



## VISUAL HYPERBOLE IN ADVERTISING (RECONNAISSANCE)

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Hyperbole (also referred to as exaggeration) is sometimes classified by rhetoric as both stylistic tropes, as well as figures of thought<sup>1</sup>. It involves an exaggerated presentation of a subject or phenomenon: an exaggeration of its appearance, action, significance, value. Literary experts acknowledge that this kind of effect is basically the result of an interaction between various tropes and figures<sup>2</sup>. This issue can be presented a little differently, indicating the close relationship between hyperbole and other tropes, such as certain types of periphrases and comparisons, metaphorical epithet and catachresis<sup>3</sup>. Literary hyperbole serves to emphasise (exacerbating the emotional colour of a work, giving it a solemn tone – as in an ode or hymn), or, by contrast, providing a humorous or even grotesque effect<sup>4</sup>. It should be noted as something

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<sup>1</sup> J. Ziomek, *Retoryka opisowa*, Kraków 1990, p. 193.

<sup>2</sup> As Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska put it, '[hyperbole], considered as one of the rhetorical figures, is not, however, a specialised stylistic trick, but rather the result of cooperation between various tropes and figures, a particular choice of vocabulary and expressive intonation' (Michał Głowiński, Teresa Kostkiewiczowa Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska, Janusz Sławiński, *Słownik terminów literackich*, ed. J. Sławiński, Kraków 1998, p. 197)..

<sup>3</sup> J. Ziomek, op. cit., pp. 192-193.

<sup>4</sup> 'Hyperbole. Obvious, extravagant EXAGGERATION or overstatement, not intended to be taken literally, but used figuratively to create HUMOR or emphasis' (K. Morner, R. Rausch, *NTC's Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Illinois 1994, p. 102). One of the funniest examples of grotesque hyperbolisation in Polish literature is

that is obvious and to a large extent an extravagant exaggeration, being the essence of hyperbolic perspectives, it finds expression in the figurative dimension, and refers not so much to the intellect as to the imagination<sup>5</sup>.

Among contemporary researchers of media text, there is an opinion that hyperbole is a figure that finds expression in polisemiotic communication more effectively than in verbal communication, which would be related to the ‘possibility of simultaneous expression of the same content in different systems of symbols, and thus at the same time acting on a variety of senses’<sup>6</sup>. As an illustration of this thesis, the author of *Poetyka mediów* refers primarily to films that – in order to produce a climate of terror – exploit (together) chiaroscuro, deformation of the image, camera movements, music, sound effects, etc. It is not possible to fully agree with the opinion that the accumulation of methods of accentuating the horror of the situations described allows the most relevant example of hyperbole to be seen in these types or works<sup>7</sup>, after all exaggeration – as even irony or synecdoche – represents a group

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no doubt *Teatrzyk ‘Zielona Gęś’* by Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński (e.g. the scenes *Potworny wujaszek* and *W szponach kofeiny*); from prose see e.g. the story *Szczur* by Witold Gombrowicz (vol. *Bakakaj*).

<sup>5</sup> Not without reason, the trend to use exaggeration (both characters and events) is tied to magical realism, which as a kind of rule refers to people’s ‘primitive’ thinking and the mythical imagination. These issues shall be dealt with in the context of the film *Underground* (1995) by Emir Kusturica, Thomas Pindel (idem, *Zjawy, szaleństwo i śmierć: fantastyka i realizm magiczny w literaturze hispanoamerykańskiej*, Kraków 2004, p. 254 and others).

<sup>6</sup> E. Szczęsna, *Poetyka mediów. Polisemiotyczność, digitalizacja, reklama*, Warszawa 2007, p. 114.

<sup>7</sup> Rather, it is difficult to exaggerate when night-time encounters with a ghost are presented. See the comment of the monographer of Jan Kasprówicz on apocalyptic visions of the poet; the researcher in this case is willing to see the manifestation of megalomania in the selection of the theme, and not so much in the way of its presentation (J. J. Lipski, *Twórczość Jana Kasprówicza w latach 1881-1906*, Warszawa 1975, p. 314).

of so-called figures by replacement/immotation (*figurae per immutationem*), and assumes a transformation of meanings<sup>8</sup>.

There is little doubt that hyperbole is associated – so to speak – with particularly intense imagery, evocative, yet intrinsically different examples of which can be found both in literary works exploiting figurative language (in baroque love sonnets, the expressionistic hymns of Young Poland and the twentieth-century war poetry) and in texts that contain iconic symbols, not necessarily polisemiotic or specifically highlighting their multisymbolic nature<sup>9</sup>. It seems that now perhaps the clearest examples of hyperbole in popular culture can be found in magazine and poster advertising.

Extremely persuasive targeting of an advert, the need to break through the ‘information noise’ that is typical of our time and speaking to as many potential customers as possible cause such a selection of motifs and a preference for those forms of expression that are used, on one hand, to break the associative routine and attract the attention of the recipient, and on the other hand to make the message clear and memorable. These conditions make hyperbole a figure of major importance in the form of today’s advertising. Incidentally, one day it seems to be worthwhile discussing the question of the relationship between the openness of advertising to hyperbole and simplification, once recognised as an essential feature of crowd psychology, and the trends for shifts in the sphere of values. Although it is not fully possible to identify the mass recipient of advertising with the crowd, it is worth recalling in this context surprisingly current observations which over a hundred years ago were formulated by a penetrating researcher into human behaviour. Gustave

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<sup>8</sup> J. Ziomek writes on this topic (in the context of literature) as follows: ‘[...] emphasis, synecdoche and hyperbole [...] belong to both varieties of figures, transformations (*mutationes*) occur both, and simultaneously at the level of verbal meanings and presented meanings’ (idem, *Retoryka opisowa*, op. cit., p. 238).

<sup>9</sup> Z. Kloch, *O hiperboli w poezji wojennej (1914- 1918)*, „Pamiętnik Literacki” 1983, z. 3, pp. 209-239.

Le Bon argued that the crowd has a great sensibility to unconscious stimuli, even absorbing ideas that are given in image form; the crowd associates uncritically things combined by only apparent ties and responds positively to exaggeration. For this reason, ‘[...] a speaker, when he wants to capture, must use very often strong terms. Exaggeration, unconditional claims, repeating the same thing several times, not getting involved in logical evidence – this is how to acquire and master the soul of the crowd [...]’<sup>10</sup>. What makes the modern advertiser achieve a similar result?

Let us attempt to define the characteristics of a strategy typical for advertising that creates a hyperbolic effect. The definition will place particular emphasis on messages that use iconic symbols due to the importance of these messages for popular culture, as well the lack of theoretical reflection on them<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> G. Le Bon, *Psychologia tłumu*, transl. B. Kaprocki, Kęty 2004, p. 28.

<sup>11</sup> For a variety of persuasive strategies in advertising, see: K. Albin, *Reklama. Przekaz. Odbiór. Interpretacja*, Warszawa – Wrocław 2000; J. Bralczyk, *Język na sprzedaż*, Gdańsk 2004; W. Budzyński, *Reklama: techniki skutecznej perswazyji*, Warszawa 1999; A. Duda, *Język mitu w reklamie*, Lublin 2010; M. Gajlewicz, *Techniki perswazyjne. Podstawy*, Warszawa 2009; A. Grzegorzcyk, *Reklama*, Warszawa 2010; R. Heath, *Reklama. Co tak naprawdę wpływa na jej skuteczność*, Gdańsk 2008; A. Kozłowska, *Reklama. Techniki perswazyjne*, Warszawa 2011; M. Leszczak, *Psychologia przekazu reklamowego: dla twórców i odbiorców komunikatów reklamowych*, Kraków 1998; P. Lewiński, *Retoryka reklamy*, Wrocław 1999; K. Mortensen, *Sztuka wywierania wpływu na ludzi. Dwanaście uniwersalnych praw skutecznej perswazyji*, transl. Rafał Kotlicki, Kraków 2006; A. Murdoch, *Kreatywność w reklamie*, Warszawa 2004; R. Nowacki, *Reklama: podręcznik*, Warszawa 2005; A. Pomieciński, *Reklama w kulturze współczesnej: studium antropologiczne*, Poznań 2005; M. Sutherland, S.K. Alice, *Reklama a umysł konsumenta: co działa, co nie działa i dlaczego*, transl. G. Kranas, Warszawa 2003; E. Szczęsna, *Poetyka reklamy*, Warszawa 2001; B. Zatwarnicka-Madura, *Perswazyja na sprzedaż*, Warszawa 2010; R. Zimny, *Kreowanie obrazów świata w tekstach reklamowych*, Warszawa 2008.

## 1.

In its most classic form, visual hyperbole is achieved by a disruption of proportions, which mostly takes the form of gigantism – it manifests itself by exaggerating the size of the product (or the size of the items subjected to it that are related to it in ways important given the purpose of the advert)<sup>12</sup>. The figure of exaggeration boldly defies perceptual customs<sup>13</sup>. It brings to the message both an element of peculiarity, as well as an evaluation factor; it prioritises its different components, carefully controlling the recipient as desired from the point of view of the effectiveness of the persuasive message.

Here are some of the most common examples. In a magazine advertisement for Gucci perfume, a comely young woman in a shiny gold dress proudly holds a perfume bottle the size of a large pumpkin. In turn, in an advertisement to encourage the purchase of a Jeanne Lenvin fragrance, a model gracefully leans against a pale pink bottle of perfume, which is almost equal in size to herself (**figure 1**). Both posters are essentially monosemiotic (they contain only a brand name, no slogan), and their persuasive power is based on a skilful hyperbolic redrawing of a stylized image, a parallelism of

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<sup>12</sup> It should be added that sometimes, very rarely, hyperbole is expressed not by magnification, but by reduction; hyperbole is also not only an exaggeration of praise, but also too much rebuke, which may produce a humorous or tender effect (see J. Ziomek, op. cit, pp. 192-193).

<sup>13</sup> This issue, as well as the incompatibility of hyperbole with communicative conventions, is summarised as follows by a literary expert: 'Hyperbole is [...] a rule of literary speech that creates images of reality presented in clearly disturbed quantitative or qualitative proportions. »Excess«, »exaggeration«, »lack of correspondence«, are words that are usually used in definitions, words that relate to the sphere of literary *signifiant* and *signifié*. When speaking of hyperbole, we therefore mean exaggeration, which refers both to the hackneyed ways of speaking, to generally accepted language customs in a given place and time, as well as to the current knowledge about the world. Statements of this type appeal to our habitual norms of the perception of reality, setting themselves against them, they appeal also to the linguistic consciousness of the recipient, to his »familiarity« with the social conventions of communication' (Z. Kloch, op. cit. p. 212).

colour and connotations of the colours used (gold connotes wealth, ‘aristocraticness’, elegance, and pastel pink introduces a note of girlish sweetness, delicacy and dreaminess). One can say that these advertisements exploit a hidden form of persuasion: although the idea that they express seems hackneyed, they captivate attention by their ascetic and somewhat fairytale character, without placing on the recipient a sense of persuasive pressure<sup>14</sup>. It would be more difficult to say the same thing about the advertisement for a mobile phone, in which visual hyperbole (a young man on a bicycle rests on a giant phone) based on polisemiotic parallelism finds its interpretation in a text [‘Don’t miss the most important experience of your life. With the new Sony Ericsson [...] you will not get lost...’ etc.]

Gigantism occurs quite often in advertisements that display the qualities of a product in a more indirect way, such as through the exploitation of hyperbolic metonymy, and therefore figures based on adjacency relationships. For example, a magazine advertisement for LG washing machines presents a polo shirt so huge that it must be dried on a rope stretched between the tops of skyscrapers. The text placed next to it explains that the company’s standard size washing machine accommodates up to 11 kg of clothes, and – written in capitals – an ambiguous slogan, beyond everything else, takes the form of a metatextual comment: ‘IT’S THE NEXT BIG THING’. A similar strategy (based on metonymy in the function of exaggeration) was used in an advertisement for ONKYO Blu Ray players; it does not show an erosion of spatial proportions, but a marginal redrawing of the effects on the viewer of watching a movie on the player (**figure 2**). The facial expression of the man (bulging eyes, wide open mouth), his gestures (a tense, veiny hand), the method of utilising ‘props’ (popcorn thrown over the head) and the slogan (‘definitely scary’) ensure that using that company’s home cinema will be a source of extremely intense sensations. The advertisement skilfully

<sup>14</sup> See E. Szczęsna, op. cit., p. 114-115.

combines hyperbole with irony (the censure expressed in the slogan makes for praise) and humour (a piece of popcorn shown in the foreground against a background of the wide open mouth of an impulsive moviegoer looks almost like vampire teeth).

When characterising the most common forms of visual hyperbole that appear in modern advertising messages, it should be noted that:

– firstly, (also) the interpretation of the direction of messages using a strategy of exaggeration is not only determined by the structure of a given message, but also by the modal frame in which it operates<sup>15</sup>. If we stop at immanent categories, not taking into account non-textual contexts, the intentions of creators and the planned type of reception, it would not be easy to indicate a greater difference between – let's say – the advert for Clarks shoes (**figure 3**) and even the Bolshevik agitational poster of 1939 by Viktor Deni and N. Dolgorukov – ‘The spirit of Stalin strengthens our army and our country’ (**figure 4**). (It is worth recalling that hyperbole reigns not only in advertising, but also in propaganda texts. It is known that totalitarian regimes liked manifestations and forms of art that exhibited heroic-monumental features: from certain literary, musical and architectural forms to parades and elaborate gymnastic systems.)

– secondly, the seemingly analogous forms of visual hyperbole based on exaggeration can be found in works representing different levels of culture. Works with similar concepts and identified with high art are preceded chronologically by popular communications<sup>16</sup>. For example, an American series of postcards from the 1920s to promote the values of particular regions of the

<sup>15</sup> See e.g. W. Bolecki, *Modalność (Literaturoznawstwo i kognitywizm. Rekonesans)* [in:] *Sporne i bezsporne problemy współczesnej wiedzy o literaturze*, ed. W. Bolecki, R. Nycz, Warszawa 2002.

<sup>16</sup> Basic knowledge of the various forms of cultural homogenisation is contained in the already classic book by Antonina Kłoskowska: *Kultura masowa. Krytyka i obrona*, Warszawa 1964..

United States used spectacular visual hyperbolas: the fertility of Californian land is depicted by images of potatoes as big as boulders, the uniqueness of the climate of Florida is shown by the superhuman size of watermelons, and a showcase of the state of Oregon was made using an enormous cabbage. Among this kind of representation we find celery the size of railway wagon as well as mussels and a variety of fruits (**images 5 and 6**). A postcard showing a giant apple (**figure 7**) seems to be very similar to the surrealist René Magritte's image from 1958. (Incidentally, this fact in itself indicates the creative potential inherent even in this uncomplicated form of hyperbole, which – by adhering to the ‘principle of non-compliance’ – betrays a predilection for kitsch.)<sup>17</sup> Undoubtedly, the meaning of the canvas of the famous Belgian painter is partially provided by its title (paratekst)<sup>18</sup> – *The Interrogation Room*: as a result of the trans-semiotic<sup>19</sup> flow of meanings, the giant fruit, which expands in a living room like an impudent tenant and seizes for itself the remaining free space, may appear like a symbol of a claustrophobic human being trapped in a world of matter (**figure 8**). Certainly, the meaning of hyperbole used by the Belgian painter cannot be reduced to a list of the features of an object. It should be noted that in artistic cultural text, the method by which a subject is presented as bizarre is occupied somewhat by making the subject itself bizarre. This prompts the somewhat paradoxical reflection that advertising hyperbole, interpreted in the context of a proper modal

<sup>17</sup> See A. Moles, *Kicz, czyli sztuka szczęścia. Studium o psychologii kiczu*, transl. A. Szczepańska and E. Wende, Warszawa 1978.

<sup>18</sup> See also the poster of the Congress of Polish Culture, R. Olbiński, 2000 (*Plakaty/Posters. Współczesne plakaty polskie Contemporary Polish Posters*, selection of Krzysztof Dydo, Olszanica 2001, p. 121).

<sup>19</sup> We can speak of trans-semiotics when ‘the semiotic or media systems co-creating a communication lose their independence (autonomy) in the creation of meaning’ (E. Szczęsna, *Wprowadzenie do poetyki intersemiotycznej [in:] Intersemiotyczność. Literatura wobec innych sztuk /i odwrotnie/*, ed. S. Balbus, A. Hejmej, J. Niedźwiedz, Kraków 2004, p. 36).



framework, (despite everything) seems to fix the subject in its concreteness and obviousness<sup>20</sup>. In contrast, hyperbole in the paintings of René Magritte rather contests reality, challenging the established habits of understanding the world and often directing attention to the unspeakable dimensions of existence.

## 2.

The second – alongside the exaggeration of proportions – form of visual hyperbole in advertising messages is associated with the multiplication of elements within a presentation. The making in this way a hyperbolic list of the desired product features is usually to an even greater extent the result of interaction between various tropes and figures, particularly metonymy, comparison and metaphor.

For example, an advertising poster for appliances assures us that a Samsung refrigerator is distinguished by its extraordinary capacity (**figure 9**). The visualisation of this feature of the product is based on a metonymic relationship: we see a shopping trolley overloaded to an unreal degree being pushed in the direction of the refrigerator by children with great effort but with a smile. Both the slogan and the facial expressions reassure the recipient that even an authentic mountain of grocery shopping does not have to be any kind of problem. (Incidentally, in the case of this advert, the effect of hyperbole is further intensified by placing it in the centre of the city on giant billboards almost equal in size to an apartment building).

In fact, an analogous treatment was applied in an English magazine advert for body lotion (**figure 10**): potential customers are persuaded about the

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<sup>20</sup> Magritte expressed himself on this subject as follows: ‘My paintings depict familiar things by all the time questioning them. Take for example an apple; you don’t understand why it is so mysterious, you don’t know what it represents’. Quoted in: *René Magritte*, Poznań 2007 (series *Wielka kolekcja słynnych malarzy*; no name of the author, translator and page number).

extraordinary efficiency and effectiveness of the product by the background against which it was shown. It shows an image which is at first difficult to identify, showing up to a hundred clenched hands that make up a curious wall, vaulted not of bricks, but the parts of the human body. This ‘catalogue’ of varied (and multicoloured) hands, completely filling the entire background of the advert and thus suggestive of inexhaustible abundance, refers to the poetics of the list or visual list, which permeates many aspects of mass culture, and does so for reasons quite different than those which inspired avant-garde art<sup>21</sup>. As evidenced by Umberto Eco in *The Infinity of Lists*, ‘the technique of the list does not intend to call into question any order of the world, but rather it wants to confirm again that the universe of abundance and consumption, available to all, represents the only model of a decent society’<sup>22</sup>.

### 3.

The third most common form of visual hyperbole used in advertising can be called context hyperbole. This kind of hyperbole does not have to give up exaggerations of proportions or the multiplication of motives, but the essence of it lies primarily in the form of hyperbolic peculiarities associated with the artist creating the unexpected for a given product by undermining the sense of obviousness of the context. This context can be understood at least in two ways, which is why two groups need to be distinguished.

Situational hyperbole can be called context hyperbole, the exaggeration effect of which comes from creating the world of the presented message, which – if treated literally – would have to be considered unusual from the point of view of common knowledge about the world and, in particular,

<sup>21</sup> See U. Eco, *Wykazy w mass mediach*, [w:] tegoż, *Szaleństwo katalogowania*, transl. T. Kwiecień, Poznań 2009, p. 353.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem.

completely unrealistic, grotesque or absurd. The fundamental issue is that the message takes on a hyperbolic meaning, not so much because of the nature of the qualitative or quantitative relationships between different elements present, but rather due to the unusual situational circumstances presented. Incidentally, messages of this kind could form an interesting subject for research into the functioning of irony in advertising, after all, despite the fact that we perceive it ‘in inverted commas’, it successfully performs its persuasive function. This group of hyperbole is distinguished by a particular diversity. Here are a few more or less typical examples.

A magazine advert for a Samsung Silky vacuum cleaner refers directly to the imagination (**figure 11**). The idea of the poster is based on the trans-semiotic implementation of a metaphor. Based on a phraseological slogan *cisza jak makiem zasiał* (literally ‘quiet as planted poppy seeds’ but with a meaning similar to ‘quiet as a mouse’), it finds its literal interpretation in the iconic organisation of the message. The vacuum cleaner, which – as the accompanying text informs – is distinguished by the remarkable gentleness of its sound, is shown on a snow-white carpet, which is covered with red poppies. The interior design and the colour of the background connote such qualities as sterile cleanliness and modernity, and the red colour (which is the colour of poppies symbolising perfect quiet and the advertised product) seems to open before us a space of dreams. This is further indicated in the second part of the slogan, which is in that colour – ‘wake your imagination’. One can say that the absurdity of the vision (flowers growing on a carpet) is here transformed into fantasy or magic, which the message owes to its hyperbolic meaning. This applies perhaps to most persuasive messages based on metaphor tricks, also much simpler, like an advert for a Wedel chocolate bar that vividly encourages one to ‘plunge into [chocolate] pleasure’ (it represents an attractive woman clothed in tasty dress made of white chocolate).

Another strategy most frequently encountered in messages that base their persuasiveness on situational hyperbole is playing with the ‘frame’ of

the presentation. Perhaps the majority of advertising for television sets convinces the recipient of the excellence of the TV picture using the same concept: shows motifs (mostly objects, animals, plants, people) that exceed the boundaries of the screen and – crossing the barrier of unreality – ‘encroaching’ on the quasi-real area of the home, which is the reality of the advert (**figure 12**). These examples are very typical, which of course does not change the fact that situational hyperbole contains a considerable potential of originality<sup>23</sup>.

A different kind of contextual hyperbole (next to the overly situational) that needs to be considered is intertextual textual hyperbole, namely, the one that supports the mechanism of exaggeration, corresponding to the persuasiveness of a given message, on some form of reference to earlier texts – in the broad sense of the term, including also relationships with non-discursive media of art and communication (visual arts, music, film, etc)<sup>24</sup>. Hyperbole of this kind often exploits styling or parody, sometimes also constituting an important component of the strategy of scandal<sup>25</sup>.

An example of intertextual hyperbole can be an advertisement for Potocki vodka (**figure 13**), which glamourises the advertised product, placing on it

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<sup>23</sup> Woody Allen’s comedy *The Purple Rose of Cairo* from 1985 is shrouded in the same idea, namely a clear ironic variation on the theme of the strength of the effect of screen fiction and the extremity of emotions that may be evoked in the viewer. The self-analytical image of the American director, the life of the poor waitress Cecilia (Mia Farrow) changes radically, and becomes very complicated when the woman (the wife of an alcoholic and a lover of lonely cinema screenings) becomes involved romantically... with the main character of her favourite film, who steps out from the screen. See the story *Widmo (El espectro)* Horacio Quirogi (in the volume *Biała zapaść*, transl. M. Baterowicz, Kraków 1981).

<sup>24</sup> See R.Nycz, *Intertekstualność i jej zakresy: teksty, gatunki, światy* [in:] thereof, *Tekstowy świat. Poststrukturalizm a wiedza o literaturze*, Warszawa 1995, pp. 59-82.

<sup>25</sup> See P. Michałowski, *Strategie skandalu i stereotypy odbioru* [in:] *Stereotypy w literaturze (i tuż obok)*, ed. W. Bolecki, G. Gazda, Warszawa 2003, pp. 284-304.

connotations of worship<sup>26</sup>. The poster refers to religion in several ways, and the references are both linguistic and structural (meaning that textual structures traditionally used in religious works are used). Almost the entire photo is filled by the picture of a bottle of alcohol, shown from a bottom-up perspective on a black and white sky. In the absence in the image of any point of reference for the advertised product, the image makes an impression of exaggeration – it thematises somewhat the issue of the controversiality of proportion and at the same time, perhaps, suggests the relativity of values we are used to. In the centre of the composition, the brand's logo is shown (and also the Potocki coat of arms), reminiscent of the shape of a cross: rays of light shine through like on the canvas of a painter wanting to portray the idea of Divine Mercy. The image is completed by a schematic representation of a crown placed above. The colour of the background, as well as its form of composition, evokes religious antithetical connotations of black and white and right and left. The slogan urges the recipient to make a 'real discovery', to reach for what is really good, no doubt bringing him happiness. The persuasiveness of the slogan 'Discover true spirit' is based on the semantic English noun homonym 'spirit' (both an alcohol and a supernatural being, the Holy Spirit) and polemical overtones in the context of the adjective (true). The advert for Potocki vodka to a certain extent sacralises its subject, at the same time 'questioning' the axiological foundations of faith. In its light, good, which is actually true, absolute good, must be discovered; thanks to the poster, this is not a problem...

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<sup>26</sup> More about advertising of this kind in: B. Pawłowska-Jądrzyk, *Sacrum i skandal. O nawiązaniach do religii w przekazach reklamowych* [w:] Eadem, *Uczta pod Wiszącą Skalą. Metafizyczność i nieokreśloność w sztuce (nie tylko) literackiej*, Warsaw 2011, pp. 191-213.

Hyperbole (although unquestionably important for cultural texts representing distant eras, such as for medieval painting or baroque poetry) is a significant figure for modern times, fitting in well in the poetic spectacle used today, especially in popular culture. In the ‘[modern and postmodern] society of the spectacle’ hyperbole and related textual techniques impact the sensitivity and imagination of recipients through a growing number of media forms and various (including trans-semiotic) ways of creating meaning<sup>27</sup>. To a huge extent, they also determine the persuasive power of Debord’s spectacle, with its inherent – and not always easy to track – elements of pressure and manipulation.

A summary of typical forms of visual hyperbole that exist in today’s advertising (sample typology):

1. Giga-hyperbole – hyperbole associated with the nature of the qualitative relationship between the elements present; it manifests itself by exaggerating the size of the advertised product or the size of objects subjected to it that are related to the product in an important way due to the objective of the advert.
2. Multi-hyperbole – hyperbole associated with the nature of the quantitative relationship between the elements present; manifested by the multiplication of elements within the presentation with the purpose of highlighting the specific features of the product being advertised.
3. Context hyperbole – exaggeration involving the peculiarisation of

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<sup>27</sup> See G. Debord, *Spoleczeństwo spektaklu* [1967], transl. M. Kwaterko, Gdańsk, 1998; Idem, *Spoleczeństwo spektaklu. Rozważania o społeczeństwie spektaklu* [1988], transl. M. Kwaterko, Warszawa 2006.

a message associated with the artist creating the unexpected for the given product, undermining the sense of obviousness of the context.

- a) Situational – hyperbole whose effect of exaggerating the properties of the product advertised is due above all to the special character of situational conditions in which the product is presented.
  
- b) Intertextual – hyperbole whose effect of exaggerating the properties of the product being advertised is due above all to some form of intertextual references used in an advertising message.

### **Visual Hyperbole in Advertising (Reconnaissance)**

Extravagant exaggeration seems to be one of the most significant traits of contemporary culture influenced by the idea of success and ‘spectaclicity’. According to the Author of the paper, even the most extreme examples of hyperbole occur in advertising. The article presents several kinds of visual hyperbole which are used in contemporary adverts (these are: giga-hyperbole, multi-hyperbole, context hyperbole – situational and intertextual). The following examples of hyperbole have been described with respect to their distinctive features, main functions and imaginative value.

**Keywords:** popculture, trope, visual hyperbole, exaggeration, spectaclicity, advertising.



1. Jeanne Lanvin perfume advertisement



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www.eic.pl/tekupisz

Posiadaj lidersa kina domowego firmy Onkyo. Wyposażony we wszystkie najnowsze technologie — w tym HDMI 1.3a, Dolby® TrueHD, DTS-HD® Master Audio, THX Ultra2 i Audyssey MultEQ® XT — 7,1-kanałowy sepcyjny odtwarzacz TX-NR905 ma szereg zalet, które umieszcza go w superklasie systemów kina domowego.

Odtwarzacz TX-NR905 został wyposażony w obsługę sieciami-oddzielającą współpracę z programami Windows Media Player™. Wideo Media Connect™ i ten sposób użytkownik uzyskuje dostęp do najlepszych internetowych i komputerowych zasobów multimedialnych muzycznych. Jako pierwszy odtwarzacz na świecie został on również wyposażony w układ HGV BeoMAX, na podstawie którego stworzono system przetwarzania wideo w wysokiej rozdzielczości 1080i. Zgodnie z najwyższymi standardami firmy Onkyo, pod maską odtwarzacza TX-NR905 znajdują się innowacyjny zasłona, znakomita konstrukcja wzmacniacza, oraz wysoko wydajne komponenty takich firm jak Texas Instruments.

Wiele produktów reklamowanych jest jako „w pełni funkcjonalne”, jednak odtwarzacz TX-NR905 całkowicie zastąpił sobie na to miano.

Będąc doskonałym dopełnieniem Amplifiera Onkyo, odtwarzacz płyt Blu-ray DV-BD606 jest oznaczony nowym członkiem rodziny urządzeń Onkyo. Odtwarzacz ten wydobywa cały potencjał z wideo wysokiej rozdzielczości 1080p każdego tytułu płyty Blu-ray. Prosto on również do swojego kompatybilnego odtwarzacza AV dźwięku surround Dolby® True HD lub DTS-HD Master Audio™ — o takiej samej jakości, jak dźwięk mikrowytworzy w studiu. Dzięki słobawaniu 1080p DV-BD606 przeniesie swoje DVD wideo i płyty DVD do światła wysokiej rozdzielczości. Urządzenie to może być również używane do odtwarzania muzyki z płyty CD i MP3.

Electronic International Commerce Sp. z o.o.; ul. Łuki Wielkie 3/5; 02-434 Warszawa; tel: (22) 594 83 83; fax: (22) 594 83 84; e-mail: eic@eic.com.pl; www.eic.pl

2. ONKYO player advertisement



**softwear** | Softens every step

STAND TALL. WALK *Clarks*

The advertisement features a woman in a white trench coat and red shoes walking on a city street. She is walking on a large, flat surface that appears to be a giant shoe. The background shows a city street with cars, a bus, and tall buildings. The text 'softwear | Softens every step' is on the left, and 'STAND TALL. WALK Clarks' is on the right.

3. Clarks footwear advertisement





4. W. Deni and N. Dolgorukov propaganda poster (1939)



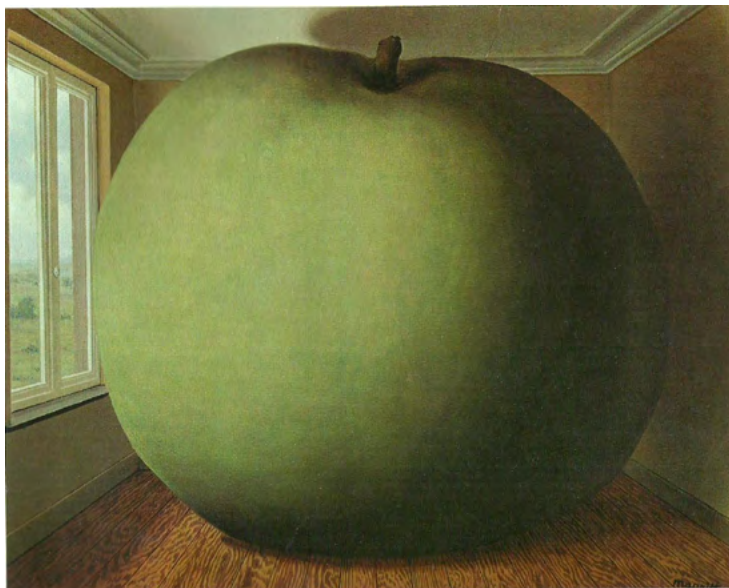
5. American postcard from the 1920s



6. American postcard from the 1920s



7. American postcard from the 1920s



8. Image by R. Magritte 'Interrogation Room' (1958)





9. Samsung refrigerators advertisement



10. E 45 Lotion advertisement

# Cisza jak makiem zasiał... *obudź wyobraźnię*



The advertisement features a Samsung Silky vacuum cleaner in a modern living room. The vacuum is red and black, with a long silver tube and a black floor head. Red poppies are scattered across the light-colored carpet, and a red and orange circular graphic element surrounds the vacuum. The background shows a white sofa and a coffee table.

**Nowe odkurzacze Samsung Silky**

Wyobraź sobie łagodność dźwięku, jaką może zaoferować Ci jeden z najcichszych odkurzaczy na świecie. Silky to odkurzacz o wyjątkowym designie i z natężeniem hałasu zaledwie 67dBa. Pozwoli on każdemu cieszyć się czasem spędzonym w domowym zaciszu. Silky to także innowacyjna technologia Silver Nano, która zaspokoi potrzeby nawet najbardziej spragnionych doskonałej czystości. Samsung stworzył Silky, aby każdy mógł cieszyć się spokojem. Silky – wstuchaj się w ciszę...

[www.samsung.pl](http://www.samsung.pl)



11. Samsung Silky vacuum cleaner advertisement

TELEWIZORY FULL LED 3D  
Z SERII LG INFINIA

## ODKRYJ TRZECI WYMIAR EMOCJI

Nie ma Cię przed telewizorem.  
Jesteś w egzotycznym lesie.  
Popatrz wokół: technologia  
FULL LED wydobywa  
dla Ciebie pełnię barw  
i prawdziwe piękno kwiatów.  
Spójrz w górę: dzięki  
TruMotion 400 Hz  
wyraźnie widać pióra  
szybujących po niebie ptaków.  
Zanurz się w nowym świecie:  
design INFINIA sprawia, że już  
nic Cię nie oddziela od  
najpiękniejszych doświadczeń.

Nie oglądasz,  
przeżywasz to.



©2010 LG Innotek

FULL LED 3D

INFINIA DESIGN

TruMotion  
400Hz

12. LG television advertisement





13. Potocki vodka advertisement



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