

Interventional Aspects of Reportage Photography

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ABSTRACT

Scientific objective: Multifaceted analysis of mechanisms of media coverage of journalistic photography in the perspective of its interventional character. The author discusses the significance of the intervention function in photodocumented visual representations in the context of contamination of the meanings of cultural and social codes. She emphasizes that in media studies, journalistic photography can be used to study the impact of the media on recipients through emotionality, persuasiveness, and appellative character. **Research methods:** The author decodes the content of journalistic photography in the context of metonymic and synecdoche-like signs, which are correlated with the functional-pragmatic approach to these media messages. **Results and conclusions:** The interventional character of reportage photography is usually a potential value; it can increase awareness and social responsibility. Photodocumentaries with distinct interventional character also play the socially activating role for the recipients. However, the primary goal of journalism interventional photography is primarily to repair existing reality and prevent negative social phenomena. **Cognitive value:** The problem of interventional character in photographic media was rarely addressed in socio-cultural research. The study on the intervention of mass media photodocuments is part of a wider discussion on the interpretation of visual culture in the context of receptive social resonance.

KEYWORDS

photodocumentary, photography, intervention, media, visuality



In contemporary culture, dominated by the message of visual media, the cognitive sphere of a photodocument, in the form of individual frames or a series of photos—photojournalism, is often distinguished by an indicator of intervention. The photo's role presented above the story of its protagonist is to sensitize the recipient to the phenomena and social problems represented in it. These are stories about famous people, anonymous but interesting people, unknown people, but typical of a particular trend, phenomenon in society and people presenting an abstract theme, illustrating a certain idea (Kobre, 2011). The stories depicted constitute interesting "photographic scenarios" inspiring social imagination. What is more, "intensive contact with existing photographic materials, for example, press, reportages, and photographic essays, makes us sensitive to [...] aspects of the social world" (Sztompka, 2005, p. 8). A social photodocument has become an important factor in learning about the present day. Its beginnings were primarily aimed at intervention and popularization of the problem, combining documentary record with rhetorical persuasion techniques and aesthetic and artistic elements (Niedzielski, 1966, p. 821).

A photodocument can be used in social sciences as an autonomous statement or documentary material, the analysis of which will allow to recognize social behavior patterns, interpersonal communication, and value systems (e.g. André, 2007; Barthes, 2008; Goban-Klas, 2009; Jeffrey, 2009; Krajewski, 2014; Lethen, 2016; Rose, 2009; Sztompka, 2012; Wolny-Zmorzyński, 2007, 2010). In media studies, however, journalism photography can be used to study the multifaceted impact of media coverage on recipients through emotionality, persuasiveness, appellative and interventional character. Performing an important role among images mediating contact with the real world (Sztompka, 2005, p. 15), it repeatedly replaced its linguistic description, even becoming a substitute for reality, because, as Susan Sontag notes: "Often something disturbs us more in photographed form than it does when we actually experience it" (Sontag, 1986, p. 168).

The first contact of the recipient with the photo is his / her recognition of realistic image references. It is only the next stage of perception to discover the meanings and ideas resulting from artistic and media interventions. The realistic reception is followed by intellectual reflection, which prompts one to move away from veristic associations, to look for new cultural and social meanings (Potocka, 2010, p. 49; Wolny-Zmorzyński, 2010).

The stories depicted also draw attention of the photojournalist's personal involvement in the story captured in one frame, which usually takes the form of participatory observation, sometimes also partial creation of events.

The authors of the photos, by fragmenting the reality, try to show the story kept in freeze frames in such a way as to intrigue the viewer and attract his / her attention. It is worth noting that individual documentary photographs can function nowadays as transmedia images and be distributed in many media at the same time. For this reason, the text accompanying a documentary photo can change its form or even separate from all text forms (title, date, signature, information about what the photo presents or under what circumstances it was taken). The image then remains autonomous, forcing the recipient to become familiar with the photograph without verbal context. But a photographer can also manipulate photos in various ways by sending a clear message to the recipient so that he / she reads the story in accordance with his / her intention. Reception of the recipient becomes partially limited and to some extent controlled by preceding selection processes carried out by the author (photographer) and the sender (medium).

Reading the meanings contained in photography and photojournalism, which perform an intervention function, requires the use of tools that enable decoding of signs and the relationships between them organized in images. The proper key for deciphering complicated polyiconic semantics seems to be semiology creating standards of conduct for the description of metonymic and synecdoche-like connotative signs (Rose, 2009, pp. 114–115). In contrast,

intersemiotic analysis (Chandler, 2011) will make it possible to reach the ideological sphere of images constituted in the symbolic layer, giving in the final process the impetus for analysis and interpretation of iconographic reception.

Photodocuments and Interventions

Intervention in journalistic photography can be manifested in a concrete dimension when its consequence is a change in non-media reality, a solution to a problem fixed in visual, textual or mixed form. It is worth noting, however, that interventional character can also take the form of a camouflage. At the time, it mainly consists of reevaluating the stereotypical judgments and opinions of recipients. The intervention in this case is already the very taking up of the topic by the reporter and drawing the public's attention to the individual or social problem. In another variant, the illocutionary aspect (e.g. in the form of a request, appeal, call for help) is not entered directly in the image or text, which means that the perlocutionary aspect is not fully anticipated by the sender (Szcześniak, 2016, pp. 184-186). This usually happens in the case of photography and photoreportage.

Considering dictionary definitions of the term "intervention" draws attention to one of the meanings that accumulates the photojournalist's intentions. This term functions in the media as an intervention illustrated by the author's involvement, exerting influence on someone in order to achieve a specific effect (Doroszewski, 1961, p. 247; Sobol, 2002, p. 278). Because the image has great persuasive potential, it supports intervention assumptions. In reportage as a hybrid, multi-media genre, the pragmatic aspect focuses on relationships, mutual influences (perlocutionary factor), and even permeation of the roles of the sender, protagonist, and recipient as well as the persuasive and intervention function of the message. The cognitive aspect includes the subject, the ways of its presentation, the presented world, hierarchy of values, and gradation of points of view. These elements are particularly important for the genre of feature (photodocumentary) and reportage (i.e. photojournalism, i.e. stories about what really happened). The perspective of seeing events and problems, their axiology, juxtaposition or collision of different points of view are crucial role in the metamorphoses of modern photojournalism and its geological evolution.

Photographs with an intervention function, as well as interventional photojournalism, represent a specific type of journalism in which the author-creator quite often consciously does not respect the principles of objectivity, typicality, and neutrality (Lethen, 2016, pp. 172-191). Photojournalists in their photodocuments most often depict the brutal side of life. As Ryszard Kapuściński wrote in *Lapidaria*: "Evil is more photogenic, fascinating, it absorbs completely" (Kapuściński, 1997, p. 122). The good of a protagonist is not always taken into account by a photographer, ethical doubts may also be raised by the way information is obtained and the circumstances in which the photographic material is created. In connection with the publication of photos of suffering and death, especially children, in the mass media, accusations against photojournalists of not complying with journalistic ethics code, objectifying the protagonists of photographs and using their difficult situation for spectacular success are constantly recurring. Photographers working for mass media are also accused of not respecting human privacy and intimacy, all the more so because the protagonists of documentary photography are often socially marginalized, excluded, unaware of their rights. The author of a photo or photoreportage with interventional character should pay attention not to harm the protagonist and not compromise the principle of ethical responsibility of a journalist (Kwiatkowski, 2003, p. 73).

Photojournalists, primarily exposing the intervention and persuasive potential of their material, can play different roles in selected media genres. Quite often, they become victims' spokesmen, calling for help, or prosecutors. Photographer can also realize his / her documentation

from the position of insider, i.e. a member of the photographed community, through participatory observation or created photojournalism. An example is the story of the fight against breast cancer told by photographer Anna Wells as a kind of visual self-experiment. In contrast, the photojournalist-outsider maintains a distance from the observed human stories, conducting external observation from the perspective of a researcher, e.g. an anthropologist.

A photojournalist undertaking an intervention is exposed to the same risk as the author of texts on social issues. It is easy to take a subjective position in this type of message, which will be related to commenting or even assessing the described conflicts. Photoreportages with interventional character, due to the circumstances of their creation and later functioning in social circulation, often come close to investigative journalism. Sometimes a photo that intrigues or arouses strong social criticism becomes an excuse for a reporter's investigation, and thus the kind of journalism that has the greatest impact and evokes changes in non-media reality. It is worth noting that documentary photographs with a persuasive-intervention dimension activate the control function of public opinion. However, the correct goal of intervention journalism remains, first and foremost, repairing existing reality and preventing negative social phenomena.

In various currents of professional 20th-century photography, artistic and documentary photography have gained the most popularity. The dissonance between objective and subjective learning of the truth has now become a fundamental epistemological dilemma. It is also worth emphasizing that at the end of the century, the ambitions of many photographers focused on combining the intervention function with aesthetic and cognitive ones. However, the undesirable result of the tendency to over-aestheticize the photographic documented reality was the widespread use of shock rhetoric and the treatment of suffering only to shake public opinion and move the recipient. In this way, tabloid aesthetics in photography (in accordance with the principle "Blood should be on the front page"), signed with known names of photojournalists, were created.

"It is not known where documentary photography ends and where voyeurism and preying on someone else's harm, misery or pain begins. It happens that the most moving war photos or those taken in areas affected by natural disasters, causing indignation or rousing people to great deeds in the framework of assistance or saving endangered lives, arise in, say, discussion." (Kwiatkowski, 2003, p. 80)

Decoding Meanings of Visual Representations

Analyzing the methodology of visual culture research, Gillian Rose (2007, pp. 101–134) distinguishes semiology as a method applicable in social science and media studies. The researcher draws attention to the analysis of meanings, because in her opinion:

"Photography thus raises some specific questions in relations to semiology, and these have methodological implications. Is the analytical language of signs adequate to the task of elucidating the impact of photographs? or is some notion necessary, like the *punctum* or 'feel' of an image or its 'expressive content'; which lies beyond the field of its meaning?" (Rose, 2007, p. 117)

It is worth responding to these suggestions in the context of analyzing selected photos that caused a wide resonance of public opinion. However, due to the formal requirements of publication, intersemiotic analysis will be limited to only selected aspects of signs and selected photographic material. A representative example of the problem of intervention is the photography of Kevin Carter, made in Sudan during the famine in 1993.



Fig. 1. Kevin Carter, “Starving Child and Vulture,” Sudan 1993

Source: <http://100photos.time.com/photos/kevin-carter-starving-child-vulture>

Recipients gave this photograph a more realistic title: “The Vulture and the Little Girl.” The picture kept in the naturalistic-biological metaphor is part of the often used (and equally often awarded) motif of photojournalism in the theme of death (and even the so-called final moments) and children’s suffering. However, photography is an ambiguous, polysemous image that carries a multitude of potential meanings that depend on the visual sensitivity of the recipient. Intersemiotic analysis assumes the transition from the documentary reception of the image to its symbolic and even unreal interpretation based on cultural and historical contexts (Kuhn, 2011; Ochnio, 2015, p. 46). Viewers may not be limited to passive reception, denoting the meanings contained in this photograph, but actively participate in modifying or creating new semantic fields. In the case of this photography, the recipients reacted expressively, demanding information about the girl’s further fate and what the photojournalist did to help the girl.

The image contains metonymic and synecdoche-like connotative signs. Carter waited to capture the moment at which the vulture would attack the child. Guided by the principle of the decisive moment, according to Henri Cartier-Bresson, he wanted to photograph the “living” allegory of death—a black bird covering a dying man with outstretched wings. In the cultural tradition, the image of a dark bird, usually a vulture, has symbolic functions. In ancient Egyptian iconography, the guardian of the dying goddess Nechbet, who would lead them to eternal life, assumed the form of a vulture with outstretched wings. In Greek mythology, however, this motif is combined with the Promethean myth, the theme of suffering and the dedication of the individual to the good of all. In the context of the Promethean symbolism of the picture presented by Carter, it can be assumed that the naturalistic depiction of the death of one anonymous child

contributed to saving many lives from hunger death. It is also worth mentioning another tradition, the Tibetan, in which the dead are folded on the mountain slopes so that the vultures devour their bodies. On the other hand, as a connotative sign, the child is associated with the future, hope, and rebirth. In the case of Carter's photo, we are dealing with an inverted metonymic sign, because the dying girl symbolizes the lack of a future here. If we still treat this image as a synecdoche-like sign, then it becomes a symbol of the lack of future for all suffering African children.

In one of the interviews, the author of the photo admitted that he observed the girl's agony for several hours. He published his material in *The New York Times*, receiving the Pulitzer Prize for it. At that time, his confession was recalled, which caused condemnation and criticism of public opinion and initiated a discourse centered on the ethics of the creation process, the role of photojournalists sometimes referred to as "death paparazzi," as well as their responsibility towards the protagonists of the photographs. The problem of implementing the intervention function also raised controversy. Questions arose about what is more important—the fate of one anonymous man (in this case, the intervention was fully dependent on the actions of the photojournalist, eyewitness, and sole observer) or maybe the intervention should be carried out by the work itself, which was supposed to move public opinion, taking the story an unknown child as an interpretation of the collective fate of the African people. Carter's photo was intended to provoke a response on a scale significant to the larger community affected by the natural disaster. Considering the intervention effect of this photograph, it must be admitted that its publication and repeated reproduction in mass media resulted in a significant, but short-term increase in the financial outlays of governments, NGOs, and individual donors to help the hungry.

In the context of interpreting this photo, the discussion on the role of the creator itself also seems justified: Who is he and who should he be—a recorder of reality, its translator or maybe a demiurge, a creator of collective imagination? Carter is now considered to be the idol of those who photograph but do not understand what they see. "Vultures" are called those journalists who prey on human suffering and tragedy in order to gain publicity and awards.

Another photo of this artist may become a reverse in the discussion on the ethics of photojournalists and the impact of their photographic documentaries. This photography is so suggestive that it doesn't even allow thoughts of fiction. The photo taken by Carter in South Africa in the mid-eighties shows an extremely cruel type of lynching (so-called necklacing).

In this case, the author previously learned about the planned crime. He hoped that maybe he could photograph the moment of execution, "a human torch." Carter followed the killers without trying to prevent the crime in any way. The process of creating a photo illustrates the dilemmas of modern photojournalism, provoking a question about what is most important—save someone's life or take a picture and show this tragic event to the world? An important issue in the context of illustrated interventionism is also the question about the missionary nature of the journalistic profession. To what extent should he remain passive, not engage in extreme situations? Some reporters, however, operate from an anesthetic positions, focused on achieving the intended goal.



Fig. 2. Kevin Carter, “Necklacing Execution,” South Africa around 1984

Source: https://kevincarterpresentation.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/2007111100_necklacing_execution51.jpg

Another picture of human tragedy is the picture of Frank Fournier in the media under the informal title of “Omayra.”

The photo was taken in 1985, after the eruption of a volcano in Colombia, as a result of which nearly a quarter of a million people lost their lives. Fournier’s photo showing a child in the last hours of her life is a shocking photographic portrait, conscious removal of a specific moment from the scale of mental agitation, also important for purely media reasons, belonging only to photography, as “negating transience” (Potocka, 2010). The child’s figure, interpreted as a synecdoche-like sign, symbolizes the tragedy of thousands of victims. Lasting sixty hours, the agony of the girl trapped in the collapse was broadcast live by global television stations. However, this picture of Fournier became the image most often cited in appeals for help to the victims of the tragedy in Columbia. The moving “pre-death portrait” in the center of the frame depicts a girl dipped up to her neck in dirty water. The viewer’s attention is mainly caught by the black eyes of the child and her dead hands. The author has not made any color modifications. Omayra’s terrifying eye color was caused by a blood infection, a sepsis that attacked her body. Among the audience, the intensity of Omayra’s gaze aroused very strong emotions, sometimes evoking symbolic associations with the demon. Audiences’ observations confirm the ability to read and interpret photography, which goes far beyond just diegesis, i.e. synthesizing the content of the image (Kuhn, 2011). The child in the picture is looking straight at us, but it’s difficult to read her emotions. The photojournalist arrived shortly before Omayra’s death. He was with her to the end, although he could not save her. In the interviews he gave after receiving the World Press Photo award (in the “Final Moments” category), he mentioned helplessness in the face of



Fig. 3. Frank Fournier, “Omayra,” Colombia 1985

Source: <https://www.worldpressphoto.org/collection/photo/1986/34475/1/1986-Frank-Fournier-WY>

suffering. He argued that he wanted to perpetuate the dignity, courage, pain, and innocent harm of the victim, becoming an intermediary between her and thousands of people in the world: “There is not one Omayra. There are hundreds of thousands of them in the world—important stories about the poor and the weak, and we, photojournalists, are here to create these bridges” (Picture Power: Tragedy of Omayra Sanchez, 2005, acc. 24).

The character of Omayra is a synecdoche-like sign of all victims of tragic disasters who have not received help. The girl and her martyr’s death captured in the picture became an appeal for help for thousands of people trapped in the ruins after the volcanic eruption. In the context of media discourse regarding responsibility for the disaster and its victims, the photo provoked the accusation of the Colombian authorities, inefficient and indifferent to the tragedy, which, despite repeated warnings by geologists and rescuers’ appeals, did almost nothing to prevent the tragedy and later reduce its effects. Photography helped not only to stigmatize the authorities’ lack of involvement in helping victims, but significantly contributed to the increase in financial aid for survivors coming in from around the world.

Children and death, children’s suffering are a theme often exploited in journalistic photography, and also often awarded. That is why a great intervention power is still returning in the news media coverage of a napalm burned girl from Vietnam by Nick Ut. According to some commentators and columnists this photo contributed to the end of the Vietnam War, provoking public unrest



Fig. 4. Nick Ut, “Napalm Girl,” Vietnam 1973

Source: <https://www.worldpressphoto.org/collection/photo/1973/37161/1/1973-Nick-Ut-WY>

and intensification of anti-war manifestations. The author of the photo was involved in rescuing burned children from the village, and his leading protagonist Kim Phuc after years became a UNESCO ambassador for helping children who were victims of war.

The photo of cardiac surgeon Zbigniew Religa, by James L. Stanfield, also fulfilled the intervention function. National Geographic magazine recognized it as the photo of the year in 1987 and one of the best hundred of this magazine. Stanfield documented heart transplant surgery almost 24 hours a day before he managed to take this unique photo. Photography connotes various semantic and intervention fields. In the foreground, the viewer sees two people—a doctor exhausted after many hours of work, observing on a monitor vital functions of the patient still lying on the operating table and barely visible from under the apparatus and cables. In the background is the third person—Religa’s assistant, who fell asleep in the corner. The image is seemingly static, but it epitomizes the viewer with a hidden expression as a record of the moment in which the fate of a man is decided. The attention of viewers can be caught by the professor’s anxious eyes focused on an invisible monitor and readiness to fight again for the patient’s life. Photography also became a symbol of the era in which our country stood far away from the West. A noticeable sign of those times is the equipment of the operating room. The presented reality of Polish medicine of the 1980s implies a kind of intervention—an appeal for support for extremely talented doctors working

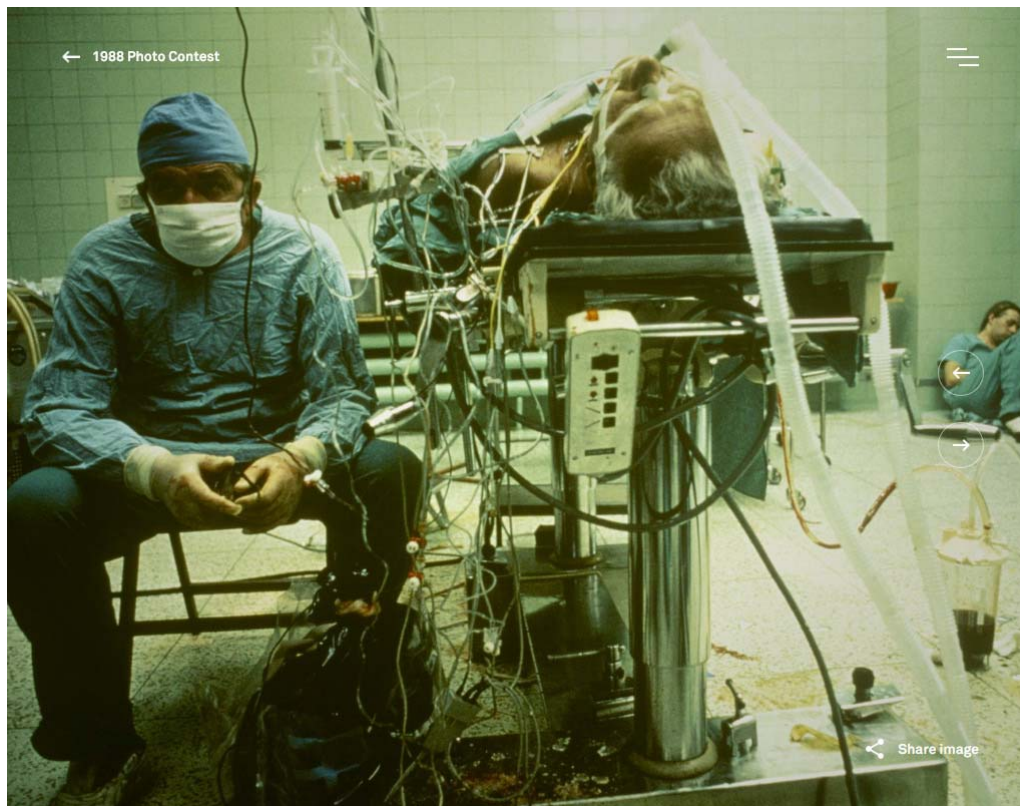


Fig. 5. James L. Stanfield, Zabrze 1987

Source: <https://www.worldpressphoto.org/collection/photo/1988/34035/1/1988-James-L-Stanfield-ST2>

in spartan conditions. Religa was the first cardiac surgeon who fought with great determination for heart transplants to be carried out in Poland. Therefore, one can treat this photograph as a portrait of a genius doctor who believed in his mission, a visionary, a god.

Stanfield's photo proved to be a breakthrough in the fight for the development of Polish transplantology. The former authorities could not still underestimate the achievements of Religa due to the global publicity of photography and admiration for the doctor from behind the Iron Curtain. That is why the cardiac center was established in Zabrze, today known as the Silesian Center for Heart Diseases.

Observation of the Social Impact of Photojournalism

A photoreportage is visual information transmitted through a series of photographs showing a part of reality. However, photojournalism smuggles some ideas while maintaining the appearance of neutral registration. The photojournalist knows the importance of intervention and makes a choice of situation and shot in this respect. It has the ambition to present phenomena that the average person does not see.

The photoreportage creating the story of the event consists of at least three frames. The first photo should tie the story of the protagonist, contain a secret that catches the attention of the

viewer. The final picture is a punch point—it must be strong, symbolic, evoke the recipient's strong experiences and willingness to help. The photo in the center of the photoreportage is also important because it develops the intrigue shown in the initial photo. Other frames are also very important as a complement to the elements of the structure. At the stage of author's selection, individual frames are often rejected, which can be very good photodocuments, but do not form a coherent whole with the other photographs. When selecting material, photojournalists are often guided by the principle, which in genre theory is referred to as collision of viewpoints (Kąkolewski, 1992). In the case of a photoreportage, the composition of the material is usually based on the game of contrasts: light-dark, near-far frame, vertical-horizontal. This way of compiling subsequent shots is to stimulate the recipient's imagination, incline him / her to constantly search for new connotations and gradually discover elements of history. Themes that bind together a photoreportage also include color, line layout, character placement, size of individual space elements. Quite often, a photoreportage has a buckle structure in which the composition of the first and last photos is similar. Cognitive elements can also become a compositional binder—character, problem, motif, iconosphere, functioning as pretexts that serve to capture and formulate an idea.

In the context of the discussed problem, it is worth referring to the series of photographs entitled “I Lived Here, I Died Here” by Jerzy Gumowski (see the multimedia material disc attached to the first edition of the book by Tochman, Jak BY Stone, Eaten, 2002). The series is a visual complement to Wojciech Tochman's reportage story about the consequences of the civil war in the Balkans and the genocide in Bosnia in 1992–1995. Gumowski's photographs combine subsequent parts of the book, oriented around the leitmotif: death, genocide, suffering of the survivors, and the memory of the dead. The pictures show people known to readers of the book (Eva Klonowski, PhD—an anthropologist identifying the remains of the victims of the genocide, or Jasna—a Bosnian woman looking for the bodies of her husband and children). The photos also include anonymous characters photographed in everyday situations and Balkan landscapes. Frames presenting objects belonging to victims and the so-called body bags containing the remains of the murdered, i.e. artifacts of the past world, which in photojournalism as metonymic characters serve as a certificate of crime. Oriented perception reinforces the viewer's horror and deep emotional responses. All of Gumowski's photos have a simple form in a black and white convention. Their cognitive aspect is specified by concise, but factual information and dates contained in signatures. The series of photos closes with a photo of a reporter with a child born after the Balkan War, met in the Serbian refugee center in Sokolac in August 2001. The final photo of the reporter's tale allows its interpretation in a symbolic convention, as the victory of life over death, human cruelty, and evil.

The words of one of the protagonists of the report “Here I Was Born, Here I Died,” were used to paraphrase the title of the album containing forty-three color photographs of Gumowski from post-war Bosnia. A woman's statement can be a point to the fate of this group of people who, after the tragedies of war, were able to overcome the trauma and slowly rebuild their lives. It is worth noting that Tochman, in order to bring the subject closer to the reader, used a photographic method of reporting reality by collecting details describing a mosaic of ruins and things left by people who are gone, and meticulous calculation and collision of points of view:

“There is a stage in the theater hall, but no audience. Clothes were placed on brown terracotta. They were sorted before: It was found on the first man, that on the seventieth. Everything was washed to regain colors. Dried on a string. Colorful clothes now lie tightly next to each other, though each separately. It is rarely a complete outfit. For example, right next to the entrance lies only a white

and blue striped T-shirt. Certainly a big man wore it. Instead, there was a thin man in that with the inscription ‘Montana.’ Next: Corduroy trousers, once white, now yellowed. Who wore them? Only denim leg under the window. Whose? Next: Only a leather belt, only briefs, only one sneaker, only a black sock. With every clothing (rather: every shreds)—an empty paper bag from which these shreds were removed. And a card with a large number printed on the computer.” (Tochman, 2002, p. 11)

The author records the viewed reality—a theater room in a village house of culture in Luści Palanka, which after the war has been turned into a place where the victims of genocide are identified. The reporter uses stylistic measures that serve the plasticity of the description by specifying the details. This reception is additionally strengthened by a photo placed next to the text, showing damaged clothes, stained with soil and blood, removed from one of the mass graves and bearing the visible stigma of the crime—bullet marks. A photograph that could be used as a forensic document or evidence for a pathologist in the context of a symbolic description gains new connotations, as a connotative sign reifying people.

The interventionism of Gumowski’s iconography, attached to the reportage story about the war in the Balkans, manifests itself in exposing the fate of individual people, which in the context of social history become a testimony of the past, an imperative of memory and a form of warning for future generations against national and ethnic conflicts, and genocide.

For many photographers telling stories using photos is the pinnacle of professional achievement. That is why long-term projects, are a fairly common form of creation for photojournalism. There are photo reports, for which the creators collected material for several dozen years. Among them, the reporting series entitled “Family Love 1993–2014. Julie Project” by Darcy Padilla stands out. The author created a photographic story about a young woman infected with HIV and her family living in an hermetic pathological community for twenty-one years.



Fig. 6. Darcy Padilla, “Family Love 1993–2014. Julie Project,” Elyssa, on her third birthday, six months after her mother’s death, wanders around the yard in front of the house, April 28, 2011

Source: <https://www.worldpressphoto.org/collection/photo/2015/29563/1/2015-Darcy-Padilla-OTS1-AAAD>

The author of a photojournalism awarded in the World Press Photo 2015 competition treated the fate of Julie Baird and her family as a comprehensive and symbolic tale of poverty, homelessness, AIDS, drugs, relationships, birth, and death. She showed problems related to social exclusion through the prism of the biography of one woman, but also created a record of the mother's story for Julie's children.

The protagonist's story is made of fragmentary scenes from the everyday life of her family, not always ordered chronologically. Many cases remain unspoken or suspended. We learn unexpectedly about further breakthrough facts from a woman's life. It is the author of the photoreportage that decides what she will reveal to the recipients, ignoring, for example, the fate of the other Julie's four children, who were taken away from their biological mother. She sets up next black and white photos, guided by the principle of contrast of darkness and light (it is worth noting that the tone changes to a much brighter at the moment when the fate of the characters, partner, and Julie's youngest daughter—Elyssa, change for the better). Padilla also contrasts photos oriented around polarized themes—life, birth, illness, and death. The recipient may be shocked by the turpism of some photographs, especially those that show the agony of a woman destroyed by illness or her neglected child in the scenery of extreme misery and destruction as a denial of a joyful childhood. Text fragments in the form of laconic but significant signatures for individual photos also play an important role in this document. Short summaries combine cognitive elements, often in a suggestive way that completes the story of the characters, with quotes or quasi-quotes from family members that represent their point of view. The signatures serve to supplement the protagonists' characteristics and understand the changes that occur in their lives. With such imaging (30 photos telling the story of 21 years of life of several people), the use of textual additions seems fully justified. In the context of these problems, the implementation of the factographic pact in photojournalism also seems interesting. To increase the persuasive potential of an image, a photographer can consciously (e.g. at the editing stage) blur realism with fragmentation, destroying contexts and aestheticizing the situational atmosphere (Potocka, 2010).

The intensity of this project can be considered in two dimensions. First, as a photojournalist's personal commitment, which influenced the lives of the characters, helping them renew broken relationships. Padilla contacted Julie with her biological father, found one of the adopted children and arranged a meeting of mother and son. Thanks to the media coverage of the award-winning project, the adoptive parents of Julie's partner Jason, moved by their granddaughter's story, helped Elyssa find a foster family. In addition, in 2014, the eldest daughter of the protagonist, Rachel, contacted Padilla, thanking her for the opportunity to learn and understand her mother's story. Rachel said seeing Julie Project helped her heal the rejection trauma. In the "Family Love" photojournalism, the author tried to appear not only as a reporter, but also as a spokesman for the characters and their tragic fate. For recipients, she became a guide helping them to make an empathic analysis of the life trajectories of excluded people.

While analyzing the intervention and the message of the work itself, one can point to its didactic potential—warning and sensitizing viewers to the co-occurrence, repetition, and inheritance of problems and social pathologies.

Summary

Analysis of the problem of intervention in the context of selected photographs outlined several important observations regarding the reception reflection of these media messages. The "interventiveness" of images can not only cause a reevaluation of the way of thinking and axiology of viewers, but also initiate specific action and help. However, interventionism does not always refer only to a tangible, evident change in reality. Sometimes it is a potential value, increasing

social awareness and responsibility, but not related to the appellative character of a given image. Photodocuments with a clear intervention function can play a socially activating role by building an unusual interaction—the protagonist-recipient, viewer (story sender-reportage recipient versus sender, author of reportage-recipient of reportage). The pragmatics of photography is also specified in the didactic function, and the reception of such constructed messages can become a cognitive and educational discourse.

The use of symbolic signs and cultural tropes by photojournalists often becomes a purposeful procedure to stimulate the intervention of media images, triggering associative thinking among some recipients. An analysis of media photography intervention mechanisms seems to confirm this assumption, as well as the need for further discussion regarding visual representations in the context of contamination of the meanings of cultural and social codes.

Interesting, in the context of the problems discussed, is another dimension of media images intervention that addresses the issue of discrepancy between the assumed effect this pragmatic photo and the real reaction of viewers. Some creators of famous documentary and photojournalism met with a kind of public ostracism for not intervening during the creation process itself. Recipients criticized their passivity and lack of counteracting the tragedies that met the protagonists of the photos (MacLeod, 1994; Kwiatkowski 2003, p. 80).

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