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Decoding the Images of the Polish Countryside, by Louise Arner Boyd (1887-1972): Ruthenians/Ukrainians in the Ethnographic Photography of an American Traveller

Abstract

This article looks at the photographic legacy of Louise Arner Boyd's (1887-1972) expedition through the Second Polish Republic in the context of her discovery of the otherness and social diversity of the country she visited in 1934. The authors were particularly captivated by the portrayal of the Ruthenians/Ukrainians of what is now Western Ukraine, as depicted in the Boyd photography. The authors focus lies on the unprocessed photographic content from the library collections of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the book she published a few years after her journey with the cooperation of the American Geographical Society in New York.

The authors told the story of Louise A. Boyd's trip to Poland primarily to introduce the reader to the context of the creation of the photographic collection, in which authors try to discover content and meanings that have not been sought before. Their analysis of the making-off process and reception into academia for Boyd's book entitled *Polish Countryside* is also crucial to understanding that it is only a part of the collection. It is a specific vision and a compromise between the photographer's and the publisher's expectations.

The Boyd photographic collection focused on rural landscapes and the architecture of villages and farms, capturing various farming methods, road and water transport scenes, village types and traditional clothing. With meticulous descriptions and detailed lists of the photographed locations and subjects, the collection serves as valuable documentation of building styles and techniques, traditional costumes, transportation, markets and agricultural and fishing practices. Thanks to Boyd's skilled photographer's eye, she was able to capture visually attractive photographs that also serve as scientifically intriguing documents of a bygone era. The significance of these photos extends beyond the confines of ethnography, as we have endeavoured to emphasise in this article. Through reinterpreting Ruthenians/Ukrainians portraits in Boyd photographs after almost a century, we aim to grasp the preserved and concealed contexts, thereby reconstructing, if not the complete image, at least its distinct components.

However, the images of contemporary Western Ukraine and its inhabitants by Louise Arner Boyd that the authors analysed are currently in the photography collection mentioned above from the UWM as part of the digitalised archive of the American Geographical Society. The authors had attempted to look at them both as an example of ethnographic photography typical of the interwar period and a unique image of a world that no longer exists. In the authors' opinion, Louise A. Boyd's photograms, placed as raw ethnographic material in the mentioned repository of the UWM library, today have the value that she wanted to give them from the beginning when she was considering the publication of *Polish Countrysides*, and they are a reminder of a world whose traces have almost disappeared today.

Keywords: Louise Arner Boyd's (1887-1972), American Geographical Society, Ukrainians/Ruthenians, interwar Poland, Kresy [borderland]



This book is a joy. Whether to handle or to study [...] it is equally useful for those who cannot visit Poland at all and as a companion for those who can.¹

Written in 1937, these words were penned by William John Rose, a distinguished Canadian slavist and historian, in his review of the album *Polish Countrysides* by Louise Arner Boyd (1887-1972). Boyd, an American traveller and renowned Arctic explorer, embarked on a journey of personal exploration in Poland in 1934. Her album of photographs, depicting the serene Polish countryside, had already been in circulation for two years when the cataclysmic events that shaped the world were captured through her lens. In this context, the words spoken at the encouragement of American readers by Rose take on particular significance.

In the literature on the subject, both the biography of Louise Arner Boyd and her expedition to the charming corners of the borderland are considered in very different

¹ W.J. Rose, "Polish Countrysides..." [review], *International Affairs*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (1937), p. 639.

contexts. Her Canadian biographer, Joanna Kafarowski,² looked at the traveller most comprehensively. Meanwhile, a number of authors focus on her expeditions to the Arctic. This comes as no surprise, as her unique position in the international polar research of the 1930s is well-illustrated by two types of expedition reports: the books Boyd published about her Greenland expeditions and the extensive archival material she left behind. *The Fiord Region of East Greenland*³ and *The Coast of Northeast Greenland*⁴ recount her activities as a photographer, geographer and leader of the team. Boyd's contributions, portraying her as a leading expert in documenting glacial retreats, are significant contributions to the literature of Arctic expeditions.⁵ As Amy Rule suggested, the many photographs she took of geological formations, glaciers and iceberg-studded fjords – which lavishly illustrate the books – show an Arctic landscape in constant change. The images were used for mapping purposes, but they may also be considered from a purely aesthetic perspective.⁶ For almost thirty years, from 1926 to 1955, Louise Boyd took part in seven Arctic expeditions, which is why she was called the 'Queen of the Arctic.'

In Belarusian literature, in turn, knowledge of the Boyd expedition to interwar Poland (especially currently Belarusian territories) is drawn from the album entitled *Polesye of Louise Arner Boyd*.⁷ In Polish literature on this topic, Boyd appears as the heroine of Małgorzata Szejnert's reportage *Heap the Mountains [Usypać góry]*, in which the author travels through Polesia in the footsteps of her predecessor.⁸

The areas of modern Ukraine through Boyd's lens have not been the subject of previous analyses, except for Larysa Buriak's work published in Ukrainian.⁹

However, the (re)discovery of L.A. Boyd's photographs for the general public, both in the USA and in Poland, was made by Susan Gibson Mikos, a historic preservation consultant affiliated with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM). Thanks to her efforts, in September 1984, photographs from interwar Poland were

² J. Kafarowski, *The Polar Adventure of a Rich American Dame: A Life of Louise Arner Boyd*, Toronto 2017.

³ L.A. Boyd, *The Fiord Region of East Greenland*, with contributions by J.H. Bretz et al., New York 1935, *American Geographical Society Special Publication*, No. 18.

⁴ L.A. Boyd, *The Coast of Northeast Greenland with Hydrographic Studies in the Greenland Sea: The Louise A. Boyd Arctic Expedition of 1937 and 1938*, with contributions by R. Foster Flint et al., New York 1948, *American Geographical Society Special Publication*, No. 30.

⁵ E. Isaksson, A. Ryall, "The Queen of the Arctic: Louise Arner Boyd," *Polar Research*, Vol. 42 (2023), pp. 1-2.

⁶ A. Rule, "Ansel Adams and Louise Arner Boyd: A Camera Tells a Story," *History of Photography*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (1998), pp. 155-160.

⁷ E. Zlobin, D. Kisel, *Polesye of Louise Boyd*, at https://polesie.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Luiza_Boyd-Albom.pdf, 10 October 2023.

⁸ M. Szejnert, *Usypać góry. Historie z Polesia*, Kraków 2015.

⁹ Л. Буряк, "Біографія крізь оптику мистецтва фотографії: колекція Луїзи Арнер Бойд як візуалізація авторського світу," *Українська біографістика*, Vol. 23 (2022), pp. 59-77.

exhibited in the Golda Maier Library of the University of Warsaw on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the American amateur photographer's trip to Poland.¹⁰

Susan Gibson Mikos was also the initiator of exhibiting these photos in Poland at the Museum of Art in Łódź.¹¹ The exhibition presented approximately 200 photos from the collection donated for Museum by the UWM Library for this purpose.¹² The exhibition itself was an important cultural event not only for Polish ethnographers, but for all those nostalgically looking at the lost Polish lands.¹³ And it was not until the 1980s, when this museum curated a photographic exhibition featuring images taken by Louise A. Boyd, that the images of the Polish periphery from the interwar period came to be associated with the adjective *kresowy* 'borderland'.¹⁴ This should not be surprising because many of the areas Boyd photographed as "Polish countryside" were not within the borders of Poland after World War II. On the occasion of the exhibition in Poland, a number of publications by Susan Gibson Mikos were published about Louise Boyd and her photographs taken in 1934 in the Polish countryside. On the one, the first attempts to analyse the photos presented at the exhibition were also made by a Polish art historian and the curator of the Museum of Art in Łódź at that time, Urszula Czartoryska.¹⁵ So far, this is the only attempt to analyse the visual layer of Boyd's works.

The aim of this article is to look at the photographic legacy of Louise Arner Boyd's expedition through the Second Polish Republic in the context of her discovery of the otherness and social diversity of the country she visited. We were particularly captivated by the portrayal of the Ruthenians/Ukrainians of what is now Western Ukraine, as depicted in the photography of the American traveller. Our focus lies on both the unprocessed photographic content from the library collections of the

¹⁰ S. Gibson Mikoś, *Polish Countryside: The Photographs of Louise Arner Boyd: American Geographical Society Collection, the Golda Maier Library, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, September 11, 1984* [exhibition catalogue], Milwaukee 1984, p. 3.

¹¹ The press release prepared by the Museum shows that the exhibition was open in September–October in 1987 and then the photographs could be viewed at the State Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw during November 1987. See more: *Wieś polska roku 1934 w fotografii Louise Arner Boyd* [press release], September 1987, Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź [subsequently: MSL], at <https://zasoby.msl.org.pl/mobjects/view/2845>, 21 November 2023.

¹² The exhibition documentation is available in the Museum's digital archive: *Wieś polska roku 1934 w fotografii Louise Arner Boyd* [exhibition documentation], MSL, at <https://zasoby.msl.org.pl/mobjects/view/1880>, 21 November 2023.

¹³ "Dawna wieś polska w fotografii Louise Arner Boyd," *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (1989), pp. 220-226.

¹⁴ L.A. Boyd, *Kresy: Fotografie z 1934 roku*, introd. S. Gibson Mikoś, Kraków 1991; U. Czartoryska (ed.), *Wieś polska roku 1934 w fotografii Louise Arner Boyd ze zbiorów American Geographical Society*, Łódź 1987.

¹⁵ S. Gibson Mikoś, "Louise Arner Boyd i jej fotografie z Polski," in U. Czartoryska (ed.), *Wieś polska roku 1934...*

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee¹⁶ and the book she published a few years after her journey.¹⁷

The starting point for our considerations is a collection of photographs documenting the social reality of the Second Polish Republic, and the everyday life of Ruthenian/Ukrainian peasants captured in the travel photography of Louise A. Boyd. Through the reinterpretation of these photographs after almost a century, we aim to grasp the preserved and concealed contexts, thereby reconstructing, if not the complete image, at least its distinct components.

We tell the story of Louise A. Boyd's trip to Poland primarily to introduce the reader to the context of the creation of the photographic collection, in which we try to discover content and meanings that have not been sought before. Our analysis of the making-of process and reception into academia for Boyd's monograph entitled *Polish Countryside* is also crucial to understanding that it is only a part of the collection. It is a specific vision and a compromise between the photographer's and the publisher's expectations. However, the images of contemporary Western Ukraine and its inhabitants by Louise Arner Boyd that we are analysing are currently in the photography collection mentioned above from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee as part of the digitalised archive of the American Geographical Society.¹⁸ We have attempted to look at them both as an example of ethnographic photography typical of the interwar period and a unique image of a world that no longer exists.

A Woman Makes Her Mark in a Man's Domain¹⁹

Louise Arner Boyd was born on September 16, 1887, in San Rafael, a suburb of San Francisco, into a prosperous family that owned a gold mine. She received a thorough education in private schools in San Rafael and San Francisco, although she never pursued higher studies. The loss of her loved ones during her youth shaped

¹⁶ American Geographical Society of New York [subsequently: AGSL], Digital Photo Archive – Europe, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Libraries Digital Collections [subsequently: UWM Libraries], at <http://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agseurope/search/searchterm/%09Lwów/order/nosort>, 10 October 2023.

¹⁷ L.A. Boyd, *Polish Countrysides, Photographs and Narrative*, with a contribution by S. Gorzuchowski, New York 1937.

¹⁸ Photos entitled *Ukraine, Storage Shed on Stilts Northwest of Kovel and Ukraine, Ruthenian Women Returning from Bolekhov Market* are printed for the first time.

¹⁹ R. Owen, "A Woman Makes Her Mark in a Man's Domain," *New York Times*, 1 May 1938, pp. 6, 20, 23.

her path, compelling her to become self-reliant at a young age and take on the role of director in the family business in 1920.²⁰

At the age of 33, Louise A. Boyd inherited an immense fortune and began hosting an open house, swiftly earning a reputation as a generous hostess and patron. She also developed an interest in horticulture and grew camellias in the greenhouses of her estate. Known for her support of aspiring musicians, Louise also held a prominent position within San Francisco's elite circles. She served on the supervisory boards of several prestigious cultural institutions in the city and actively participated in its major social events. Her ventures into travel commenced when she journeyed to France and Belgium in 1920 with a friend. The following year, she explored various other European countries.²¹

She discovered her passion for geographical expeditions when she first travelled to Spitsbergen in 1924. Two years later, she set out on her first expedition to the polar regions. At that time, she rented a Norwegian seal-hunting ship with the surprising name *Hobby* and sailed with a group of friends to the distant Franz Josef Land. During this journey, she collected botanical specimens and began photographic documentation of Arctic land formations and glaciers. Over the years, this initial fascination with the Arctic and documenting its landscapes will become her life's work.

In 1928, Louise Boyd was preparing for another expedition on the same ship. However, the news of the disappearance of Roald Amundsen, a world-famous Norwegian explorer, forced her to change her plans. Boyd promptly offered her ship and crew to the Norwegian government and joined the search for Amundsen. Nevertheless, the months-long trip covering 10,000 miles was in vain. Boyd recorded the expedition on film and in thousands of photos. In recognition of her role in the fruitless search, King Haakon VII of Norway decorated her with the Chevalier Cross of a Knight of St. Olaf, making her the first non-Norwegian woman to receive this honour.²²

This trip became a watershed moment in the traveller's life. As Canadian researcher Joanna Kafarowski noted, Boyd's life changed in an instant: "leaving behind a life of luxury, she embraced discomfort and the hardships of travel."²³ On the flip side, apart from toughening her character, the 1928 expedition significantly widened her connections, introducing her to a new social circle. While searching for Amundsen, she had the opportunity to meet the most prominent Arctic researchers and

²⁰ S. Gibson Mikoś, M.J. Mikoś, "Kresy w obiektywie Louise Arner Boyd, amerykańskiej eksploratorki (1934)," in A. Janicka, G. Kowalski, Ł. Zabielski (eds), *Prace dedykowane profesor Swietłanie Musijenko*, introd. J. Ławski, Białystok 2013, *Colloquia Orientalia Bialostocensia*, Vol. 3, *Pogranicza, Kresy, Wschód a Idee Europy*, No. 1, p. 451.

²¹ S. Gibson Mikoś, "Louise Arner Boyd..."

²² W.A. Wood, A.L. Washburn, "Obituary: Louise Arner Boyd (1887-1972)," *Geographical Review*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (1973), p. 279.

²³ J. Kafarowski, *Polar Adventure...*, p. 3.

gain knowledge about the navigation conditions of its waters. Being in various social and cultural societies also influenced her views and aesthetic tastes.

In the summer of 1930, Louise Boyd visited northern Sweden and Finland, collecting botanical specimens and photographing the Sámi people. Louise Boyd's emerging scientific interests brought her into contact with Dr Isaiah Bowman, Director of the American Geographical Society (AGS), a renowned institution in New York dedicated to supporting geographical research. Her eventual familiarity with him would become one of the driving forces behind her expedition to the Polish borderlands in 1934.²⁴

She also owes her travel skills to her acquaintance with Bowman, especially when it comes to human geography and ethnographic photography. The 1931 expedition was a turning point in Miss Boyd's career, for she spent much time with Bowman and members of the geographical society's staff on her way home. She came to recognise the interdisciplinary nature of geography and the benefits to be gained from integrating several facets of science within a single project using a mobile logistics base.²⁵

During the years 1928-1941, she carried out seven expeditions to polar regions. In 1933, 1937 and 1938, she researched Eastern Greenland on AGS's behalf while also sponsoring these expeditions. Despite prior exploration of the area by Danish and Norwegian explorers, Boyd contributed significantly by filling gaps and rectifying errors in the research conducted by earlier teams.²⁶ During the 1933 expedition, Boyd fearlessly faced the challenge of navigating through drifting ice along the coast. The adventurer systematically approached every fjord and bay in the Francis Joseph and Charles Oscar fjord area and gathered a few thousand photographs of topographic formations, ice/glaciers and animal and plant life. The inner parts of the glacial fjord that she mapped during this expedition were named *Weisboydlund* in her honour, and the main glacier is referred to as 'Louise Glacier.' She also visited an Inuit community, where she was impressed by their friendliness and cheerful disposition.²⁷ Following this expedition, she became aware of the necessity for an interdisciplinary approach to exploring Arctic territories, influenced by discussions with fellow crew members – including Bowman. The results of this expedition were published in a work by all five expedition participants entitled *The Fjord Region of East Greenland* by AGS.²⁸

In 1934, she visited Poland and France, participating in geographical congresses. World War II prevented her next expeditions.²⁹ In 1941, she financed and led a secret

²⁴ S. Gibson Mikoś, "Louise Arner Boyd..."

²⁵ W.A. Wood, A.L. Washburn, "Obituary: Louise Arner Boyd..." p. 281.

²⁶ S. Gibson Mikoś, *Polish Countryside: The Photographs of Louise Arner Boyd...*, p. 4.

²⁷ S. Gibson Mikoś, "Louise Arner Boyd..."

²⁸ L.A. Boyd, *The Fjord Region...*

²⁹ L.A. Boyd, *Kresy: Fotografie...*, p. 18.

mission to the west coast of Greenland to collect materials relating to radio transmissions in the Arctic. From 1942 to 1943, she was a consultant to the American government on Greenland and Spitsbergen in the War Department. In recognition of her achievements, she received a diploma from the United States government³⁰ after the war. A few years later, she published her third book entitled *The Coast of Northeast Greenland*, where she described the results of Arctic expeditions in 1937 and 1938.³¹

In 1955, at the age of 67, she achieved her lifelong dream by becoming the first woman to fly over the North Pole. Notably, she accomplished this feat in a privately rented plane, marking the first polar flight from Norway.³²

When Isaiah Bowman was enlisting a new staff member or a would-be geographer, it was his practice to conclude the interview with an admonition that rewards are rare in science and stem largely from within the scientist. In Walter A. Wood and A. Lincoln Washburn's opinion, Miss Boyd received the Bowman warning when she undertook the book *Polish Countrysides*.³³ But the admonition was neither new to her nor a setback to her aspirations; she had learned these fundamental truths in her childhood.³⁴

However, recognition and honours came to her spontaneously and abundantly. Louise Boyd was appointed a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour in France and was awarded the Medal of King Christian X of Denmark, along with the Andree Plaque from the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography. Moreover, she received honorary degrees from the University of California, the University of Alaska and Mills College. She was elected an honorary member of the California Academy of Sciences, and the Louise A. Boyd Junior Museum of Science in San Rafael was named in her honour.³⁵

She passed away at the age of 84 in September 1972 in a nursing home. In her final years, her company's financial crisis had depleted her wealth. Nonetheless, the remaining assets – primarily movable objects and scientific heritage – were bequeathed to the American Geographical Society and Marin County Historical Society in San Rafael.

Her wish was for her ashes to be scattered over Greenland. However, it was too expensive. Nevertheless, her friend Walter A. Wood made every effort to ensure that at least a part of her wish was fulfilled. Eventually, he arranged for her

³⁰ S. Gibson Mikoś, *Polish Countryside: The Photographs of Louise Arner Boyd...*, p. 4.

³¹ L.A. Boyd, *The Coast of Northeast Greenland...*

³² M.J. Mikoś, "Archiwalne kartograficzne i fotograficzne polonika w zbiorach Biblioteki Amerykańskiego Towarzystwa Geograficznego na Uniwersytecie Wisconsin w Milwaukee," *Z Badań nad Książką i Księgozbiorem Historycznymi*, spec. issue (2017), pp. 527-535.

³³ L.A. Boyd, *Polish Countrysides...*

³⁴ W.A. Wood, A.L. Washburn, "Obituary. Louise Arner Boyd..." pp. 279-282.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

ashes to be scattered over the Arctic Ocean ice, one hundred miles north of Point Barrow, Alaska.³⁶

Expedition 1934

In 1931, after meeting Louise Boyd during the Amundsen search, Dr Bowman was appointed president of the International Geographical Association. This responsibility also designated him as the president of the International Congress of Geographers in Warsaw (1934). According to Susan Gibson Mikos and Michael J. Mikos, Bowman appointed Louise Boyd as a delegate to that Congress on behalf of the United States government and the American Geographical Society. Following his advice, she decided to use her stay in Poland to collect photographic material from various parts of the country. To facilitate her unrestricted travel, she brought her Packard along with her personal driver, Percy R. Cameron.³⁷

Louise Boyd arrived in Poland in mid-August 1934, a few days before the start of the Congress, and stayed until the end of October. Her interest in Poland extended beyond the Congress. She wrote: "It seemed to me that the opportunity offered of doing photographic work in Poland was one that should not be missed. In addition to attendance at the Congress, my objective was to make a photographic record of the country's rural life, as revealed in representative portraits of peasant types and representative views illustrating methods of farming and other land uses, native industries, transportation, architecture and market scenes. This was somewhat of a departure for me after long devotion to photography in the Arctic."³⁸ During this time, Louise Boyd extensively travelled across Poland, visiting numerous cities and towns in what is now western Ukraine, then part of the eastern provinces of the Second Polish Republic. Her travels captured the essence of everyday life, traditions and elements of folk culture. The list of cities she managed to visit also included Lviv, Zalishchyky and Kolomyia. As she states in her travel report, she covered a total of 10,000 miles and took over 2,000 photos using a Folmer Graflex model 'D' camera. During her trip, Boyd was accompanied by the following Polish geographers: Dr Stanisław Gorzuchowski (High School of Commerce, Warsaw), Dr Wanda Rewieńska (University of Vilnius) and Dr Walenty Winid (University of Poznań).³⁹ Emphasising their important role in the expedition, she mentioned: "Their knowledge of the country made it possible for me to see and understand much that would

³⁶ L.A. Boyd, *Kresy: Fotografie...*, p. 19.

³⁷ S. Gibson Mikos, M.J. Mikos, "Kresy w obiektywie..." p. 452.

³⁸ L.A. Boyd, *Polish Countrysides...*, pp. 5, 7.

³⁹ Due to their involvement in the conspiracy during World War II, all three did not survive the war or post-war repression in the People's Republic of Poland.

have been hidden – even to a Polish traveller without the benefit of such expert guidance – and their knowledge of the language was indispensable in many districts where no languages but Polish is spoken.”⁴⁰

Throughout her journey, Louise Boyd successfully explored and captured images of the majority of Poland’s key regions. Boyd’s longest journey took her from Warsaw through Częstochowa to Krakow, then from Cieszyn to Zakopane, further east along the Carpathians to Podolia, north through Volhynia to Polesia and then back through Białystok to Warsaw. Although Boyd travelled throughout Poland, she spent most of her time in the Borderlands, and these areas are documented best in her photos. After the Geography Congress ended, Boyd joined a small group on a short trip to north-eastern Poland. She visited the estate of Edward Tarasiewicz, then the nearby villages of Wola and Łunna. Here, she had her first opportunity to photograph a peasant village. The whole group rafted down the Neman River to Grodno and then went by train to Vilnius. The travellers then visited the Karaim settlement in Trakai and the Old Believers’ village in Maciesze before finally returning to Warsaw.

Of all the places Louise Boyd visited, Polesia captivated her the most – its vast wetlands and forests with the flowing Prypiat River. She drew attention to the sparse population and scarce arable land. She was impressed by the people, their ethnic composition (i.e., Belarusians, Ruthenians, Poles and Jews), as well as their material culture. She took most of the photos there, showing landscapes, water routes, fishing, villages, fairs and, above all, local inhabitants.⁴¹

The Polish countryside (1937)

The result of her expedition in 1934 was a unique collection of photos, a crucial element of a larger collection of photographs constituting the legacy of the famous traveller and photographer kept in Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in the USA.⁴² The entire collection is currently freely available on the library website.⁴³

Louise Arner Boyd donated two thousand four hundred and thirty-one prints taken during the trip to the American Geographical Society, of which there were many duplicates or several shots of the same scene⁴⁴. Nevertheless, Boyd wrote in her letters to Dr. Bowman that these photos are not about their beauty (they are

⁴⁰ L.A. Boyd, *Polish Countrysides...*, p. VI.

⁴¹ M.J. Mikoś, “Archiwalne kartograficzne i fotograficzne polonika,” pp. 527-535.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ AGSL, UWM Libraries, at <http://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agseurope/search/searchterm/%09Lwów/order/nosort>, 10 October 2023.

⁴⁴ American Geographical Society of New York Records [subsequently: AGSNY], Archival Collection [subsequently: AC 1], box 182, folder 26, file 60, Louise Arner Boyd to Isaiah Bowman,

rather good) but about the content they present. In one of the letters written quickly from the Bristol Hotel in Warsaw, she wrote about her hard work during the expedition. ("I worked hard [...] and hope I have some really true material").⁴⁵ She was most fascinated by the landscapes of Polesia, which is why she prepared an article in *Geographical Review* with her own illustrations.⁴⁶ At the same time, in every free moment, the traveller describes the photos she took from Poland. This work took several months, but the result, as Boyd intuitively believed, turned out to be beyond AGS's expectations. She noted for Isaiah Bowman:

I have now gone over my Polish pictures and you will be glad to know that I am going to be able to turn over several hundred in connection with a paper I will submit. While they are not perfect, I think I can honestly say they are on the whole exceedingly good and very interesting subjects. We certainly will have a fine lot of various types of highways, details of farm houses and barns, people inhabiting the rural districts of Poland, and the country around Pinsk and the Prypec river, including isolating settlements, transportation by canoe and the fisherman and their nets, as well as the monthly market at Pinsk which I considered the most interesting one I saw in Poland. I am hard at work on my paper as well as the pictures, and will get it off to you as soon as possible.⁴⁷

The correspondence between L.A. Boyd and Dr Isaiah Bowman also shows that the original concept of AGS was to publish a descriptive scientific work that would be illustrated with photos by Boyd as a souvenir of the great impressions after the Congress in Warsaw and the time spent in Poland.⁴⁸ On December 27 1934, Dr Bowman wrote to Louise Boyd:

We look forward to progress on the pictures of Poland and believe that you will find the preparation of the material a happy experience for we are all back in this country and can work together closely in producing a good article with plenty of photography. After you have titled the pictures I should like to see them all in full panoply in order to judge of the possibilities of a book of the sort that we published several years ago entitled "Peru from the air."⁴⁹

16 April 1935, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agsny/id/20282>, 20 November 2023.

⁴⁵ 19 October 1934, AGSNY AC 1, box 182, folder 26, file 32, Louise Arner Boyd to Isaiah Bowman, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agsny/id/20189>, 20 November 2023.

⁴⁶ L.A. Boyd, "The Marshes of Pinsk," *Geographical Review*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (1936), pp. 376-395.

⁴⁷ AGSNY AC 1, box 182, folder 26, file 58, Louise Arner Boyd to Isaiah Bowman, 13 March 1935, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agsny/id/20274>, 20 November 2023.

⁴⁸ AGSNY AC 1, box 182, folder 26, file 41, Isaiah Bowman to Louise Arner Boyd, 27 December 1934, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agsny/id/20238>, 20 November 2023.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

However, in 1935, Bowman, who heads the AGS, had no specific vision: sometimes he thought about ethnographic work, sometimes about a collection involving several Polish authors.⁵⁰

Please don't get the book idea fixed in mind too firmly until we have seen the photographs and, what is more important, given further time to a text of fairly substantial length that should go with them. It may be that we could get three or four Polish authors for a modest fee to write sections for such a book, and that part of the text could be done here in the manner that we discussed.⁵¹

Ultimately, the work was published according to Boyd's concept, which, like in the case of her other publications, participated in the publishing costs.⁵² And two years later, Louise Boyd made the decision to publish a richly illustrated report of her journey through Poland. Her aim was to include approximately one quarter of all the photos captured during the expedition. Ultimately, the work was published by the American Geographical Society. In addition to Boyd's own impressions, her book includes a description of the entire trip, with additional notes and information, as well as a chapter titled *Some Aspects of Rural Poland*, written by Dr Stanisław Gorzuchowski. As Boyd was not an expert in Polish geography and ethnography, she relied on the guidance of Polish geographers who accompanied her on the journey. This led to the suggestion by the scientific editor of the Platt series, Raye Roberts (1891-1973), to enhance this edition with a scientific text.

First and foremost, it is important to emphasise that Louise Boyd reluctantly consented to the editorial proposals concerning two issues: the title under which her report was published and the inclusion of the work authored by Stanisław Gorzuchowski, who, at that time, was promoted to a professorial position and was considered one of the most recognised specialists in the field of social geography. In the archives of the American Geographical Society, which was the publisher of *Polish Countrysides*, even correspondence between Boyd, Gorzuchowski and the editor from Platt⁵³ has been preserved. Based on this, we can conclude that the editor is personally responsible for the book's final appearance. He undoubtedly had a certain vision of the Polish province and made sure to implement it by shaping the

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² AGSNY AC 1, box 182, folder 26, file 61, Isaiah Bowman to Louise Arner Boyd, 6 June 1935, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agsny/id/20284>, 20 November 2023.

⁵³ AGSNY AC 1, box 404, folder 11, file 11, Louise Arner Boyd to Raye Roberts Platt, 6 October 1936, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agsny/id/19101/rec/9>, 20 November 2023; AGSNY AC 1, box 404, folder 11, file 12, Raye Roberts Platt to Louise Arner Boyd, 7 October 1936, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agsny/id/19101/rec/9>, 20 November 2023.

American reader's perception of it through Boyd's notes, the itinerary, Gorzuchowski's article and, most importantly, her photos.

Louise A. Boyd urged for the work to bear the title *Pictures of Rural Poland*, *Glimpses of Rural Poland* or *With the Camera in Rural Poland*⁵⁴ because she firmly believed that the adjective 'countryside' is wholly unsuitable for a scholarly publication, which she aspired to as a member of AGS.⁵⁵ Her indignation primarily arose from a sense of marginalisation in the author's work, to which she had devoted great dedication. Above all, she stressed that this was not a comprehensive depiction of the Polish province, but merely a portrayal of what she had managed to capture.⁵⁶ In her opinion, including Gorzuchowski's article diminished her work and, in the context of the photos presented, ultimately distorted the image of the areas she visited.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, Louise Boyd's work received many favourable reviews. Interestingly, the reviewers also valued Boyd's work for reinforcing her narrative with an article by Dr Gorzuchowski ("a remarkably lucid essay").⁵⁸ Gorzuchowski's biographer, Tadeusz Marszał, even believed that his contribution to *Polish Countrysides* was one of his best and most important publications on this subject.⁵⁹

Considering that illustrations were the book's main focus, because of the lack of access to the original photos, the book could be used for both tourism and scientific purposes. In his review, Axel Schou further emphasised that:

If someone were to indicate where the book's scientific centre of gravity is, it must be said that it is in this extensive collection of photographs – which constitute ex-

⁵⁴ AGSNY, AC 1, box 404, folder 11, file 12, Raye Roberts Platt to Louise Arner Boyd, 7 October 1936, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agsny/id/19101/rec/9>, 20 November 2023.

⁵⁵ AGSNY AC 1, box 404, folder 11, file 20, Louise Arner Boyd to Raye Roberts Platt, 12 October 1936, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agsny/id/19113/rec/9>, 20 November 2023.

⁵⁶ AGSNY AC 1, box 404, folder 11, file 12, Raye Roberts Platt to Louise Arner Boyd, 7 October 1936, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agsny/id/19101/rec/9>, 20 November 2023.

⁵⁷ AGSNY AC 1, box 404, folder 11, file 25, Louise Arner Boyd to Raye Roberts Platt, 22 October 1936, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agsny/id/19135/rec/9>, 20 November 2023.

⁵⁸ See A. Schou, "Louise A. Boyd: Polish Countrysides. 16 × 25 cm, 235 S., 495 Il., New York 1937," *Geografisk Tidsskrift*, Bd 40, No. 2 (1937), pp. 186-187; W.A. Wood, A.L. Washburn, "Obituary: Louise Arner Boyd..." p. 281; T.L. Smith, "Polish Countrysides: By Louise A. Boyd, with a Contribution by Stanislaw Gorzuchowski, Special Publication No. 20, New York: American Geographical Society, 1937, pp. 233, XII [...]" [review], *Rural Sociology*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1937), p. 242; W.E. Ekblaw, "Boyd, Louise A. Polish Countrysides, pp. XI, 235, a Wealth of Photographs and a Number of Maps, Special Publication No. 20, New York: American Geographical Society, 1937" [review], *Economic Geography*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (1937), pp. 431-432.

⁵⁹ T. Marszał, *Łódzki ośrodek geografii społeczno-ekonomicznej (1945-2015). W stulecie urodzin profesora Ludwika Straszewicza*, Łódź 2016, p. 230.

tremely valuable anthropogeographical pictorial material. Some of the photos are text illustrations, but most of them have been collected in the form of an album, practically arranged according to such topics as population types, village forms, church buildings, farmsteads, tools, farming methods, means of transport, markets, etc. (...) If we examine the photos, we will find a wealth of details in them that make them a scientific collection of material, a basis for further analyses and conclusions. Photo ref. 470, featuring a horse startled at the sight of the author's large American wagon, carries a symptomatic meaning. It highlights the rarity of cars as they navigate through remote Polish bypasses.⁶⁰

In his review, however, W. Elmer Ekblaw concentrated solely on Louise Boyd's work, acknowledging her expertise in ethnographic photography and commending the very concept of the expedition and the publication of her work. He primarily justified his appraisal by emphasising that:

To many Americans, Poland is even more of a *terra incognita* than China – the Poles are almost as alien as the Turks. A book like this is necessary to familiarise our people with the fact that Poland is a captivating country with a rich history of achievements in the arts and sciences, boasting a culture as refined and modern as that of France. The Poles are dynamic, ambitious people with superior intellectual strength and spiritual idealism who have, for centuries, maintained their aspirations, cultural traditions and linguistic integrity despite the tripartite sovereignty of Russia, Prussia and Austria. Their significant economic and ethnic contributions to British life and industry through immigration are noteworthy. More a travelogue than a comprehensive treatise on Polish geography, even the text is pictorial. The book's most significant contribution lies in its splendid and plentiful depiction of landscapes, homes, folk, means of transportation, various aspects of industry and activity – particularly agriculture and rural land use – and other features of Polish countryside and village life.⁶¹

However, it should be remembered that the publication so warmly received by the world of science contained only a quarter of the photographs taken by Boyd during the expedition. The full extent of what she saw and recorded reflects the so-called "raw material" from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee library collections in the USA. Nonetheless, referring to the publication remains helpful as the travelogue, published by Boyd, is an edited version of her diary and notes that she kept during the expedition.

⁶⁰ A. Schou, "Louise A. Boyd...", pp. 186-187.

⁶¹ W.E. Ekblaw, "Boyd, Louise A. Polish Countrysides...", pp. 431-432.

Ruthenians/Ukrainians in Boyd's "Polish Countryside's Inventory"⁶²

Analysing the Museum photography collection's content, it is evident that Boyd skilfully organised her research and observations with a keen sense of observation despite the absence of formal professional education. The photos and comments focused on rural buildings and the materials used in their construction, distinctive landscape features, types of settlements, land cultivation methods, agricultural products, means of transportation, population demographics, clothing and trade between rural and urban areas. All photos are carefully described, including the place where they were taken, the date and sometimes the time. Some of the descriptions are extensive, detailing the materials used in constructing houses or for cleaning clothes. They also include market prices of products, step-by-step processes depicted in the photographs and anecdotes about people and events.⁶³ As Susan Gibson Mikos noted:

Through her camera lens we view the soft serenity of Polish fields and farmsteads, the bustle of marketplaces, and the gaiety of holiday costumes. We see windmills and wagons, forests and mountains, the fresh faces of young people and the weatherbeaten visages of their elders. Boyd shows us life as it was lived amongst the thatched roof wooden cottages of innumerable villages whose origins reached back to Medieval times. It was a life often poor in material goods, but with a rich traditions of arts, music, dance, oral literature, customs, and material culture.⁶⁴

In a number of cases, the author took sequences of several photos, documenting a character or an object in several respects – which gives the images presented in the album part of the reportage a film-like character.

Boyd's work on the territories of the Second Polish Republic can be classified into two arbitrary groups based on its approach. There are several general views, including a distant street in a village and cottages and barns observed from the opposite side of the river. Additionally, there are panoramas of fields and meadows with rows of stacks. Boyd discerned specific features at the intersection of Polish villages and the landscape, noting variations in the structures of human settlements across different regions of the country, diverse roofing styles and the modes of communication on both land and water. Another group consists of close-ups, capturing the essence of functionality, including women intricately weaving wicker crafts, a mother with children at the barn entrance, men beside a wicker fence, stalls at the Lviv market,

⁶² The term 'Ruthenian' was applied by Boyd and her contemporaries to Ukrainians who occupied the former Austrian province of Galicia. S. Gibson Mikoś, *Polish Countryside: The Photographs of Louise Arner Boyd...*, p. 13.

⁶³ S. Gibson Mikoś, "Louise Arner Boyd..."

⁶⁴ S. Gibson Mikoś, *Polish Countryside: The Photographs of Louise Arner Boyd...*, p. 7.

a rare glimpse of a street in Łódź (city photos are uncommon), skilled craftsmen in front of their blacksmith shops or mills and a group of clergy members in front of a church. This genre of photos constitutes the individual character of Boyd's collection. These striking images highlight a person's strong connection with what they have created around themselves and with their family and community. The bond captured in these photographs primarily signifies what is enduring and hereditary (i.e., lasting for generations).⁶⁵ As Boyd suggests, it underscores the dignity of the people portrayed despite their toil and poverty – this resilience is distinctly evident in these photographs. She was touched by their warmth and hospitality and wrote – with conviction – about the strength, kindness, and goodness that were visible on their weather-beaten faces. Her photographs of the Polish province are valuable in both scientific and artistic terms.⁶⁶ All of this allows us to assume that despite her material wealth, she appreciated the value of a simple life. In this way of perceiving places and people in interwar Poland, we also see Boyd's personal search for an existential nature.

Narrative of the tour: Places

An American's perspective of the Polish countryside in the early 1930s, captured through the lens of a camera, offers unique insights. Firstly, the collection serves as a documentation of the exploration of a geographical, ethnographic and social landscape that was novel to Louise A. Boyd. The photographs taken during the trip reflect her fascination with the novelty and exotic character of the Polish provincial landscape. Through her lens, backwardness ceases to be a social problem, and the underdeveloped countryside is portrayed as natural, even wild.

Louise Boyd's photos from Poland are significantly different from those from the Arctic. While the latter shows majestic landscapes of mountains, glaciers, icebergs and fjords, the photos from Poland mainly show people and their environment. Very few images from Poland show physiographic elements, while the majority depict residential areas, buildings, roads, markets and people. The original photos, donated to the American Geographical Society, are accompanied by detailed notes providing information about the locations, dates, and sometimes even the time of day, along with descriptions of the activities or scenes depicted.⁶⁷

Although her meeting with Poland was accidental and only served as an interlude in her Arctic research, Louise Boyd prepared for the journey with the same

⁶⁵ U. Czartoryska, "Z kart fotografii etnograficznej," in U. Czartoryska (ed.), *Wieś polska roku 1934...*

⁶⁶ L.A. Boyd, *Kresy: Fotografie...*, pp. 20-21.

⁶⁷ S. Gibson Mikoś, M.J. Mikoś, "Kresy w obiektywie..." p. 452.

diligence she applied when planning her Arctic expeditions. “One of the main purposes, as noted in her introduction by another writer in 1934, was to capture views of elements that were characteristic of the time but might vanish in the near future.”⁶⁸ As she wrote in the book, she was particularly interested in remote rural areas where traditional customs were best preserved: “Hence, from among the more than two thousand views taken, illustrating both rural and urban Poland, a selection has been made for the reproduction of this volume of photographs that illustrate the old rather than the new, the rustic and primitive rather than urban and cultivated.”⁶⁹

In Drohobych, she was particularly impressed by the colourful costumes of the local people.⁷⁰ In Delatyn, fate had it that she witnessed the funeral of a small child in the Greek Catholic rite. Although she did not dare to take photos of the procession, she noted in her itinerary that all the decorations were made of paper and conifers, which symbolised death in almost every country she visited in Europe.⁷¹

Over the following two days, she travelled from Kolomyia to Horodenka in the Dniester Valley. She noticed that East of Przemyśl, she felt like she had entered a new world.⁷²

During this expedition, Louise Boyd reached Zaleszczyki on the border with Romania and then journeyed north through Podolia to Tarnopol and Lviv, where she spent several days capturing numerous photographs, particularly at the market. On September 26, Boyd arrived in Złoczów. As she ventured further into Volhynia, she observed that the locals were relatively poorer, dressed in simpler attire compared to those in Podolia and at the foothills of the Carpathians. Among the notable locations in Volhynia were Kremenets and Pochaiivskaya Lavra, where Boyd and her companions lodged for the night. She later recounted the warm hospitality they received from the monks. The following day, their journey took them through Dubno to Kovel, Bucyna and Ratne. “Of particular interest to her was the architecture of public buildings, or rather the adaptation of residential structures to meet social needs. This is evident in the photos she captured, identified by archivists as ‘Ukraine, storage shed on stilts northwest of Kovel’⁷³ and ‘Ukraine, storefront in Kremenets.’”⁷⁴

It was no coincidence that her camera focused on Market Square, one of the main historical places in Lviv, where trade continued until the 1940s. Boyd sees this

⁶⁸ L.A. Boyd, *Polish Countrysides...*, p. 5.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 39.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., p. 37.

⁷³ AGSL Digital Photo Archive – Europe, Louise A. Boyd, box 58 S, lb000032, L.A. Boyd, *Ukraine, Storage Shed on Stilts Northwest of Kovel*, 29 September 1934, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agseurope/id/4940/rec/1>, 10 October 2023.

⁷⁴ AGSL Digital Photo Archive – Europe, Louise A. Boyd, box 58 S, lb001251, L.A. Boyd, *Ukraine, store front in Kremenets*, 27 September 1934, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agseurope/id/5937/rec/106>, 10 October 2023.

place as a multidimensional cultural text; an important place in social life. For her, the Market Square in the city centre is more than just a place of trade; it is a social phenomenon and a meeting place between provincial and urban cultures.⁷⁵

The market in Lviv has been preserved in several photographs. Describing her own feelings regarding that place, L. Boyd underlined: “Several days were spent in Lviv, during which I had the opportunity of taking many photographs, including market scenes. I was particularly struck by the fine type of people we saw in the market. The vendors seemed healthy both in body and mind, with strong faces and smiles that radiated humour and kindness.”⁷⁶

As portrayed by L.A. Boyd, the borderland landscape is primarily characterised by controversy and layers of provincialism. The photographer focuses on topics that clearly emphasise the economic marginality of the western lands of modern Ukraine (cattle carts on the streets of Lviv, a lack of road transport, rural women barefoot in the market, poor appearance of sellers, etc.). Through the lens of her camera, even cities and towns – especially Lviv – appear as deeply agricultural provinces of Europe. “Every foreign traveller in Poland today is struck by the contrast between the new and the old. Cities like Warsaw, Poznan, Lviv and Gdynia, with their electric street cars, taxicabs, public buildings and hotels, are towns of the 20th century. However, one need not go far from their outskirts to step back into rural scenes that have not greatly changed for several centuries.”⁷⁷

First of all, let us note that the socio-cultural situation in Lviv at that time was much more complicated and not as clear as captured in the photographs of L.A. Boyd. In the early 1930s, it was quite a large city with a thriving cultural life, a university, museums, an opera, a renowned artistic and scientific community, restaurants and cafés. It was adorned with remnants of Renaissance architecture and exquisite buildings in the style of European Art Nouveau. Let’s take the memories of Stanisław Lem (1921-2006), who was born in Lviv and spent his childhood there, and we notice that for him, Lviv was “an extremely European city” similar to Vienna, but much smaller. The writer draws a dynamic and metropolitan portrait of the city of his childhood:

After this discourse, I return to Lviv of the 1930s, with its shaded walkways and hilly streets. The almost sylvan Academic Street, flanked by the Grand Theatre on Legions Street and Mariacki Square in the centre, was particularly enchanting at night with the illuminated rooftop signs of Schicht’s soap and Shuchard chocolates. Around 1935, the captivating film *Al Jolson* was released, with its titular song ‘Sonny Boy’ quickly adopted by the street singers.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Л. Буряк, “Біографія крізь оптику мистецтва фотографії: колекція Луїзи Арнер Бойд як візуалізація авторського світу,” *Українська біографістика / Biographistica Ukrainica*, Vol. 23 (2022), p. 68.

⁷⁶ L.A. Boyd, *Polish Countrysides...*, p. 43, 72.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁷⁸ S. Lem, *Highcastle: A Remembrance*, transl. by M. Kandel, Cambridge, MA 2020, p. 79.

It is also worth noting that when travelling in the Borderlands, Louise Boyd, as a rule, avoided taking photos of urban landscapes or their inhabitants. She also photographed the latter to the extent that they were integral to the lives of peasants working on the land or were an area for selling agricultural produce. Hence, cities in photography are presented only as marketplaces, where the countryside meets the city. In this context, the image of Lviv in Louise Boyd's work is limited only to market scenes and does not represent the city in its full glory. In fact, it gives it a certain charm and intercultural colour, although it focuses primarily on the shadows and does not highlight the splendour of this pearl of Galicia.

Narrative of the tour: Women

Borderland photography by Louise A. Boyd, which can be viewed in the digital repository of the Golda Meir Library in Milwaukee, demonstrates the author's passion for reflective, classical compositions. The author did not strive for narrative or even scientific context in her work. Just like other exploratory photographers, she tried to capture the moment and her emotions. In place of that, her photos highlight her fascination with humanity. Particularly, her photos of Ruthenian/Ukrainian women show her admiration for the femininity of girls and mature women.

One gets the impression that they constitute a series of photographs that could be titled *Woman/women on....* In L.A. Boyd's eyes, many portraits of Hutsul (Ukrainian) women fill the collection, evoking various associations. The subjects of these photos serve as a testament to the photographer's heightened fascination with the female members of the communities residing in Galicia and Volhynia during the interwar period. It is unmistakable that Boyd was captivated by the Hutsul women's traditional attire. In her itinerary, she even noted:

Their costumes, which they wear not only during holidays and festivals, but also as their everyday attire, are particularly intriguing. The women were clad in bright red skirts, white blouses, richly embroidered in cross stitch and black or bright blue velvet vests, many of them elaborately embroidered or beaded.⁷⁹

Even though they dressed festively, their poverty and modesty are visible in photos from the markets in Staryi Sambir, Zalishchyky, Horodenka and Lviv, where women in richly decorated embroidered costumes wander the city streets barefoot. Nonetheless, Louise A. Boyd's scientific determination did not prevent her from acknowledging the personal allure of the individuals she photographed.⁸⁰ It is worth paying attention to two photographs from the Ukraine-Ruthenian women collection

⁷⁹ L.A. Boyd, *Polish Countrysides...*, p. 39.

⁸⁰ L.A. Boyd, *Kresy: Fotografie...*, pp. 20-21.

in Bolekhov⁸¹ and Ukraine-Ruthenian women near Bolekhov.⁸² Her photography is full of kindness towards them. This is particularly interesting in the context of the fact that Boyd mostly portrayed poverty and deprivation in the Polish provinces in the interwar period, but she did it in an extremely kind and even enthusiastic way.

As she wrote in *Polish Countrysides*, her stay at the market in Lviv resulted in a unique gallery of portraits of peasant women selling the work of their hands at the market. The author of the photos recorded a kaleidoscope of women's images against the background of the variety of agricultural products that women trade on the market. The unique gallery of portraits of Ukrainian peasant women is perceived as a collective portrait of a woman in the countryside. Against this backdrop, what will stand out are the portraits of individual women who somehow caught the photographer's attention, intrigued and interested her, and perhaps moved her for some reason.

The faces of each of them bear traces of hard work and women's indifference to their appearance. Some portraits are particularly expressive. What particularly stands out is a series of portraits featuring an elderly woman in Lviv, titled *Ukraine, Woman at Lviv Market*.⁸³ In fact, it is difficult to determine the age of the woman portrayed, but her wrinkled face and worn-out hands make the viewer assume that she is a mature person. Boyd, however, attempts to photograph her from various angles, seemingly searching for the most flattering one, while also capturing her vacant gaze, portraying her deep immersion in her own thoughts. Two years later, in Nipomo, California, Dorothea Lange captured an iconic photo of the Great Depression titled *Migrant Mother* (1936), depicting a mother with small children similarly gazing into the distance. In this context, Boyd's photo from the Lviv market, much like Lange's work, serves as an example of descriptive and ethnographic photography. However, unlike Lange's photo, Boyd's intention was not to incite social change or to appeal for aid for migrant farmers in search of work. The pictures of Boyd reflect admiration and awe for the natural beauty of a woman in a cheap, worn-out scarf, which a challenging life and hard work could not overshadow.

It is similar in the case of the portrait of two flower girls from Lviv, labelled *Ukraine, Two Women Selling Flowers at Lviv Market*⁸⁴ or in the photo labelled as

⁸¹ AGSL Digital Photo Archive – Europe, Louise A. Boyd, box 73 S, lb001737, L.A. Boyd, *Ukraine, Ruthenian Women in Bolekhov*, 21 September 1934, UWM Libraries, <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agseurope/id/5789/rec/101>, 10 October 2023.

⁸² AGSL Digital Photo Archive – Europe, Louise A. Boyd, box 73 S, lb001736, L.A. Boyd, *Ukraine, Ruthenian Women near Bolekhov*, 21 September 1934, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agseurope/id/5795/rec/103>, 10 October 2023.

⁸³ AGSL Digital Photo Archive – Europe, Louise A. Boyd, box 69 S, lb001447, L.A. Boyd, *Ukraine, Woman at Lviv Market*, 24 September 1934, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agseurope/id/5527/rec/122>, 10 October 2023.

⁸⁴ AGSL Digital Photo Archive – Europe, Louise A. Boyd, box 72 S, lb001666, L.A. Boyd, *Ukraine, Two Women Selling Flowers at Lviv Market*, 24 September 1934, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agseurope/id/5735/rec/115>, 10 October 2023.

*Ukraine, Woman Holding Chicken at Lviv Market.*⁸⁵ There is also a young woman in the photo signed as *Ukraine, Bread Stall at Lviv Market.*⁸⁶ Women were portrayed as being of different ages and wealth, as indicated by their clothes, posture, and looks. However, these portraits lack dynamics, they are quite static. The women portrayed by Boyd were usually shown frontally, rarely in profile.

However, in some photos, you can see the impatience of children who did not stay in the instructed position for long. The mothers held them gently as if they were stopping them in motion, as in the photo entitled *Ukraine, Women and Children Standing by House.*⁸⁷ Even the slightest movement was undesirable for the quality of the photo because it failed to capture the image in good quality. Nevertheless, Boyd did not seem to care at all. Some of the photos feature not only figures captured in motion, but also unexpected “background characters,” usually men. Those photographed, however, probably did not pose for Boyd at all. Even those captured in a sitting position (on the ground, on a bench, near a fence or in front of the wall of a house or shop with their families) do not express interest in the photographer and the fact that their photo was taken. It is worth noting three such approaches: 1) *Ukraine, Two Women in Elaborately Embroidered and Beaded Clothing;*⁸⁸ 2) *Ukraine, Women Standing in Front of House in Horodenka;*⁸⁹ 3) *Ukraine, Three Women Harvesting Potatoes North of Vorokhta.*⁹⁰

It might be a mistake to presume that these portraits are similar to each other, thus appearing repetitive and monotonous. In reality, a series of portraits were captured at marketplaces across different Galicia, Podolia and Volhynia regions. In addition to the gallery of portraits from the Lviv market, the following should be

⁸⁵ AGSL Digital Photo Archive – Europe, Louise A. Boyd, box 72 S, lb001661, L.A. Boyd, *Ukraine, Woman Holding Chicken at Lviv Market*, 24 September 1934, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agseurope/id/5751/rec/127>, 10 October 2023.

⁸⁶ AGSL Digital Photo Archive – Europe, Louise A. Boyd, box 72 S, lb001634, L.A. Boyd, *Ukraine, Bread Stall at Lviv Market*, 24 September 1934, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agseurope/id/5705/rec/94>, 10 October 2023.

⁸⁷ AGSL Digital Photo Archive – Europe, Louise A. Boyd, box 69 S, lb001436, L.A. Boyd, *Ukraine, Women and Children Standing by House*, 23 September 1934, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agseurope/id/5492/rec/146>, 10 October 2023.

⁸⁸ AGSL Digital Photo Archive – Europe, Louise A. Boyd, box 73 S, lb001745, L.A. Boyd, *Ukraine, Two Women in Elaborately Embroidered and Beaded Clothing*, 23 September 1934, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agseurope/id/5817/rec/113>, 10 October 2023.

⁸⁹ AGSL Digital Photo Archive – Europe, Louise A. Boyd, box 69 S, lb001441, L.A. Boyd, *Ukraine, Women Standing in Front of House in Horodenka*, 23 September 1934, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agseurope/id/5518/rec/163>, 10 October 2023.

⁹⁰ AGSL Digital Photo Archive – Europe, Louise A. Boyd, box 70 S, lb001519, L.A. Boyd, *Ukraine, Three Women Harvesting Potatoes North of Vorokhta*, 22 September 1934, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agseurope/id/5615/rec/108>, 10 October 2023.

mentioned: *Ukraine, Two Women Walking Through Zalishchyky Market*;⁹¹ *Ukraine, Woman and Child at Stary Sambir Market*;⁹² *Ukraine, Transporting Baby Carriage in Horse Drawn Carriage in Drohobych*;⁹³ *Ukraine, Ruthenian Women Returning from Bolekhov Market*.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the portraitist succeeded in capturing the uniqueness and individuality of each of her subjects. In several photographs, one can observe a cheerful expression on the faces of the individuals posing before Louise Boyd's lens. Some even smile gently.

Hence, it is not astonishing that Boyd initially contemplated naming the album containing photos from the Polish province as 'snapshots.' The photos taken during Boyd's 1934 expedition through Poland reflect her quest for impressions, capturing moments that communicate the feeling of being "there and then" and expressing what the Polish countryside – with its traditional farming, construction and cultivation methods – personally signified to her.

More than ethnography. Final remarks

Louise Boyd perceived her mission in Poland as capturing the gradually disappearing way of life in Polish villages in photography. She gleaned information from local geographers about the areas she visited, closely observed the work of craftsmen and documented various techniques of land cultivation, food storage, weaving, clothing, religious customs and construction systems. Additionally, she delved into specific activities such as threshing, churning butter and crafting equipment in great detail. In doing so, she preserved an agricultural world that has since ceased to exist for future generations.

Understood in this way, her work can be compared with ethnographic photography, especially popular in the second half of the 19th-century photographic documentation of Indians in America. However, the differences were significant.

⁹¹ AGSL Digital Photo Archive – Europe, Louise A. Boyd, box 72 S, lb001629, L.A. Boyd, *Ukraine, Two Women Walking Through Zalishchyky Market*, 23 September 1934, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agseurope/id/5744/rec/116>, 10 October 2023.

⁹² AGSL Digital Photo Archive – Europe, Louise A. Boyd, box 72 S, lb001611, L.A. Boyd, *Ukraine, Woman and Child at Stary Sambir Market*, 20 September 1934, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agseurope/id/5745/rec/119> 10 October 2023.

⁹³ AGSL Digital Photo Archive – Europe, Louise A. Boyd, box 72 S, lb001617, L.A. Boyd, *Ukraine, Transporting Baby Carriage in Horse Drawn Carriage in Drohobych*, 21 September 1934, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agseurope/id/5750/rec/112>, 10 October 2023.

⁹⁴ AGSL Digital Photo Archive – Europe, Louise A. Boyd, box 73 S, lb001735, L.A. Boyd, *Ukraine, Ruthenian Women Returning from Bolekhov Market*, 21 September 1934, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agseurope/id/5783/rec/104>, 10 October 2023.

Nonetheless, according to Susan Gibson Mikos, Boyd's photographs are more natural, not as posed as Edward S. Curtis's photographs of Indians. This is due, on the one hand, to the fact that the modern Boyd camera was lighter and did not require a long time to set up the shot, which allowed for greater spontaneity of the approach. Despite occasionally asking the individuals she was interested in to pose, the descriptions on the back of the photos and the captured images themselves indicate that these poses were executed swiftly and naturally, without deliberate staging, a common feature apparent in many photos of indigenous people. The almost instantaneous shots give Louise A. Boyd's photographs an air of authenticity. Also, Boyd's motives were purely scientific; she had no commercial purpose for these photos beyond documenting. When selecting objects, she avoided adding colour to the images with additional props – she photographed people in an authentic environment.⁹⁵

Urszula Czartoryska also highlights the distinction between Louise Boyd's work in the Polish province and the photographs taken under the Resettlement Administration (1935) and Farm Security Administration (1937) by photographers engaged in government aid for landless farmers. American photographers, such as the aforementioned Dorothea Lange, captured their images in economically devastated agricultural areas of the USA. The contrast is significant: Boyd's photographs depict a world in a state of undeniable backwardness, even for that era, yet relatively stable. In contrast, Lange delves into areas affected by cataclysm, capturing abandoned farms, storm-ravaged stretches of fields and migrant farm workers in a perpetual quest for employment. The symbolic message, conveying uncertainty about the future, unfulfilled maternal warmth, lack of manual labour, and the fragmentation of familial bonds, is apparent in Lange's photographs and those of other American documentarians working within their own country, with a clear commitment to intervention and moralistic duty.⁹⁶

On the other hand, Boyd deliberately avoided what was new in rural work or construction, which was – after all – the increasingly widely introduced modern economy. The symbolism of her photography, as emphasised by Urszula Czartoryska, primarily manifests motifs related to a hierarchical society in which the almost sacred nature of cultivation and breeding remains undisturbed. Let us add that all this will disappear as a result of World War II, but technological/civilisational changes will also affect this area.⁹⁷

The collection presents L.A. Boyd as a talented artist who subtly sensed and could reflect the artistic aesthetics of the 1930s and trends of the time, giving her photos a more artistic character than documenting the reality of the Polish provinces in the interwar period. At the same time, her photos reveal her interest in and improvement in contemporary artistic trends.

⁹⁵ L.A. Boyd, *Kresy: Fotografie...*, p. 21.

⁹⁶ U. Czartoryska, "Z kart fotografii..."

⁹⁷ Ibid.

The characteristic static nature and even at times monumentalisation of the motifs, particularly evident when dealing with the motif of a family group wandering or even a child on the road, is certainly achieved consciously by the author. This method brings together a double awareness of choice: the choice of a frame marked by the seriousness of means, in accordance with the author's belief in the ancient tradition of a way of life. All this is accompanied by an undeniable awareness of certain experiences in modern photography, particularly in the avant-garde of the 1930s, characterised by the purity of composition, logical structure and occasionally deliberate poster-like frontal approach. In this way, Boyd responded to the "spirit of the times" expressed in progressive photography in formal terms and using a symbolic language related, for example, to the language of film of the 1930s.⁹⁸

The undoubted advantage of L.A. Boyd's as a nonprofessional photographer was her keen sense of space and her ability to capture those moments of life that best reveal the inner world of an individual. The ability to find the most expressive threads, see iconic places, and capture the shades of emotions on the characters' faces made Boyd's photos a unique catalogue of types of inhabitants of the Polish borderland.

One of the photos in Louise Boyd's digitised collection, taken at the Lviv market, stands out with the caption *Ukraine, Boy with Chicken in Coup at Lviv Market*⁹⁹ due to its distinct composition compared to the other photos in the collection. However, without this photo, we could not say that some change is coming and that it is inevitable. Not only is it a change of generations but also a civilisational change.

In the photo, Boyd depicted a teenager selling poultry while engrossed in reading a book. The photographer successfully captured the moment when the boy, absorbed in his reading, appears oblivious to his likely responsibilities of selling and guarding the stand. Evidently indifferent to whether the goods will be purchased, the plot of the book seems to be of much greater interest to him. This boy captured by L.A. Boyd in the chaos of the centre of Lviv in September 1934, represents another seemingly new generation. The book in his hands symbolises the future, which will probably not be related to farm work and market days in a nearby town. Most likely, the protagonist of her photo will be able to get an education, so it is unlikely that he will stay in the village. The optimistic message conveyed by this somewhat contemplative photograph not only enriches the entire collection of photographs but also portrays the traveller as someone in search of extraordinary instances beyond the routine of everyday life in the Polish province.

Louise A. Boyd's photographs also have an additional value compared to other well-known images of Polish peasants that are known in Polish literature on the subject. These photographs are a reflection of the observations made on life in the

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ AGSL Digital Photo Archive – Europe, Louise A. Boyd, box 72 S, lb001662, L.A. Boyd, *Ukraine, Boy with Chicken in Coup at Lviv, Market*, 24 September 1934, UWM Libraries, at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agseurope/id/5728/rec/202>, 10 October 2023.

Polish countryside during the mid-1930s by a foreigner, traveller, and talented observer. Presented in Poland in 1987 at an exhibition organised by the Museum of Art in Łódź, they were a great surprise for the Polish audience – astonishing with the breadth of folkloric themes, competence in selecting regional materials and understanding of customs.¹⁰⁰ In the introduction to the exhibition catalogue, Ryszard Stanisławski also emphasised:

In addition to the exceptional photographic values, Louise Boyd's documentation will rekindle memories and inspire nostalgic reflection on a bygone era for some. For others, it will evoke imaginative depictions of the surroundings, portrayals of people, and customs that they may never have encountered, all of which have become part of the past, giving way to a landscape altered by new technologies and means of communication, and by the increasingly effective infiltration of modern civilization that is gradually replacing the characteristics of old Polish folk culture.¹⁰¹

It is important, especially when it comes to snapshots of rural life from Galicia and Volhynia, to realize that Louise Boyd preserved an image of these lands that is no longer possible to imagine due to the events of the last World War. As Cathrin Ciancia, who extensively used the book *Polish Countrysides* when researching the ethnic situation in the interwar period in this area, wrote:

As scholars, we impose our own sense of significance on the physical and imagined spaces that we encounter. Looking to the interwar period, our perspectives are inevitably shaped by knowledge of what happened here during the Second World War. On the one hand, the interwar history of Volhynia might easily become infused with nostalgia, not least because the multiethnic Volhynian borderlands of 1918-1939 seem so much more enticing than today's ethnically homogenous region. Like the geographer Louise Boyd, who took photos and wrote descriptions of Volhynia during her visit in the 1930s, we are captivated by the cacophony of languages, the variety of religious beliefs and lifestyles, and the diverse landscapes that the interwar province had to offer.¹⁰²

It is also worth remembering that Louise Boyd's goal was not to create a comprehensive, richly detailed picture of life in the Polish provinces, or the relationship between the centre and the province, the city and the countryside in the Second Polish Republic. In this way, in the social dimension, Louise Boyd's photography remained outside the political situation in the area and only meticulously documented the disappearing pre-industrial civilisation. It should be noted that the Polish province portrayed by Boyd did not quite match the idyllic depiction seen in her photographs. According to Włodzimierz Mędrzecki and Kathryn Cianci, the Eastern Galician

¹⁰⁰ U. Czartoryska (ed.), *Wieś polska roku 1934...*, p. 5.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² K.C. Ciancia, *Poland's Wild East: Imagined Landscapes and Everyday Life in The Volhynian Borderlands, 1918-1939*, Stanford, CA 2011, at <https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:sz204nw1638/Ciancia%20Dissertation%20August%2019-augmented.pdf>, 10 October 2023.

province, even within the context of the Second Polish Republic, was a region that lagged behind economically and struggled with disadvantages. While Louise Boyd, as an outsider, perceived the borderland as an enchanting, primitive landscape, the region was an economic, political and security nightmare for the fledgling state.¹⁰³ However, the photographer was certainly not seeking to highlight evidence of economic backwardness. Instead, she depicted the everyday lives of the people within it, showcasing their resilience and their ability to thrive despite any challenges it presented – at least in her opinion at the time.

On the other hand, Polish-Ukrainian relations remained beyond Boyd's reach, and the ongoing tension was also felt in the provinces. Let's recall, for example, that a few years prior to Louise A. Boyd's arrival, the Galician village experienced the impact of the pacification in 1930, leaving a profound mark on social relations in the area. It is worth noting that the International Geographical Congress of 1934 was scheduled to take place a few months after the political assassination of Minister Bronisław Pieracki by OUN member Hryhorij Maciejko on one of Warsaw's streets, with the city serving as the host of the Congress. Furthermore, it cannot be excluded that the Polish guides of the American photographer played a role in preventing her involvement in the intricate web of ethnic relationships in Galicia and Volhynia during the 1930s. Perhaps, in this way, they served more as "gatekeepers" than mere guides, to borrow from an ethnographic perspective.

Nevertheless, Louise A. Boyd's photograms, placed as raw ethnographic material in the repository of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee library in the USA, today have the value that she wanted to give them from the beginning when she was considering the publication of *Polish Countrysides*. They are a reminder of a world whose traces have almost disappeared today. The collection focused on rural landscapes and the architecture of villages and farms, capturing various farming methods, road and water transport scenes, village types and traditional clothing. With meticulous descriptions and detailed lists of the photographed locations and subjects, the collection serves as a valuable documentation of building styles and techniques, traditional costumes, transportation, markets and agricultural and fishing practices. Boyd was neither a professional geographer nor a photographer, but it cannot be denied that she had a sense of composing photos. Thanks to her skilled photographer's eye, she was able to capture visually attractive photographs that also serve as scientifically intriguing documents of a bygone era. The significance of these photos extends beyond the confines of ethnography, as we have endeavoured to emphasise in this article.



¹⁰³ See W. Mędrzecki, *Kresowy kalejdoskop. Wędrówki przez ziemie wschodnie Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej 1918-1939*, Kraków 2018, p. 212; K.C. Ciancia, "Borderland Modernity: Poles, Jews, and Urban Spaces in Interwar Eastern Poland," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 89, No. 3 (2017), pp. 531-561.

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Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8