku: 102 wiersze* (Kraków: Wydawn. a5, 2002), 107–8. “Death/ is always a moment late” [translation mine, PZ]

²⁷Tomasz Różycki, “Przylądek Horn,” in *Kolonie* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2007), 12. “We buried our childhood/ it is a question of religion” [translation mine, PZ]

²⁸Such poems from *Kolonie* as *Rajska plaża*, *Węgorze elektryczne*, *Przylądek Horn* and many others indicate this interpretation. See M. Drzęźła, *op. cit.*

²⁹Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: The Noonday Press, 2012), 83. [translation mine, PZ].

³⁰An element of “strangeness”, clearly highlighted by Różycki, is immanently hidden in this expression.

³¹“Dotykam twojego zdjęcia. Przykładam je do czoła jak jasnowidz / tropiący ciała zaginionych.” (“I am touching your photograph. I press it against my forehead like a clairvoyant/ searching for the bodies of missing persons” — as Mariusz Więcek wrote in a text referring to a similar experience. Mariusz Więcek, “Robię Ci zoom i zachwykam się,” in *Equilibrium* (Sopot: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Sopotu, 2009), 49.

longevity. At the same time a photograph announces its death, becomes an omen of the inevitable, perhaps – paradoxically – getting some more vital energy in this way. The reader who rebels against death – or quite to the opposite, one that accepts the end foreshadowed by bodily transformations or the deadness of a photograph, has a chance to appreciate the transition moment expressing the dynamics of vitality and recognizable only when confronted with the consistency of an object³².

Różycki's clear photo-graphemic juxtaposition of an image's motionlessness recorded in a photograph with the dynamic natural world seems to have a similar value.

The transformations taking place on the surface of a photograph are also significant: "From one photo to another, is not by any chance/ some minor detail disappearing? And eventually/ will there only be the backdrop left?". The photo-graphemic record of the fading process not only refers to the technical problem regarding the loss of details, but it is also a handy metaphor of the human memory, in which individual faces or events gradually disappear. The "writing" of a photography seems to be unreliable, and the symbols of which an image consists blur. The Derridean trace of the human presence is only slightly more permanent than this presence. The loss of a photo is also painful because it is the only object which could testify to the events that it recorded.

In the case of *Las tropikalny*, the fading process goes beyond the scope of one photograph. Różycki clearly presents a series of photos here, each separated from the others by some amount of time. From one photo to another, the image of the photographed person is transferred, undergoing stronger and stronger transformations, stemming from the inevitability of the transience process. Subsequent photos, as in a time-lapse movie, document not only weddings and funerals, but also, predominantly, the ageing of the human face, the changes it undergoes (coexisting with those that take place on the surface of the photograph). The process of "transmitting" the image from one photo to another – being almost a photo-copy – causes a systematic loss of details and nuances, which blur with each attempt at recording them. "And eventually/ will there only be the backdrop left?", Różycki asks. An empty photo, showing just a backdrop³³, becomes an extremely telling testament of human evanescence.

The "minor detail" which Różycki asks about, which is gradually more blurred in each subsequent copy, would be the most important element of the photographic record. After all, it is the only sign to which the author directly pays attention. However, he refers to features which are not defined in the text, functioning in Barthes's "third sense"³⁴. This symbol, escaping its own original context, puncturing like a *punctum*, would contain the essence of human identity.

³²Marcela Kościńczuk, "Fotografia. Forma życia jako żałoby," in *Imperium Rolanda Barthes'a*, ed. Anna Grzegorzczak et al. (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2016), 266.

³³The empty backdrop (a photo-grapheme) clearly refers to many artistic projects which describe human evanescence in a similar way – such as a photographic series by Ken Griffiths, showing the same couple in front of a house over many years.

³⁴See for example Dziadek, *Obrazy i wiersze*, 190.

In *L'excès du visible*, Edouard Pontremoli wrote: "In order to approach the understanding of the essence of photography, we need to accept the photographic value as unclear, since this graphy is not realized with a free human hand"³⁵. In the mechanical process of creating an image, the human "hand" (which indeed would be difficult to define as "free") indeed seems to play only a secondary role³⁶. However, this does not mean that the process of copying a photograph is completely technical. Photographs, which are the basic photo-graphemes of the third stanza (contained in the phrase "Taken in full sunlight/ wedding photos"), are also clearly imperfect; not only because of the gradual fading of the image, but also because they were taken by a man. The rookie mistake of taking a photo in full sunlight causes a partial loss of the recorded image; some signs which should be contained in the photo are lost forever.

The photographic record which appears in Różycki's poem seems to be marked with emptiness in many respects: be it due to overexposure (which happened at the very moment of recording the photo), or due to the transience of photos, or the blurring of photographed figures. The photograph becomes branded with absence – like in another poem from *Kolonie*, in which we read: "Stare filmy i zdjęcia, pełna ich jest pustka, / i szafa i szuflada"³⁷. This game of presence and absence, immanently inscribed into the notion of photography, gains its new counterpart in the final verses of *Las tropikalny*:

[...] Champagne breakfast took place
and will take place tomorrow as well, although empty
are all the bottles with bad wine and at the bottom of a glass
there is always something left, some grounds, love

Empty wine bottles seem to be the same souvenirs of past events as the imperfect photos.

In her famous book *On Photography*, Susan Sontag wrote:

Poetry's commitment to concreteness and to the autonomy of the poem's language parallels photography's commitment to pure seeing. Both imply discontinuity, disarticulated forms and compensatory unity: wrenching things from their context (to see them in a fresh way), bringing things together elliptically, according to the imperious but often arbitrary demands of subjectivity.³⁸

The method of constructing literary pictures in Różycki's poem should be treated in the same way. The objects which he lists in the final verse are taken out of their context, like in the cropping process, directing the recipient towards (seemingly irrelevant) details. The "subjective cri-

³⁵Edouard Pontremoli, *Nadmiar widzialnego fenomenologiczna interpretacja fotogeniczności*, trans. Marian Leon Kalinowski (Gdańsk: Wydawn. Słowo, Obraz Terytoria, 2006), 9. [translation mine, PZ]

³⁶While taking a photo the human hand-sets in motion numerous physical, chemical and information (in the case of digital photography) processes. To put it simply, in the case of an automated creation the details of individual hand movements do not really influence the photograph (although an amateur hand can "ruin" a photo, for example by making it blurred). This method of creation seems to be remote from drawing or painting, where each gesture, the direction of the strokes, as well as how hard the pencil is pressed against the paper, the angle, etc. are all directly reflected.

³⁷Tomasz Różycki, "Ziemia ognista," in *Kolonie* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2007), 46. "Old films and photos, the emptiness is full of them, / and the closet, and the drawer." [translation mine, PZ]

³⁸Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 2005), 83.

teria of seeing the world" would also include the use of enjambment – analogous to the "clean cut" cropped photograph. Such a way of constructing a poem (although obviously observable also in texts which do not refer to photography) would also be considered to be a photo-grapheme in this context – understood as the meeting point between two neighboring media. The snapshot-like character of images in the first stanza should be interpreted in the same way.

Objects which – as if with the use of a photographic ZOOM – Różycki points out are supposed to prove that the loss of meaning of life inscribed into the final verse of the poem cannot be complete; "there is always something left". In *Nie bez reszty* Tadeusz Sławek asks "What is "the rest"? [...] Let's say what «the rest» is not. Suggestion number one: it is not what we push away from ourselves as unimportant, what lies beyond the scope of our interests"³⁹. The rudimentariness of "the rest" clearly (and somewhat paradoxically) relates to – as highlighter by Sławek – the metaphor of a garbage dump, where objects which are in a situation of "transition, transit"⁴⁰ end up. In Różycki's poem, grounds, garbage, shreds of emotions, distant echoes of past events become "the rest"— making it possible to reminisce. Listing love among all those things highlights the significance of this feeling in an ironic way.

Taking into account this context, let us go back to Tadeusz Sławek, who finished his book *Nie bez reszty* with the following conclusion:

The memory inevitably comes back, but this is no longer the memory which I manage. It does not have the character of an archive, from which we can freely, always retrieve a given document of a memory. I must admit that this is not *my* memory – which is only a step away from admitting that it has its own mechanisms and longings, which will not subordinate to my wishes⁴¹.

This memory is in a way autonomous, free from the human will. It is very often set in motion by old photographs, "puncturing" Barthes's *punctum*. A very similar mechanism makes it possible that "champagne breakfast took place/ and will take place tomorrow as well ", whereas time, measured by the rhythm of subsequent analogous events, seems to go around in circles. Photo-graphemic poems are mostly a textual record of such experiences.

Photo-graphemicality should be regarded as a group of traits functioning on different textual levels. However, introducing the medium of photography into literature does not always have a form of a direct reference. In *Las tropikalny*, apart from such references, there is also a number of photo-graphemes, which allow for the extraction of the features of this medium and the transmission of it on the poetic ground – from the "touch of time" metaphor inscribed in them, to the construction of the poem, highlighting the issue of motion and motionlessness, or the functioning of a photo frame. Without pointing them out, it is difficult to fully reconstruct the relationships connecting literature with photography.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

³⁹Tadeusz Sławek, *Nie bez reszty: o potrzebie niekompletności* (Mikołów: Instytut Mikołowski, 2018), 5.

⁴⁰Sławek, 200.

⁴¹Sławek, 202.

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ABSTRACT:

The paper is an attempt at analyzing the intertextual relations between literature and photography. In order to extract them, the notions of textual “photo-graphematicity” (understood as a number of features indicating similarities between a text and a photograph) and “photo-grapheme” (their individual textual realization), inspired by Derridean “grammatological” categories. Their functioning in a poetic text is presented using the example of *Las tropikalny* by Tomasz Różycki.

Polish literature

poetry

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