

43 | 2020 :
Création/destruction
Varia

The blend of poetry and document in the photographic artist's book *The Road is Wider than Long* by Roland Penrose (1939)

ANNE REVERSEAU

Résumés

English Français

The Road is Wider than Long is a paradoxical artist's book created by Roland Penrose in 1939. At the same time documentary and poetic, a travel report and a lyrical production, it comprises free verse, typographic poetry, "papiers collés", and photographs. This heterogeneous nature allows to explore the contrasts and contradictions between but also the coming together of avant-garde poetry and photography. First, this article shows how *The Road is Wider than Long* draws from amateur practices by focusing on Penrose's method of handling the pictures. Then, turning to the actual text, it elaborates on the notion of "poetic rendition". Finally, it discusses the power of poetry when it is interwoven with and combines different aesthetics and intentions, and this at the crossroads of memory and document. Originally a keepsake to keep a record of a couple's trip memories in the Balkans, *The Road is Wider than Long* belongs at the same time to Surrealist books with photography illustrations and to the tradition of the photobooks focused on territories.

Réalisé par Roland Penrose en 1939, *The Road is Wider than Long* est un livre d'artiste paradoxal. À la fois documentaire et poétique, récit de voyage et production lyrique, il se compose de vers libres, de poésie typographique, de « papiers collés » et de photographies. Cette hétérogénéité permet d'explorer les contrastes et les contradictions, mais aussi les riches interactions, entre la poésie d'avant-garde et la photographie. Cet article commence par montrer que *The Road is Wider than Long* s'ancre dans les pratiques amateurs en se penchant sur la façon dont Penrose manipule ses images. Une analyse précise du texte permet ensuite de développer la notion d'« interprétation poétique », avant d'en venir à une réflexion sur les pouvoirs de la poésie lorsqu'elle interfère avec diverses esthétiques, au croisement de la mémoire et du document. Pensé à l'origine comme un « keepsake » conservant les souvenirs d'un couple en voyage dans les Balkans, *The Road is Wider than Long* se situe dans deux traditions en même temps : celle des livres surréalistes illustrés par la photographie et celle des livres de photographie portant sur les territoires.

Entrées d'index

Mots-clés : surréalisme, livre de photographie, livre d'artiste, poésie, écriture du voyage

Keywords : Surrealism, photobook, artist's book, poetry, travel writing

Texte intégral

Article published within the frame of HANDLING Project (this project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N° 804259). <https://sites.uclouvain.be/handling/>

1. The uncommon encounter of poetry and document in photobooks

- ¹ *The Road is Wider than Long* is the ideal case study for those wishing to consider the links between poetry and the concept of document. This illustrated book by Roland Penrose is at the same time a photobook and an artist's book, a double role that requires some explanation.
- ² The history of photobooks is connected to that of documentary aesthetics. Ever since the 19th century, long before documentary photography was formally defined as a "style" (Lugon), photography has been understood as a proof of reality and a faithful testimony: it has been used as a document (Brunet 2000; Grojnowski). Many of the photobooks of the 19th century were travel narratives, often of ancient and well-known countries (Greece, Egypt). They were also made by authors what François Brunet calls "early explorers of city life", such as Marville in Paris, Thomas Annan in Glasgow and John Thomson in London (Brunet 2009, 35-36). Photobooks thus focused on the exploration of a country, city or region. Their aim was mainly to show a particular reality for those who could not travel or who wanted to revisit their travels (Badger and Parr).¹
- ³ During the interwar period, another type of illustrated book surfaced in the context of Surrealism: artists and writers such as Man Ray, Paul Eluard, Lise Deharme and Claude Cahun collaborated on several book projects that integrated paintings, drawings and, more rarely, photography (Badger and Parr). These mixed works did not aim to depict a reality. They were works of imagination that often emphasised the power of wonder and the power of the image. They also differed from a textual point of view, since they use a poetic – instead of informative and descriptive – language, either in verse as

in the case of Eluard (Montier), or in prose poems as with Cahun (Oberhuber).

- 4 Photobooks about cities and countries aimed at the general public were sometimes distributed together with magazines or journals, whereas Surrealist illustrated books were published in very limited series and often were not distributed at all, but designed for private use only. Put simply, these two types of illustrated books followed parallel tracks without meeting or intersecting until the rapid emergence of what was called the "artist's book" after the Second World War (Moeglin-Delcroix). The 1963 publication of Edward Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, when the documentary came to be the core of artistic and experimental research, marked a turning point in particular.
- 5 This very brief and evidently all-too schematic discussion prepares the ground for the study of the making of *The Road is Wider than Long* in 1939 and its originality. Penrose's book comprises free verse, typographic poetry, "papiers collés" and photographs. It is both documentary and poetic, a travel report and a lyrical production. It addresses the imagination as well as the thirst for reality. This very contrastive nature is what makes it so interesting to those wishing to understand how photography is able to closely bring poetry and document together, considering poetry as a way to access reality and elaborating on the idea of documenting the inner life. These approaches are the ones I tackled in my book *Le Sens de la vue* when discussing what could be a "poetic document" in literature (Reverseau 2018, 202-25). In the field of photography, the idea of a Surrealist documentary aesthetics has been explored by Ian Walker: while most art historians² emphasized distorted images and manipulations, he demonstrated how "straight photography" was the perfect tool for the Surrealists who wanted to reveal the enchantment of the vernacular (Walker 2002).³
- 6 Following research by Elena Gualtieri and others (Grojnowski; Reverseau 2018) into Blaise Cendrars' 1924 poem collection *Kodak (Documentaire)*, which, unlike Penrose's book, contained no images, this article explores the various aspects of the idea of "poetic document" through this peculiar case study. This notion – meaning a concrete support used for another purpose than its initial purpose – allows us to emphasise the contrasts and contradictions between but also the coming together of avant-garde poetry and photography. First, this article shows how *The Road is Wider than Long* draws from amateur practices by focusing on Penrose's method of handling the pictures. Then, turning to the actual text, it explores the notion of "poetic rendition", first offered by Antony Penrose, the son of Lee Miller and Roland Penrose. Finally, it discusses the power of poetry when it interweaves with and combines different aesthetics and intentions.

2. A personal project: from trip to book

- 7 What can one make of glorious memories of an exceptional trip to the Balkans? What should one make of a once-in-a-lifetime experience? These questions may have been on the mind of British poet and artist Roland Penrose when he left his partner, the great American photographer Lee Miller, behind in Bucharest and hastily returned home to the UK, right before the start of the Second World War. Lee Miller and Penrose had travelled together during the summer of 1938. Penrose joined Miller in Greece and they subsequently travelled to Bulgaria and Romania. In Bucharest they were hosted by Harry Brauner, the brother of painter Victor Brauner, who introduced them to the folklore of the region, its music and singing traditions especially. The pair subsequently travelled to Transylvania and the Black Sea (Penrose 1979; Walker 2008).
- 8 According to Penrose's own later account in the preface he wrote to a reprint of the book in 1979, the moment he left Lee Miller and hastily boarded an Orient-Express train was the moment that he conceived of *The Road is Wider than Long* (Penrose 1979). The book was supposed to be a setting for the precious memories he kept of this particular 1938 summer. *The Road is Wider than Long*, first, was a way for Penrose to arrange pictures he took during his 1938 trip, much like someone might put together a photo-album after returning from a holiday trip. Just like anyone, he handled his own vernacular images. From the very beginning, it was a personal project, a keepsake, a fortifying of his memories. It is thus a very circumstantial book, first intended to be a gift for Lee Miller who received a luxurious handmade copy of the book in January 1939 with an additional portrait of her (Walker 2008, 79). The manuscript was dedicated to Lee and she also appeared in the photographs included in the book.
- 9 After Penrose published two sections in the *London Bulletin*,⁴ the book was printed by a close friend of his, E.L.T. Mesens, the Belgian poet and artist who was then at the head of the London Gallery. Penrose's project relied on amateur practices such as scrapbooking and he paid great attention to the publishing details, supervising the whole production process. He for instance chose the reproduction technique; he surprisingly opted for the "off-set" over a more expensive and accepted method. At that time, "off-set" was still a rather new technique that would soon be commonly used in dailies, magazines and mass-produced publications. He went so far as to lay out the pages himself with a friend who was a printer and who let him use all his letter cases (Penrose 2003).
- 10 A total of 500 copies were printed with 10 additional deluxe versions. Printing these deluxe copies proved difficult as the embossed paper did not fully integrate the off-set lithographs. Penrose consequently decided to cut the pictures from a number of normal copies and paste them into the deluxe copies. He also decorated the head copy with drawings (Penrose 2003). Even if it was a way of solving a problem, this anecdote emphasises Penrose's taste for scrapbooking and customising a book and text. It brings to mind Victor Hugo, who decided to paste his picture in a number of copies of *Les Contemplations* and asked his family members to help him because it was too expensive to include a printed photo portrait in every copy (Edwards, 177-83). Among these four versions of *The Road is Wider than Long* – the handwritten copy given to Lee Miller, the head copy with drawings, the 10 deluxe versions with pasted pictures, and the 500 off-set copies – and the two reprints – the one made by Anthony Penrose in 1979 and the one made by the Getty Museum in 2003 – I chose to work on the most recent reprint which is a collation of both the visual and textual "originals".⁵
- 11 *The Road is Wider than Long* was intended as a visual diary. Penrose wanted the photographs to be at the very core of the work of art; he wanted them to record something rather than simply illustrate the work. As in a travel diary, the photographs seem to follow the chronological order of the trip even if they do not allow the route to be retraced. Let us now consider them.
- 12 The photographs display beautiful landscapes with mountains (12, 24, 26, 31), monuments such as a grotto (20), an ancient theatre (38), the columns of an ancient temple (40), and sculptures such as a bust and foot (45). Even if the text does not include proper nouns and the reader cannot be sure what exactly he is looking at, it does offer a commentary on the images. Below the picture of the ancient steps, the text reads: "the stage of a Greek theatre echoing / the smile that drops from her lips" (38). Other pages are more documentary-oriented, when text and image relate to the same thing. On page 30, for instance, the picture shows three tame bears, flanked by four men in folk costumes with small drums. The text offers a poetic account of what seems to be a folk story:

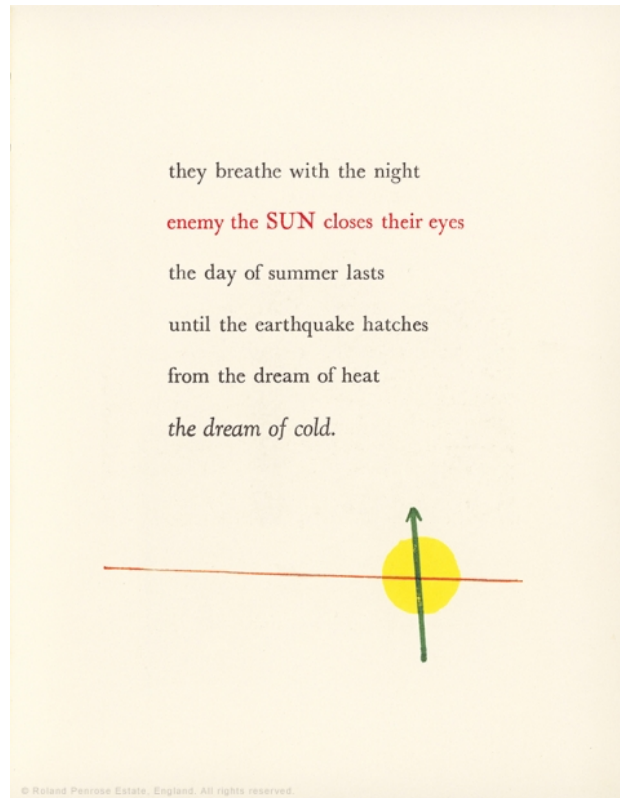
The Macedonian whose flute kills
stands everywhere
his bears will dance
they forget the dust for a little music
the Macedonian will be able to buy
a pair of gold eyes for his bride (30)

- 13 Page 11 shows a photograph of a traditional well. It is framed in a documentary way and belongs to what has been called

the “documentary style” since the Thirties by Walker Evans and his followers (Lugon): it is a neutral and frontal picture, taken against a grey sky, with no characters so every aspect of the object is visible. Generally speaking, most of the photographs literally illustrate the text and some bring to mind a type of children’s books, with the textual and visual referent as close to each other as possible. At the start of the text, for instance, the photo of an olive tree is pictured in the middle of the page, between the two lines of the poem, immediately after the word “olives” (2). On the opposite page, the drawing of a yellow circle pierced by a green arrow appears after six lines of text on the sun. The word “sun” itself is written in red and in capitals (3; **Figure 1**). This very simple type of relationship between text and image in the first pages of the book is probably meant to compensate for their complex meaning. Indeed, like most surrealist poetry, *The Road is Wider than Long* makes use of abstract images without any denomination and employs a mysterious “they”.

- 14 The text-image relationship in *The Road is Wider than Long* appears literal, naïve and at times childish. Even if some comments and pages are documentary from a formal point of view, the aesthetics of the entire book is not documentary-like. The project itself is documentary but in a more general sense. Penrose wants to report certain events but does not use documents only: he includes poetry elements to the report. *The Road is Wider than Long* is a “visual diary” but also a “poetic rendition” of a trip, as Antony Penrose himself later said.

Fig. 1. Roland Penrose. *The Road is Wider than Long*. Los Angeles: Getty Museum, 2003, p. 3.



Roland Penrose © Lee Miller Archives, England 2020. All rights reserved. leemiller.co.uk.

3. A “poetic rendition” made of documents

- 15 The son of Lee Miller and Roland Penrose also stated that *The Road is Wider than Long* was, for his father, the “chronicle of a shared journey and his gentle expression of his obsessive love for the woman of his dreams” (*Else*, 60-67). This suggests that the book was a private and personal account for Penrose. But *The Road is Wider than Long* is not just a testimony: the “poetic rendition” transcends the anecdote and the particular. The interplay between documentary and poetry becomes apparent when we closely look at the text itself.
- 16 At first sight, *The Road is Wider than Long* brings together memories of a trip to the Balkans in text and image. The main topic is leave taking and the text may evoke “nomads” and a “gipsy” who bathes her children in a river. The poems are at times very literal, in particular when the text adds extra information to a picture and functions as a caption. For instance, the text below the picture of a horse-drawn cart loaded with hay reads:

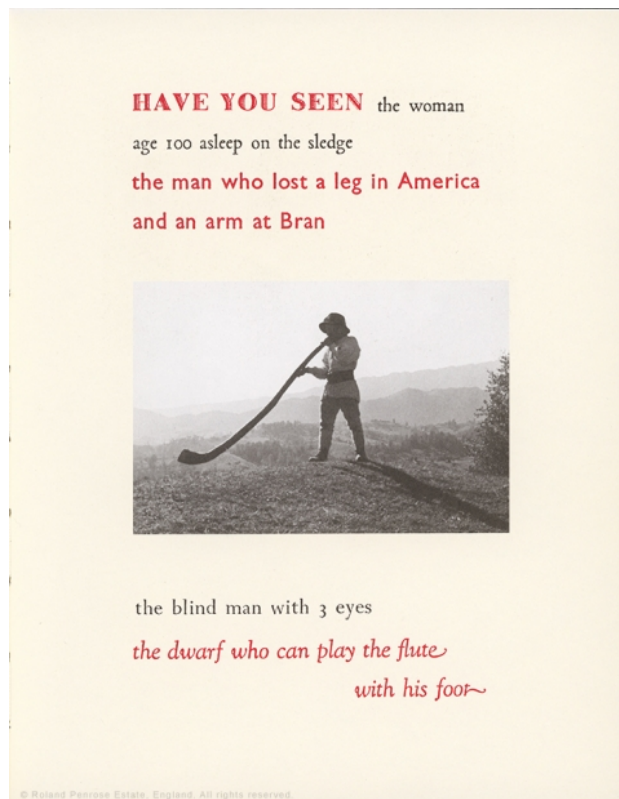
This cart that blocks the road has been
at work for six hundred years (7)

- 17 The poet appears to be recounting a number of memories, of people Lee and he met during the trip especially:

HAVE YOU SEEN the woman
age 100 asleep on the sledge
the man who lost a leg in America
and an arm at Bran
the blond man with 3 eyes
the dwarf who can play the flute
with his foot (17)

- 18 These lines of free verse evoke a list format and the poem seems to narrate a number of things seen, especially because in the middle of both this enumeration and the page, a very concrete object is pictured, a man blowing a huge, traditional trumpet (**Figure 2**). The enumeration, however, begins with a question, the effect of which is that the page in its entirety transcends the realm of personal writing. It may address a reader that is not only Lee Miller.

Fig. 2. Roland Penrose. *The Road is Wider than Long*. Los Angeles: Getty Museum, 2003, p. 17.



Roland Penrose © Lee Miller Archives, England 2020. All rights reserved. leemiller.co.uk.

- 19 Real memories were the raw material for the book and Penrose knows how to turn these into a lyrical evocation. For instance, the seven lines below a beautiful portrait of a group of women and a child transform the description into something of an ode and hymn to a woman who appears to be a symbol for all women:

She tore her dress
a dress covered with a dress
and covered with a dress
she tore her dress to mend it
joined by her fingers
torn by her breasts
her dress tears from within. (10)

- 20 Based mainly on repetitions and similarities in sound, Penrose's poetic language is simultaneously very simple and lyrical. These lines also show the importance of the tension between hiding and showing which is potentially at the core of a personal account, whether a travel report or a more intimate narrative.
- 21 The tensions between the different aims of this book are visible in the very text, for instance, in the play with pronouns. The relationship between the American-British couple and the country they are visiting is exemplified by a line at the beginning of the book: "Let us through" (4). Because they literally cross into a territory that is not their own and meet people that are strangers to them, Penrose uses the pronoun "they". But the pronoun "we" never disappears behind "they". *The Road is Wider than Long* remains a piece of travel writing: "At night we found a deserted city" (40). Toward the end of the book, Penrose increasingly seems to focus on the experiences of the couple. On one double spread, for instance, a photograph is placed next to a piece of paper with handwritten inscription, an illustration that seems to break with the travel report format and instead focuses on the love story. It reads:

Lovers who escape who are free to separate
Free to re-unite leave their tongues
Plaited together hidden in the dry grass
Folded in peasant cloth
Embalmed in the green memories of desire (36)

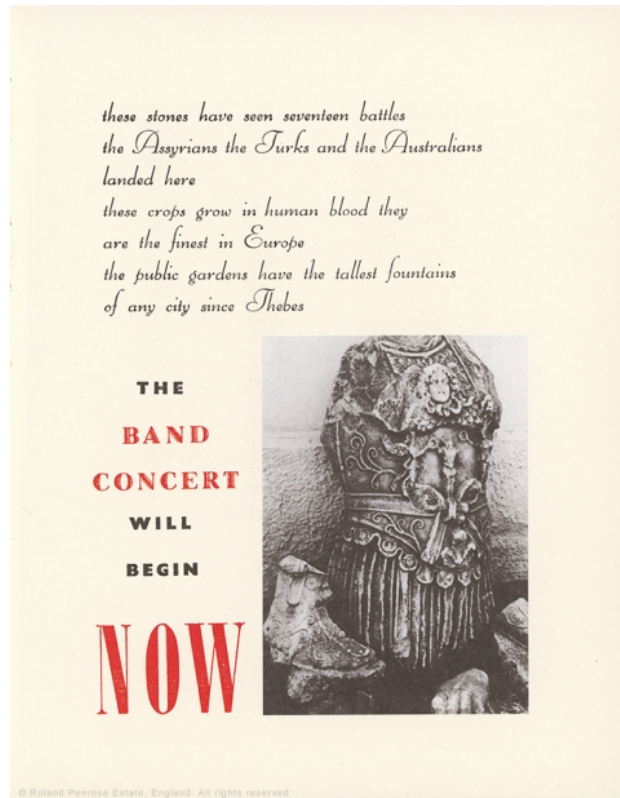
- 22 The tension between the lyrical topic and the report nonetheless remains strong until the end of the text as we can still read very informative lines on the second-but-last page:

these stones have seen seventeen battles
the Assyrians the Turks and the Australians
landed here
these crops grow in human blood they
are the finest in Europe
the public gardens have the tallest fountains
of any city since Thebes (45)

- 23 Even when the lines seem to be documentary, a Surrealist tone can be discerned through definitive statements in the form of aphorisms (like the title) and proverbs that give a sense of the irrevocable. For instance, "If you are lying your finger will be trapped" is framed in a double rectangle, as if pinned to a wall (41). This layout evokes a sense of definitive change, such as "Until then nothing can be done", isolated on the page (32), which can be linked to an announcement at the very end: "The band concert will begin NOW" (45; **Figure 3**). Something, this line suggests, is about to start, something that will herald a completely new era. This idea of a mysterious and radical revolution is typical of the Surrealist aesthetics but is very rarely combined with documentary photographs. A Surrealist documentary aesthetics exists, as Walker stated, but it is associated with the magic of everyday life and the enchantment of triviality much more than with the Surrealist prophetic voice (Walker 2002).
- 24 This tension between document and mystery is moreover visible in the choice of words. Unlike most Surrealist poetry, *The Road is Wider than Long* revolves around a very concrete "they" and a central female character called "Maritza". Even

if the reader does not know much about Maritza – she is “strong”, plays the guitar and is probably a member of the Macedonian musical group the couple met – she is a recurring character and gives a narrative dimension to the book, which ends with Maritza continuing to play her guitar after the departure of the couple: “while Maritza / tunes the two cords of her guitar” (46).

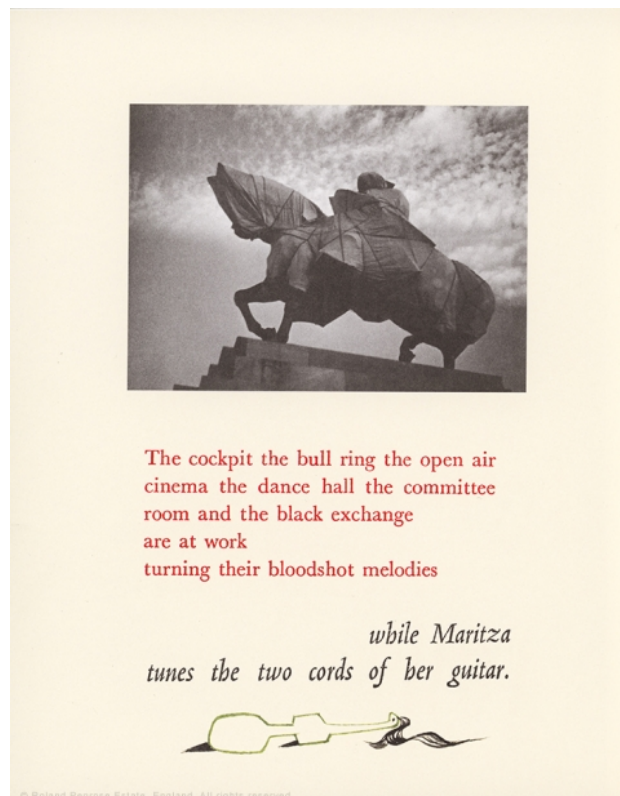
Fig. 3. Roland Penrose. *The Road is Wider than Long*. Los Angeles: Getty Museum, 2003, p. 45.



Roland Penrose © Lee Miller Archives, England 2020. All rights reserved. leemiller.co.uk.

4. A paradoxical artist's photobook

Fig. 4. Roland Penrose. *The Road is Wider than Long*. Los Angeles: Getty Museum, 2003, p. 46.



Roland Penrose © Lee Miller Archives, England 2020. All rights reserved. leemiller.co.uk.

- 25 On the last page (46; **Figure 4**), the strange picture of a horse sculpture has partly been covered with a torn cloth. This fabric, which simultaneously conceals and reveals the body of an animal, strengthens the tension between showing and

hiding which is central when reporting an experience. It also evokes the famous picture of Man Ray that opened the first issue of the French Surrealist journal *La Révolution surréaliste*, published in Paris between 1924 and 1928. The picture, called *L'Enigme d'Isidore Ducasse (Isidore Ducasse's Enigma)*, was taken in 1920 and illustrates the idea that visuality and especially photography can conceal things. Indeed, photography is not a mere documentary tool and can conceal instead of revealing. This seems to be exemplified by the sculpture pictured in the book: the horse appears to have gone blind – its eyes are hidden – but still continues to walk. It might thus serve as a metaphor for the poet or the couple – symbolically blind but choosing to travel anyway. If the aim was to show “they”, the people they met during their trip, in reality only the “we” and the inner subjective point of view is narrated in the book. This paradox is also present in the title of the book, which was drawn from the following lines:

The road is wider than long
trees are thicker than tall
wells reach to the clouds
their blood is more solid than their bones (12)

- 26 These lines are repeated ten pages later with a slight tweak that makes it obvious that the “road” does not refer to a general road but to their personal experience: “our road is wider than long” (22). The immediately preceding lines aptly express the tension between “we” and “they” and shed new light on the ambition of the book:

We have forgotten yesterday
And tomorrow's news is bad news
Our children need medical attention
We need a house without walls
Surrounded by fire
The doors open to all who can see (22)

- 27 Transparency is in a way the ideal of the Penrose-Miller couple. They would like to perceive the “they” as clearly as they want to be seen. This quest for a sense of community and the collective is for them, as it was for many Surrealists, a way to transcend the individualist and bourgeois couple. This may hold the key to interpreting the presence of Miller in a number of the pictures included in the book. On page 16 for instance, she looks up at the camera and smiles. This smile is not the universal smile she was used to displaying while she modelled; it is obviously addressed to Penrose, who held the camera. It is a strong sign of intimacy. Together with the text, which notes that she had just washed her hair, this picture emphasises their intimacy and the fact that this intimacy is offered to the reader by virtue of the book.

- 28 This contrast is emphasised by the layout, with the use of different letter cases and colours. At the beginning of the book, it is as if Penrose wanted to use all the letters and printing tools at his disposal. For instance, the photograph of the well on page 11 is flanked on both sides by words formatted in different styles: “stone” in capitals and in red, “clouds” in italics and black and so on. Penrose even put a touch of yellow and blue paint next to two words. This profusion of colours and forms creates an impression of childlike happiness that is linked to the joyful intimacy of a couple on vacation. Progressively, the reader comes to realise that Penrose's play with layout may be of a more serious nature. More and more, it evokes the political manifestoes and leaflets of the 1930s. Page 45, for instance, shows the line “The band concert will begin NOW” in large, capital letters in the colour red (**Figure 3**). Even the formal features of the book reveal how Penrose tried to transcend the tension between the intimate and the universal, the documentary and the poetic.

- 29 *The Road is Wider than Long* is not so much an example of the discrepancy between contradictions as it is a quest to combine, mix and unite these contradictions. For Penrose, this was what poetry was meant to do because it can transform a document into the record of a memory. A poetic document is a document enhanced by subjectivity but it is this personal dimension that allows it to be universal. In a way, this approach evokes the traditional role of poetry. Indeed, lyrical poetry is typically a paradoxical gesture because it addresses a particular person, under special circumstances, and simultaneously tries to transcend both and address a universal audience, beyond a specific feeling. Penrose chose to use photographic documents to sustain this poetic endeavour. In *The Road is Wider than Long*, photography introduces a type of documentary aesthetics and, more importantly, it creates its own memory logic. The photographs do not compete with the words: instead, they contribute to unite poetry and documents. *The Road is Wider than Long* is a paradoxical artist's photobook: it shows documentary photographs instead of the unbridled drawings or paintings one may expect in a love poem and it uses lyrical poetry when a mere rendition is expected from a travel book. *The Road is Wider than Long* is also an extraordinary attempt to unite. In this sense, it is an expression of the Surrealist quest for Unity. On a symbolic level, Penrose mingles the “making” (which is here the scope of poetry) and the “taking” (which is the scope of documents) by exploring different ways of “keeping”, through memories, through words, and through images.

5. *The Road is Wider than Long*: a cross-border poetic document

- 30 As a conclusion, *The Road is Wider than Long* exhibits a variety of functions: it is a very personal book, intended as a keepsake. It is the record of a Balkan trip, the souvenir of a summer romance and a declaration of love. For Penrose and more broadly for Surrealists, it shows the importance of the handling of pictures and the weight of vernacular and even trivial photographs, as explained about the whole Surrealist movement in the exhibition *La Subversion des images* in 2009 (Chérout, Bajac, Poivert and Le Gall). However, *The Road is Wider than Long* goes beyond the intimate sphere: in this couple's memories lies a universal quest for otherness. Its originality lies in its form, a blend of poetry and document, a unique combination of photographic documents with a poetic inspiration and artistic composition. *The Road is Wider than Long* belongs to that rare category of Surrealist books with photography illustrations published before the Second World War, together with books aimed at bibliophiles such as *Banalité* (Fargue, illustrated by Parry and Loris), *Facile* (Eluard, illustrated by Man Ray and Nusch) as well as more experimental titles such as Claude Cahun's *Aveux non avendus* and *Le Cœur de pic* (with a text by Lise Deharme). As a Surrealist book, *The Road is Wider than Long* can be considered an intermedial experimentation, what Andrea Oberhuber calls a “cross-border space” (Oberhuber 2011, 81). It also belongs, in a more surprising way, to the tradition of the photobooks focused on territories, cities and lands because of its use of “off-set” photographs, in particular. It is a document rooted in an experience because it integrates real-life documents. Above all, *The Road is Wider than Long* is a declaration of faith as much as a declaration of love. Penrose believes in the conjunction of image and text and, more than anything else, in the power of a poetry that is able to create something unique from these paradoxical and dynamic identities.

Bibliographie

Works Cited

- BADGER, Gerry and Martin PARR. *The Photobook: A History. Volume I*. London: Phaidon, 2004.
- BRUNET François. *La Naissance de l'idée de photographie*. Paris: PUF, 2000.
- BRUNET François. *Photography and Literature*. London: Reaktion Books, 2009.
- CAHUN, Claude. *Aveux non avenus*. Paris: Éditions du Carrefour, 1930.
- CAHUN, Claude and Lise DEHARME. *Le Coeur de pic*. Paris: José Corti, 1937.
- CENDRARS, Blaise. *Kodak (Documentaire)*. 1924. *Du monde entier. Poésies complètes, 1912-1924*. Paris: Gallimard, "Poésie", 1993.
- CHÉROUX, Clément, Quentin BAJAC, Michel POIVERT and Guillaume LE GALL. *La Subversion des images. Surréalisme, photographie, film*. Exhibition catalogue (September 23 2009 – January 11 2010). Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2009.
- EDWARDS, Paul. *Soleil noir. Photographie et littérature*. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2008.
- FARGUE, Léon-Paul. *Banalité*, illustré de réogrammes et recherches d'objets de Loris et Parry. 1930. Paris: Gallimard, 2007.
- GROJNOWSKI, Daniel. *Photographie et langage. Fictions, Illustrations, Informations, Visions, Théories*. Paris: Corti, 2002.
- GUALTIERI, Elena. "Kodak Modernism: Avant-garde Poetry in the Age of Popular Photography". *Modernist Cultures* 7:2 (2012): 180-204.
- KRAUSS, Rosalind and Jane LIVINGSTON. *L'Amour fou: Surrealism & Photography*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1985.
- LUGON, Olivier. *Le Style documentaire. D'August Sander à Walker Evans. 1920-1945*. Paris: Macula, 2001.
- MAN RAY and Paul ELUARD. *Facile*. Paris: GLM, 1935.
- MOEGLIN-DELCROIX, Anne. *Esthétique du livre d'artiste (1960-1980)*. Paris: Jean-Michel Place, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1997.
- MONTIER, Jean-Pierre. "Facile, ou le livre photographique comme scène érotique". *La scène érotique sous le regard*. Ed. Françoise Nicole and Laurence Perrigault. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2014: 108-118.
- OBERHUBER, Andrea. "Projets photolittéraires et modes de lecture de l'objet livre dans les années trente". *Transactions photolittéraires*. Ed. Jean-Pierre Montier. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2015: 159-170.
- OBERHUBER, Andrea. "The surrealist book as a cross-border space: The experimentations of Lise Deharme and Gisèle Prassinos". *Image & Narrative* 12:3 (2011): 81-97.
- PENROSE, Roland. *The Road is Wider than Long*. Ed. E.L.T. Mesens. [1939]. London: Bradley Press for London Gallery Editions, 1979.
- PENROSE, Roland. *The Road is Wider than Long*. Los Angeles: Getty Museum, 2003.
- REVERSEAU, Anne. *Le Sens de la vue. Le regard photographique dans la poésie moderne*. Paris: Sorbonne Université Presses, 2018.
- REVERSEAU, Anne (ed.). *Portraits de pays illustrés. Un genre phototextuel*. Paris: Garnier ("Lire et voir", n°3), 2017.
- La Révolution surréaliste* 1 (December 1924).
- "Roland Penrose *The Road is Wider than Long*, presented by Antony Penrose". *Else* (4 November 2012): 60-67. URL: https://issuu.com/elysee.lab/docs/else_4 (page accessed October 10 2019).
- RUSCHA, Edward. *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*. Los Angeles: National Excelsior Press, 1963.
- WALKER, Ian. *City Gorged with Dreams: Surrealism and Documentary Photography in Interwar Paris*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002.
- WALKER, Ian. *So Exotic, So Homemade: Surrealism, Englishness and Documentary Photography*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008 (esp. "Penrose and Miller in the Balkans", 73-92).

Notes

¹ This paragraph and the following reflection on photobooks focusing on a country, city or region are rooted in a broader collective research on what we call "portraits of territories, cities and lands" in the field of illustrated books. See my own research (for instance Anne Reverseau 2017), but also the works by David Martens, Galia Yanoshevsky, Susana S. Martins, and many others.

² Such as Rosalind Krauss and Jane Livingstone who were the curators of one of the first exhibitions on the topic, "L'Amour fou. Photography & Surrealism" in 1985.

³ In addition to this book about Surrealist documentary aesthetics, Ian Walker published a chapter about *The Road is Wider than Long* in his essay *So Exotic, So Homemade*. He places Penrose's book in the context of travel books written by poets and of English Surrealism of the Thirties. His approach is much more cultural than poetic.

⁴ *London Bulletin*, n°7 (December 1938 / January 1939), 17-22, and n°8-9 (January/February 1939), 51-56. I would like to thank Ian Walker for this information.

⁵ As is explained in the "Note on the 2003 Edition", the 2003 reprint produced by the Getty Museum is thus the collation of two different copies: the manuscript dedicated to Lee Miller with the original pictures and the master copy with the drawings and typographical games. All subsequent page numbers refer to this 2003 reprint (even when the pages are not numbered).

Table des illustrations

	Titre	Fig. 1. Roland Penrose. <i>The Road is Wider than Long</i> . Los Angeles: Getty Museum, 2003, p. 3.
	Crédits	Roland Penrose © Lee Miller Archives, England 2020. All rights reserved. leemiller.co.uk.
	URL	http://preo.u-bourgogne.fr/interfaces/docannexe/image/810/img-1.jpg
	Fichier	image/jpeg, 392k
	Titre	Fig. 2. Roland Penrose. <i>The Road is Wider than Long</i> . Los Angeles: Getty Museum, 2003, p. 17.
	Crédits	Roland Penrose © Lee Miller Archives, England 2020. All rights reserved. leemiller.co.uk.
	URL	http://preo.u-bourgogne.fr/interfaces/docannexe/image/810/img-2.jpg
	Fichier	image/jpeg, 423k
	Titre	Fig. 3. Roland Penrose. <i>The Road is Wider than Long</i> . Los Angeles: Getty Museum, 2003, p. 45.
	Crédits	Roland Penrose © Lee Miller Archives, England 2020. All rights reserved. leemiller.co.uk.
	URL	http://preo.u-bourgogne.fr/interfaces/docannexe/image/810/img-3.jpg
	Fichier	image/jpeg, 481k
	Titre	Fig. 4. Roland Penrose. <i>The Road is Wider than Long</i> . Los Angeles: Getty Museum, 2003, p. 46.
	Crédits	Roland Penrose © Lee Miller Archives, England 2020. All rights reserved. leemiller.co.uk.
	URL	http://preo.u-bourgogne.fr/interfaces/docannexe/image/810/img-4.jpg
	Fichier	image/jpeg, 479k

Pour citer cet article

Référence électronique

Anne Reverseau, « The blend of poetry and document in the photographic artist's book *The Road is Wider than Long* by Roland Penrose (1939) », *Interfaces* [En ligne], 43 | 2020, mis en ligne le 15 juillet 2020, consulté le 12 janvier 2021. URL : <http://preo.u-bourgogne.fr/interfaces/index.php?id=810>

Auteur

Anne Reverseau

(FNRS) Université Catholique de Louvain

Anne Reverseau is Professor of French Literature at Université Catholique de Louvain and permanent researcher of the FNRS (Belgium). She specializes in French avant-garde and modernist poetry and the relationship between literature and photography. Her doctoral thesis was published in 2018 as "Le Sens de la vue. Le regard photographique de la poésie moderne" (Sorbonne Université Presses). She worked in the MDRN group at KU Leuven (Belgium) between 2011 and 2018. Her postdoctoral research focused on the role of the document in the first half of the 20th century and on the "collaboration between writers and photographers in portraits of countries and cities" (1930-1970). In addition to several articles and collective books, she edited two volumes on the latter topic: "Paper Cities" (co-ed. Susana S. Martins. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2016) and "Portraits de pays illustrés. Un genre photo-textuel" (Paris: Garnier, 2017). Thanks to a "Starting Grant" from the ERC, she is now in charge of the European research project HANDLING, about the handling of pictures by writers (<https://sites.uclouvain.be/handling/>).