

Widok. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture

title:

An Album of Scenes from Rural Life? Marcin Olszyński's Photographs from Starogród (1856)

author:

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source:

Widok. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture 41 (2025)

URL:

<https://www.pismowidok.org/en/archive/41-photoalbums/an-album-of-scenes-from-rural-life>

doi:

<https://doi.org/10.36854/widok/2025.41.3059>

publisher:

Widok. Foundation for Visual Culture

affiliation:

SWPS University

University of Warsaw

keywords:

Marcin Olszyński; amateur photographer; photographic album; photography; 19th century; Starogród; Karol Beyer; Marek Ptasiński

abstract:

The text discusses a photographic series by Marcin Olszyński, taken in 1856 in the village of Starogród near Warsaw. It attempts to reconstruct the circumstances under which the photographs were created and to reassemble the series based on surviving images, manuscripts, and press articles. The text includes reflections on the 19th-century understanding of the term “photographic album” and the practices surrounding its use, placing Olszyński’s series in a new light. It offers a reinterpretation by broadening the research perspective to include an analysis of Olszyński’s working methods, his relationships, and introduces the material context of the surviving prints as a source. It posits that Olszyński’s series is much more than only the first Polish ethnographic photography, but also, in a broader context, a multidimensional narrative—and above all, a fascinating and innovative project that marked a turning point in the career of the young amateur.

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An Album of Scenes from Rural Life? Marcin Olszyński's Photographs from Starogród (1856)

A as in Album

In the nineteenth century, before the advent of photography, people understood albums as small, portable museums¹ with autographs, fragments of poetry or music, or drawings. Photographs naturally joined this list relatively quickly,² using the already established forms rooted in tradition and fashion. Over time, they developed their own formats.³

In addition to the traditional bound codex form that presented a collection, the term "albums" also referred to portfolios with loose leaves, and even to individual leaves without any binding. Karol Beyer's 1859 *Album fotograficzny widoków Warszawy* (A Photographic Album of Views of Warsaw) serves as an example: a portfolio of twenty-four loose sheets, which buyers could also purchase separately, without a cover. Besides the plates selected by Beyer, customers at his studio could acquire many other views mounted on leaves bearing a lithographed title of the collection.⁴ One could thus say that the album itself represented an open form. As a set defined by the author and publisher, it conveyed a certain concept. However, as an expanded selection, the album allowed buyers to modify this concept and create their own new wholes.

In the 1850s, themed albums began appearing in the offers of Warsaw's print shops and photographic studios. Published in small print runs, these albums occupied a space somewhere between publishing and handicraft. They presented collections of photographs showing views, historical monuments, or artworks. Unlike portrait albums, friendship books, or autograph books, these works lacked a predefined personal character, but people

could personalize them in various ways. Owners often did so by adding bindings, placing ownership marks and bookplates, and altering the format, order, or layout of the photographs.⁵ In this way, the owner became a co-author.

Thinking of an album as a collection frees it from a rigid form. The album becomes dynamic, recreated, deconstructed, and constructed according to a new idea with each use. One step further, even the idea itself—the concept behind assembling a set—could be called an album.

At the exhibition *Lovely Is the Youth of Our Age: Photo Albums 1850–1950* (*Śliczna jest młodość naszego wieku. Fotoalbumy 1850–1950*), the curatorial team and I employed the term “unrealized album,” understood as an album that remains in the realm of intention, concept, or imagination, lacking a material form. Nevertheless, the nineteenth-century press referred to such constructs as albums, indicating their presence in the public consciousness. In this context, among other works,⁶ we presented several photographs from a series created by Marcin Olszyński (1829–1904)⁷ in Starogród. By doing so, we introduced these photographs into a new interpretative domain.⁸

A as in Amateur

Olszyński came from a landowning family and had considerable property. A youthful interest in art brought him into a circle of artist friends. Olszyński spent time with those people and supported them financially. Photography, an ever-evolving field that stirs imagination and curiosity, changed radically at the turn of the 1840s and 1850s. This transformation did not escape the attention of the young Olszyński. The daguerreotype gave way to a new negative-positive method, which enabled the production of paper prints. The ability to reproduce high-quality images created new possibilities for the broader use of photographs, for example in albums and publications, which proved deeply inspiring. In Warsaw, Karol Beyer (1818–1877)⁹ began using the

wet collodion technique in his studio in the spring of 1852. Most likely at that time, Olszyński decided to try his hand at photography and turned to Beyer for guidance.¹⁰

In 1851, Beyer traveled to London for the Great Exhibition,¹¹ which gave photography an unprecedented platform and voice. There, he met Frederick Scott Archer (1814–1857),¹² from whom he learned the new wet collodion technique.¹³ Beyer eagerly shared his experience and practical knowledge, becoming a mentor for many amateurs in Warsaw. Aleksander Karoli (1828–1901) recalls that he explored the art of photography during the summer of 1853 as a middle school student.

At that time, I often visited Beyer, who never refused to give me advice or explanations in the field of photography. He kindly lent me a cast-off single lens, to which I adapted a small camera—or rather something resembling one—constructed by hand out of cardboard and wooden slats. Dinner plates served as trays, and the darkroom was the fireplace in the dark kitchen of an old-town hallway. I prepared the glass plates, collodion, sensitizing bath, so-called “salted” paper, and so on, by myself.¹⁴

The collodion method continued to improve, which the press reported with great attention. The technique seemed visionary and future-proof. Its use sparked the imagination, particularly among young people, who saw it as an opportunity to pursue their ambitions. In 1854, *Gazeta Codzienna* (The Daily Newspaper) wrote about a peculiar photographic passion observed in Warsaw:

Many amateur photographers have appeared; they photograph with abandon. Because they do this without charging, their friends become the victims of their relentless talent. Like it or not, friends must serve as models for the desired compositions and submit to a thousand exercises, directed by the merciless hand of the amateur artist, who

seats them in every conceivable posture and shape. For their suffering, they receive the reward of seeing their likeness entrusted to paper or glass for immortalization—granted, not always accurately, but always to the amateur’s delight.¹⁵

Olszyński ranked among these enthusiasts: he eagerly photographed his friends, also in informal situations, staging scenes that resembled “tableaux vivants.” Then, he pasted these photographs into albums that he had been compiling since 1849.¹⁶

The albums included drawings—often humorous—as well as accounts of the artists’ five walking trips. Thus, they served as chronicles of Warsaw’s artistic bohemia while maintaining a practical and open-ended character. In July 1852, *Kurier Warszawski* (Warsaw Courier) published an extensive note on the expeditions of young painters. The note included the following passage:

The works produced [during these excursions] are collective efforts and form a specific general album filled with relics of antiquity and materials worthy of preservation. Therefore, when planning to release any historical or descriptive work, publishers will find ready, rich sketches and studies for their purposes in these works.¹⁷

In early March 1856, Olszyński presented four albums to a broader audience during one of the archaeological evenings at the Resursa Obywatelska Palace. According to press reports, his presentation generated interest and received positive feedback.¹⁸ In the summer of 1856, the twenty-seven-year-old Olszyński set out from Warsaw to the small village of Starogród situated on the Świder River, likely with a group of friends. The village encompassed the manor and estate farm that belonged to the family of Olszyński’s friend, Witold Horodyński (1831–1900).¹⁹



Fig. 1 Marcin Olszyński, photography scene, Starogród village, 1856, salted paper print, cardboard, Muzeum of Warsaw (AF 16655)

A Portrait-Story

This was not the group's first visit; they had rested in the manor during an excursion to Vilnius in July 1851²⁰ and returned again two years later.²¹ In August 1855, the group arrived in Starogród, and Olszyński documented the time spent in "light-hearted amusement"²² with several photographs.²³ His visit the following year seems to have assumed a different character and focused on a deliberate photographic project. Olszyński brought two cameras with accessories and a portable darkroom with chemical reagents²⁴ necessary for producing negatives using the wet collodion technique on glass plates. During his stay on the Horodyński estate, he created a series of more than a dozen photographs that documented the village and its inhabitants.

In this case, a photograph (Figure 1) from the collection of the Museum of Warsaw serves as a valuable source. The picture shows a scene of photographing, captured through the “eye” of a second lens.²⁵ On the left, Olszyński appears hidden under a focusing cloth, looking into the upside-down image on the ground glass of a large-format box camera; most probably, he checks the composition. In the center, a man in a coat and cap stands posing for the photograph. In the background, we see two horse-drawn carts. On the right, a group of women and children observe the scene; they sit on the ground, probably in front of the local tavern. Most likely, the photograph shows a Sunday scene,²⁶ judging by the festive clothing and the number of people involved, who would have otherwise been performing farm work. This unique document reveals the behind-the-scenes reality, usually hidden from view in intentionally selected and curated prints.

The only individual portrait in the series depicts the bust of an older man (Figure 4). This photograph seems exceptional for several reasons. First, I think that it does not represent a “folk type” but rather a very modern attempt at a psychological portrait of a specific person. The model faces forward and looks directly into the lens. The photographer aims to capture him as naturally as possible, without pose or embellishment.

Second, Olszyński cropped the print from a much larger negative and cut it in a way that directs the viewer’s attention to the man’s face.²⁷ Such framing and tight cropping of a photographic portrait occurred very rarely at that time. The

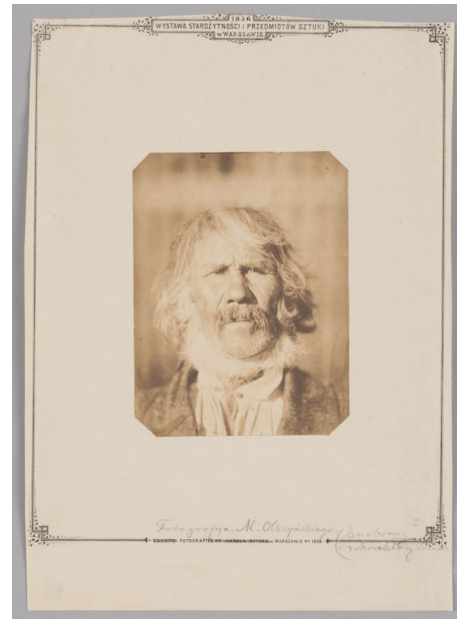


Fig. 2 Marcin Olszyński, Portrait of Marek Ptasiński, 1856, salted paper print, cardboard, Museum of Warsaw (AF 16657)

picture recalls a model's head study, the type of exercise students in art schools perform as drawings or using other techniques. Thus, Olszyński borrows from the artistic language of preparatory material, produces photographic notes and sketches, and breaks with the tradition of the studio portrait, which typically assumed a specific pose and a wider presentation of the model. This way, he rejects the photographic canon of the time, which followed the conventions of painting to create supporting material for painters. Such an approach brings him closer to the contemporary understanding of documentary photography. Olszyński produced three more group portraits: of women (Figure 5), of children (Figure 6), and of men (Figure 7). This fact raises the question: why did he choose this particular man?



Fig. 3. Marcin Olszyński, Peasant women, Starogród, 1856, copy on salt paper, cardboard, National Museum in Warsaw (Gr.Pol.16288 MNW);

Fig. 4. Marcin Olszyński, peasant children, Starogród, 1856, copy on salt paper, cardboard, National Museum in Warsaw (Gr.Pol.16289 MNW);

Fig. 5. Marcin Olszyński, Peasants, Starogród, 1856, copy on salt paper, cardboard, National Museum in Warsaw (Gr.Pol.16290 MNW).

The portrait drew the contemporaries' attention as well. Kazimierz Władysław Wóycicki (1807–1879), editor of *Biblioteka Warszawska* (Warsaw Library), wrote: "Finally, we must mention the bust of an old man from the same village, a former soldier, which impresses with the unique originality and expressiveness of his face."²⁸ Many years later, in 1870, the illustrated weekly *Kłosy* (Ears of Grain) published a wood engraving by Feliks Zabłocki (1846–1874) based on a drawing by Henryk Pillati (1832–1894), made after that very photograph. At the time, Olszyński worked as *Kłosy*'s art director and freely drew from his own archive. From the caption "Marek Ptasiński, an old peasant," we learn that to Olszyński, this man was not an anonymous figure. The photographer must have noted the man's name during his stay in Starogród. Interestingly, Olszyński ensured that Ptasiński's portrait, although published in the section "Głowy charakterystyczne" ("Characteristic Heads"), appeared with the appropriate title.

For the landowner, Witold Horodyński, Ptasiński certainly held a special place. In his memoirs, Horodyński writes: "This always reminds me of the peasant from the Starogród area named Ptasiński. Tall, broad-shouldered, with a pleasant appearance, he served in his youth in Napoleon's voltigeur regiment, took part in many campaigns, and liked to recount them in his own way. I enjoyed listening to him."²⁹ Horodyński shares an anecdote told by Ptasiński, from which it appears that the latter fought in Spain.

Olszyński's Album V contains Wojciech Gerson's drawing titled *Opowiadanie staruszka* (*An Old Man's Story*) (Figure 8), which depicts an elderly man seated under a tree, surrounded by a group of six young men, including Olszyński and Gerson.³⁰ In fact, the old man may be Ptasiński, and the entire composition likely portrays a scene from Starogród.



Fig. 6. Wojciech Gerson, *Old Man Narrating*, c. 1855, watercolour, pencil, National Museum in Warsaw (Rys.Pol.569/11 MNW)

People play an important role in Olszyński's photographs from the Starogród series. They do not serve as staffage or incidental, insignificant elements that merely complement the landscape—the most popular subject in photography at the time. The innovative quality of these photographs lies in their shift of focus: the villagers, their lives, surroundings, homes, farmyards, and customs take center stage. Olszyński's perspective seemingly moves beyond the prevailing approaches to photography and ethnographic frameworks. The photographs defy simple classification; instead, they seem multidimensional. In the album context of an album, namely when interpreting the entire series, they create a story about the lives of specific individuals and their surrounding world.

The series can be understood as a narrative about Horodyński's success as a landowner. Written before his death in 1900, Horodyński's memoir evidences his deep commitment to the estate and farm.³¹ The memoir reports that, after returning from his agricultural studies in Greifswald, Horodyński applied his newly gained knowledge to revive a property he found in a state of collapse. As he recalls, "the pre-harvest season proved harsh; the poorer rural population literally starved to death."³² Horodyński's notes indicate that he formally became the leaseholder of Starogród at the time.³³ One

of his first decisions involved the dismissal of the steward, a man named Białowiejski, who had beaten peasants and neglected his duties.³⁴ The decision likely earned Horodyński popularity and goodwill among the farm workers and villagers.



Fig. 7. Marcin Olszyński, Harvest Festival, Starogród, 1856, copy on salt paper, cardboard, National Museum in Warsaw (Gr.Pol.16291 MNW)

Unfortunately, Horodyński's notes lack a single mention of Olszyński's visit or of any photography conducted on the estate. In his memoir, Horodyński explains that certain pressing issues overwhelmed him at that time: first, the responsibility he carried as a steward, and second, family matters³⁵ –his father's deteriorating health, the sudden death of his sixteen-year-old brother Mieczysław on March 1, 1855,³⁶ and the passing of his beloved mother, Józefa Horodyńska née Przygodzka,³⁷ a few months later. After those events, Horodyński's father distributed the estate among the children and moved to Warsaw. This way, Horodyński formally became the owner of Starogród.³⁸ When Olszyński arrived in 1856, Horodyński welcomed him as the rightful host.

The album includes a photograph that depicts a harvest festival (Figure 9), at which the young Horodyński receives a delegation of peasants, who deliver agricultural produce. This image shows his success as a modern estate manager and the interdependence between his work and the rural community's well-being. I believe that without Horodyński's engagement, his attitude, and the nature of his relationship with the peasants, Olszyński would not have been able to create such a series. The act of photographing must have created a particular kind of tension; moreover, it required consent and mutual trust. Perhaps we should currently consider the Starogród photographs as the result of a collaboration rather than as "ethnographic" observation, namely according to their previous classifications.³⁹

In late November 1856 and in early 1857, the Warsaw press reported on the photographic series created in Starogród and intended for sale:⁴⁰

One of our local amateur artists produced exquisite photographic images taken from nature, presenting scenes from rural life Together, they may form a photographic album of village life events.⁴¹

In March 1858, Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, prolific novelist, journalist, historian, and publisher, authored a column in which he refers to the series as a "collection of studies" and a "photographic notebook." Partially favorable, his review also harshly criticizes the portraits, accusing them of excessive realism.⁴² Beyer had sent Olszyński's photographs to Kraszewski, asking for a mention in the article to support the young artist, whose works clearly failed to sell:

Although, taking execution into account—done in the countryside and by a person with little experience—not all of them present favorably, in many respects they still prove engaging and far more interesting than mine. He immediately

tackled the most difficult task: capturing subjects that could move. And even if he did not give us perfect images, they are ours, so much so that one cannot stop looking at them.⁴³



Fig. 8. Marcin Olszyński, Farmstead, Starogród, 1856, copy on salt paper, cardboard National Museum in Warsaw (Gr.Pol.16292 MNW)

Fig. 9. Marcin Olszyński, Threshing, Starogród, 1856, copy on salt paper, cardboard, National Museum in Warsaw (Gr.Pol.16293 MNW);

Fig. 10. Marcin Olszyński, Mill, Starogród, 1856, salt paper print, cardboard, National Museum in Warsaw (Gr.Pol.16295 MNW)

A Rewriting Attempt

Olszyński's album followed an open formula: buyers could purchase the photographs individually or as a set. The absence of a binding posed no problem. In the print shops that offered the album for sale, one could choose a suitable folder on the spot or commission a preferred cover or binding at a bookbindery⁴⁴ – a popular practice at the time. The photographer did not assign a specific title to the album.⁴⁵ As a result, the images escaped unambiguous classification, which left them open to interpretation and allowed for various uses.

The complete set has not surfaced or survived to date. The National Museum in Warsaw holds nine out of the set of more than a dozen photographs sent to Kraszewski: *Kobiety wiejskie* (*Peasant Women*) (Figure 5); *Dzieci wiejskie* (*Peasant Children*) (Figure 6); *Wieśniacy* (*Peasants*) (Figure 7); *Dożynki* (*Harvest Festival*) (Figure 9); *Zagroda wiejska* (*Peasant Homestead*) (Figure 10); *Młocka* (*Threshing*) (Figure 11); *Chata; Młyn* (*Cottage; Mill*) (Figure 12); and *Niedziela na wsi* (*Sunday in the Countryside*).⁴⁶

We can find two photographs from this series in the Special Collections at the joint Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Krakow. One shows a country cottage,⁴⁷ and the other constitutes a cropped fragment of the mill composition.⁴⁸ Both belonged to Teofil Lenartowicz, a poet and ethnographer, who included them in his personal album.⁴⁹ The Museum of Warsaw has four photographs from the same series (Figures 1, 3, 4, 13).⁵⁰ These are salted paper prints, notable for their mounting on thin cardboard with a lithographed frame from *Album Wystawy starożytności i przedmiotów sztuki w Warszawie* (*Album of the Exhibition of Antiquities and Artworks in Warsaw*). Beyer prepared the album for the abovementioned exhibition, held in 1856. The photographs appear to have served a working purpose. Evidence suggests that Olszyński used his teacher's studio and darkroom and likely repurposed Beyer's mounts for his own experiments. Interestingly, we can try to imagine the photographers' collaboration and their work behind the scenes at the time.

In early 1857, Wóycicki juxtaposed both albums, comparing Olszyński's series with the first Polish photographic book by Beyer—a methodically crafted and fully professional work:

The photographic albums of Karol Beyer and the young artist Marcin Olszyński demonstrate how much support photography can offer for archaeological research and our young painters who have devoted their talent exclusively to native subjects. The first photographer captured the antiquities displayed at the exhibition in the Potocki Palace in the most faithful copies. The second photographed various views of a village in Mazovia—Starogród in the Stanisławów district on the Świder River—including cottage structures, a watermill, the interior of a barn during threshing, and the harvest festival ritual. He also presented three separate group portraits: one of peasants, one of village women, and one of young boys. ... One should hope that others will follow this fortunate idea in all regions of our country, and soon we will possess a wealth of material for our painters.⁵¹

Wóycicki also highlights several shots and the portrait of the peasant as ready-made painterly arrangements. If we were to follow the logic of *Biblioteka Warszawska's* editor, then a revision of the existing view of the first Polish photographic albums would become necessary, and we would have to resituate Olszyński's series in the scholarly discourse.

What most likely inspired the series of photographs taken in the Polish countryside, were the walking tours across the country, in which Olszyński participated with a group of artist friends. The painters sketched landscapes and folk motifs,



Fig. 11. Marcin Olszyński, Sunday in the countryside, 1856, salt paper print, cardboard, Museum of Warsaw (AF 16654);

Fig. 12. Marcin Olszyński, Cottage in the village of Starogród, 1856, printed on salt paper, cardboard, Museum of Warsaw (AF 16656)

collecting supporting material for larger projects. The positive reception of Olszyński's albums at the *Resursa Obywatelska Palace* in early 1856 also played a role. The idea for the album may have come directly from Beyer himself, who worked on a similar collection for the antiquities exhibition at that time. Olszyński must have recognized photography's supplementary potential in the publishing industry, although the first illustrated magazine in Polish territories would only appear in 1859.⁵²



Fig. 13. Wojciech Gerson, *Composition with a camera*, watercolour, gouache, pencil, National Museum in Warsaw (Rys.Pol.13611 MNW)

Olszyński took a risky step. As an amateur, he lacked substantial experience or the resources that studio owners possessed. He had to rent two cumbersome large-format box cameras for at least several days and transport them to Starogród, which entailed costs. Moreover, he probably purchased the supplies for preparing collodion, as well as glass plates for negatives, printing paper, and mounts. Thanks to his acquaintance with Beyer, Olszyński could use Beyer's studio and printing room after returning from the Horodyński estate. Producing the final prints, attaching them to mounts, and preparing the sets required many attempts and possibly took

place in collaboration with an experienced individual, perhaps someone employed at the photographic studio. Finally, at least two print shops in Warsaw offered the photographs for sale. Merely placing one's work in such locations would have entailed commission fees.⁵³ All this effort must have generated considerable expenses. Beyer writes: "Olszyński, an amateur painter, currently resides in Rome. He has meanwhile abandoned photography because no one here recognized the merits of his work, and he did not recover even part of the costs. This deprived us of beautiful studies, which he would have known how to select."⁵⁴

The collection of the National Museum in Warsaw holds a drawing by Gerson (Figure 14), which I perceive as a comment on the failure of Olszyński's photographic project. Enclosed in a cartouche, a rural landscape appears at the center of the composition. One can identify it as Starogród from a distance (cf. Figure 2). The viewer's eye is drawn to the foreground, where a toppled box camera lies with a broken tripod. Lying atop the cartouche, a jester points toward the dramatic scene, with an owl, a symbol of wisdom, standing next to him. Rather than as a joke, the drawing seems to serve as a visual interpretation of Beyer's poignant words in his letter to Kraszewski.

Olszyński was deeply affected by the failure of his first professional project. However, he ultimately returned to photography. Around 1860, he joined Karol Beyer's Photographic Studio professionally, where he managed an additional printing room in Hotel Europejski.⁵⁵

The Starogród photographic series seemingly resists unambiguous interpretations. It comprises not only the first



Fig. 14. Wojciech Gerson, Starogród, 1853, watercolour, National Museum in Lublin (S/G/1357/ML)

Polish photographs on ethnographic themes, as Wanda Mossakowska notes, or bold attempts at photographing people outdoors, as Beyer rightly observes. The series also tells a story about a specific community, offers a view into a fragment of its world, testifies to the achievements of a young and progressive landowner, and documents the history of a place. Olszyński himself conceived the series as a photographic sketchbook—a modern supporting material for painters or publishers. To me, above all, this series tells the story of a young amateur and visionary whose ambition, working methods, passion, and relationships seemed to transcend his times.

- 1 Such a phrase appeared in considerations regarding the essence of the album even before the era of photography, in an article published in a French fashion magazine. "Qu'est-ce qu'un album?," *Le Règne de la mode. Nouvel almanach des modes rédigé par le Caprice* (1823): 119. Bernd Stiegler writes about this in "Was ist ein Fotoalbum?," *Fotogeschichte*, no. 161 (2021): 5–14.
- 2 Despite the undeniable and widespread popularity of photographic albums from the 1850s onward, *Orgelbrand's encyclopedia* mentioned photography in the context of the album only in 1898. *S. Orgelbranda Encyklopedia Powszechna z ilustracjami i mapami*, Vol. 1 (Warszawa: S. Orgelbranda Synowie, 1898), 133.
- 3 In the nineteenth century, one such format included albums with cut-out windows, which related to the rise of the *carte de visite*. In Warsaw, beginning in 1859, customers could order such photographs at Karol Beyer's studio. See Danuta Jackiewicz, *Karol Beyer 1818–1877* (Warszawa: Dom Spotkań z Historią; Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, 2012), 20.
- 4 "Wiadomości o fotografiach mających wartość historyczną albo artystyczną wykonanych w Zakładzie Karola Beyera, w Warszawie Nr. 389.," *Gazeta Warszawska*, no. 330 (1859): 6.
- 5 Aleksandra Fedorowicz-Jackowska, *Nieuznana rewolucja? Polskie książki i fotografia (1856–1883)* (Warszawa: Instytut Sztuki PAN, 2023).
- 6 We presented a selection of photographs of *Gazeta Świąteczna* (The Holiday Newspaper) readers from Konrad Prószyński's collection. Prószyński wanted to create an album of folk types, a project that never came to fruition. See Agata Koprowicz,

- "Nauka patrzenia na siebie. Egofotografie chłopskich czytelników 'Gazety Świątecznej' (1881–1905)," *Stan Rzeczy*, no. 2 (2021): 205–41.
- 7 The following authors discuss Olszyński and his group: Marta Ziętkiewicz-Szlendak, "Marcin Olszyński (1829–1904) i jego działalność fotograficzna," *Dagerotyp*, no. 21 (2012): 69–107; Stefan Kozakiewicz and Andrzej Ryszkiewicz, *Warszawska "cyganeria" malarska. Grupa Marcina Olszyńskiego* (Warszawa: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1955) (*Źródła do dziejów sztuki polskiej*, Vol. 8, ed. Andrzej Ryszkiewicz).
 - 8 Wanda Mossakowska was the first to study these photographs; Marta Ziętkiewicz discusses them too. However, no scholar has examined their album context yet. Cf. Wanda Mossakowska, "Etnograficzne fotografie Marcina Olszyńskiego (1829–1904)," in *Arma virumque cano. Profesorowi Zdzisławowi Żygulskiemu jun. w osiemdziesięciopięciolecie urodzin*, ed. Juliusz Chrościcki (Kraków: Muzeum Narodowe, 2006), 185–90; Ziętkiewicz-Szlendak, "Marcin Olszyński," 72–4.
 - 9 Wanda Mossakowska, *Początki fotografii w Warszawie (1839–1963)*, Vol. 1 (Warszawa: Instytut Archeologii i Etnologii PAN, 1994), 69.
 - 10 Mossakowska, "Etnograficzne fotografie," 189; Ziętkiewicz-Szlendak, "Marcin Olszyński," 72.
 - 11 Gerry Badger, "'The Most Remarkable Discovery of Modern Times': Three Photographic Exhibitions in 1850s London," in *Photoshow: Landmark Exhibitions that Defined the History of Photography*, ed. Alessandra Mauro (London: Thames & Hudson, 2014), 37–59.
 - 12 Martin Barnes, "Archer Frederick Scott," in: *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*, Vol. 1, ed. John Hannavy (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 55–7.
 - 13 Adam Wiślicki, "Fotografia w Warszawie," *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, no. 209 (1863): 377–78.
 - 14 Aleksander Karoli, "Karol Beyer," *Fotograf Warszawski*, no. 7 (1912): 105.
 - 15 *Gazeta Codzienna*, no. 269 (1854): 2.

- 16 Olszyński created a total of seven albums and an eighth one with explanatory notes. Unfortunately, at the end of the Second World War, looters took the albums to the Third Reich. Only three of them—marked IV, V, and VI—returned to Poland. The National Museum in Warsaw now holds these volumes. The explanatory notes volume was destroyed in 1944. Kozakiewicz and Ryszkiewicz, *Warszawska "cyganeria" malarska*, 47–130.
- 17 *Kurier Warszawski*, no. 175 (1852): 922.
- 18 *Gazeta Warszawska*, no. 65 (1856): 2.
- 19 Józef Horodyński (1790–1871) purchased the manor and estate most likely around the turn of the 1840s and 1850s, before Witold left to study agriculture in Greifswald. Feliks Witold Horodyński, *Notatki o koligacji i wspomnienia młodości spisał w roku jubileuszowym MCM Felix Witold Eustachy Horodyński na pamiątkę dzieciom swoim a w szczególności [sic] synowi Drowi Witoldowi Horodyńskiemu*, National Library MS acc. 10735, 95. Some sources list incorrect birth and death dates for Józef Horodyński, as well as other inaccurate information about his family members. Cf. Eugeniusz Kozłowski, "Horodyński Józef Karol," in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, Vol. 10 (Warszawa: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich; Wydawnictwo PAN, 1962), 3–4; *Gazeta Warszawska*, no. 174 (1871): 2; Stanisław Całka, *Starogród. Wieś mazowiecka* (Warszawa: ULMAK, after 2006), 33; Mossakowska, "Etnograficzne fotografie," 188.
- 20 Mossakowska, "Etnograficzne fotografie," 189.
- 21 The collection of the National Museum in Lublin includes a drawing by Wojciech Gerson, titled *Starogród* and dated 1853 (Figure 2) (S/G/1357/ML).
- 22 Olszyński's album VII features an invitation for painters to visit Starogród. Kozakiewicz and Ryszkiewicz, *Warszawska "cyganeria" malarska*, 130, item 633.
- 23 Album V, sheet 19, 34–36; Album VI, sheets 20–23, 26.
- 24 Most likely borrowed from Beyer's studio.

- 25 The operator of the second camera could have been Count Ferdynand Kloch de Kornitz, who had belonged to Olszyński's group at least since 1854. He worked at Beyer's studio, among other roles, as a retoucher and a posing assistant. In a nineteenth-century photographic studio, a posing assistant arranged the model's pose for the photograph. In the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw, Album IV, sheet 14, holds a portrait of Kloch with Juliusz Kossak, taken by Olszyński, with the note "1854." Among others, Mossakowska discusses Kloch's collaboration with Beyer in Mossakowska, *Początki fotografii w Warszawie*, 69.
- 26 One of the photographs in the series, held in the National Museum collection, bears the title *Niedziela na wsi* (Sunday in the Countryside) (Gr.Pol.17004Mnw). The Museum of Warsaw's collection includes the same print (Figure 3), but the print lacks a title (AF 16654).
- 27 Assuming that Olszyński borrowed the cameras from Beyer, he had access to two negative formats: 24.5 × 19.5 cm and 21 × 16 cm. See Jackiewicz, *Karol Beyer*, 27.
- 28 Kazimierz Władysław Wóycicki, "Doniesienia Literackie," *Biblioteka Warszawska* 1 (1857): 255.
- 29 Horodyński, *Notatki o koligacji*, 119.
- 30 Album V, p. 3, item 452. Kozakiewicz and Ryszkiewicz, *Warszawska "cyganeria" malarska*, 78.
- 31 Only Horodyński's account has survived, so it constitutes a subjective source that we cannot confront or compare with other testimonies to render the conclusions more objective.
- 32 Horodyński, *Notatki o koligacji*, 115.
- 33 Probably in 1854. See Horodyński, *Notatki o koligacji*, 115–16.
- 34 Horodyński, *Notatki o koligacji*, 114–15.
- 35 Horodyński, *Notatki o koligacji*, 118.
- 36 "Wiadomości miejscowe," *Warszawska Gazeta Policyjna*, no. 63 (1855): 2.
- 37 *Kurier Warszawski* published a funeral poem dedicated to Horodyńska, signed with the initials "J.Gr."; *Kurier Warszawski*, no. 171 (1855): 889. Obituary: *Kurier Warszawski*, no. 142 (1855): 735.

- 38 Horodyński, *Notatki o koligacji*, 116.
- 39 Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, Susan Meiselas, Laura Wexler, Wendy Ewald, and Leigh Raiford, *Collaboration: A Potential History of Photography* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2023).
- 40 *Gazeta Codzienna*, no. 14 (1857): 4.
- 41 *Kurier Warszawski*, no. 325 (1856): 1667. Most likely, the author of the mention was Karol Kucz (1815–1892), *Kurier Warszawski*'s editor-in-chief at the time, who had known Olszyński at least since 1855. Kozakiewicz and Ryszkiewicz, *Warszawska "cyganeria" malarska*, 76.
- 42 "Listy J.I. Kraszewskiego do Redakcji Gazety Warszawskiej," *Gazeta Warszawska*, no. 102 (1858): 2.
- 43 Karol Beyer's letter to Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, Jagiellonian Library, MS 6461, IV, sheets 202–204.
- 44 For a broader analysis of the bookbinding market in Warsaw and studios' offers, see Elżbieta Pokorzyńska, *Z księgą w herbie. Słownik biograficzny introligatorów warszawskich okresu zaborów* (Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego, 2021).
- 45 I titled the article "An Album of Scenes from Rural Life" after Kucz's apt phrase from the previously quoted mention promoting Olszyński's photographic series. *Kurier Warszawski*, no. 325 (1856): 1667.
- 46 Inv. no. Gr. Pol. 16288-16295 R and 17004 R.
- 47 Inv. no. BZS.RKPS.2029.7. Cf. Figure 13.
- 48 Inv. no. BZS.RKPS.2029.92. Cf. Figure 12.
- 49 *Umarli żywi*, Teofil Lenartowicz's album, manuscript 2029.
- 50 AF 16654 – AF 16657. Two of these photographs (Figures 3 and 13) match the ones held at the National Museum in Warsaw, titled *Chata* and *Niedziela na wsi*. Although produced as part of Olszyński's project, photograph AF 16655 (Figure 1) did not become part of the set for sale.
- 51 Wóycicki, "Doniesienia Literackie," 254–55.
- 52 *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* (Illustrated Weekly) used photographs as models for illustrations from the very beginning. See Ewa Nowak-Mitura, *Początki fotografii w prasie polskiej. "Tygodnik Ilustrowany" 1859–1900*

, Vol. 2 of the series *Źródła do historii fotografii polskiej XIX wieku* (Warszawa: Liber Pro Arte, 2015).

- 53 Olszyński deliberately chose print shops. One of them was Franciszek Dazziaro's luxurious shop, opened just a year earlier and already attracting significant attention. *Kurier Warszawski*, no. 219 (1855): 1125–6; *Gazeta Codzienna*, no. 237 (1855): 2.
- 54 Karol Beyer's letter to Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, Jagiellonian Library, MS 6461, sheet 202.
- 55 Mossakowska, *Początki fotografii w Warszawie*, 146. Ziętkiewicz-Szlendak, "Marcin Olszyński," 77.

