

Aneta Pawłowska

Department of Art History

University of Łódź

aneta.pawlowska@uni.lodz.pl

Anna Wendorff

Department of Spanish Studies

University of Łódź

anna.wendorff@uni.lodz.pl

FROM SIGN TO WORD IN CONTEMPORARY POLISH "HTML LITERATURE". POST-AVANT-GARDE HEIRS OF MODERNIST TYPOGRAPHY

Abstract: Digital literature or "HTML literature" is one of the more expressive and important trends of the Polish literature of the 21st century. In order to present the main aims and objectives of HTML literature, it is essential to take under consideration the digital works characterized by the autonomisation of words, as well as the isolation of words from the linguistic and non-linguistic context and reality, so that "the word itself and for itself would have a clear meaning" – as it was claimed in the late 1960s by one of the main representatives of Polish language art and the icon of Polish concrete poetry, Stanisław Dróżdź. The authors search for the predecessors of such an approach to literary texts in the period of the Great Avant-garde – one can refer here to the pronouncements of the Polish Formists and Constructivists (the true beginning are the literary manifestoes and poems of Tytus Czyżewski from 1921, inspiring such Polish Constructivists as Henryk Berlewi, Mieczysław Szczuka, Teresa Żarnowerówna, as well as Władysław Strzemiński, the latter author deserving special attention. Contemporarily in the 21st century, the works of Piotr Kowalczyk are renowned for a similar treatment of "the isolated word". Kowalczyk, who works under the pseudonym of Nick Name, is the author of such works as: *iPhone Stories*, *Twitter Fiction*, *Tech Quotes*, *Transtories*, as well as *Short stories for geeks*.

Keywords: Great Avant-garde movement, "HTML literature", visual arts, 20th and 21st century, Polish avant-garde poetry.

"HTML literature" in Poland is a new and young trend. The beginning of digital poetry worldwide is dated back to 1959, when Max Bense persuaded his student Theo Lutz to devise the first digital generator for the random creation of texts. In Poland this trend was initiated by the group Perfokarta, whose members met at

a clear meaning”, one can refer to the works of the main representative of Polish language art and the icon of Polish concrete poetry, Stanisław Dróżdź (1939-2009), while attempting to pinpoint the highlights of his poetic activity (e.g. the exhibition entitled *Stanisław Dróżdź. Structural Poetry. Concept-Shapes*, at the “od-Nowa” Gallery in Poznań, in March and April 1969). His best-known single work is the textual cave entitled *Między* [Between].

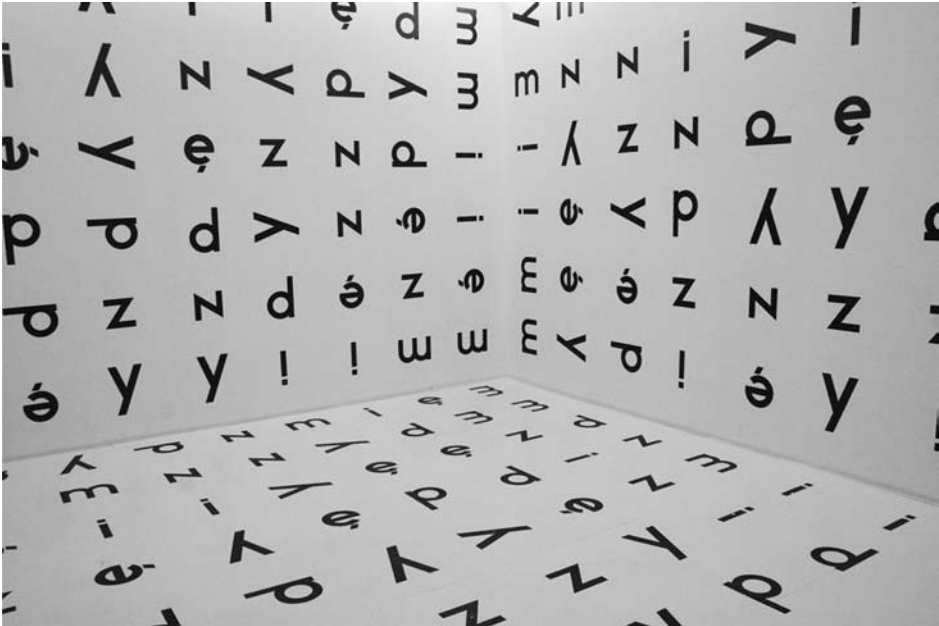


Figure 2. Stanisław Dróżdź, *Między*, MOCAK, Kraków, fot. A. Pawłowska

This installation is currently on display and can be admired at the MOCAK (Museum of Contemporary Art in Cracow). For this project the artist covered the white cube space of the gallery with even rows of letters selected at random from the set limited to “m,” “i,” “ę,” “d,” “z,” and “y”, with some of their combinations seemingly close to forming the word “między”, but never actually arriving at it. The viewer/reader can enter the cube and thus be truly “between.”²

The progenitors of “HTML literature” in Poland can also be sought and found in the activities of the artist Stanisław Czycz (1929-1996), who created a series of non-linear polyphonic poems, in which he placed columns of parallel voices one beside the other. He refused to be confined by a standard-sized page, and sought

² Read more in: A. Le Nart, *Stanisław Dróżdź*, <http://culture.pl/en/artist/stanislaw-drozdz> (08/08/2017).

to expand his writing surface, experimenting with a regular-sized typewriter and an A3 sheet, or gluing pages together to obtain scrolls. His most famous works are *And* (1961), *Ajol* (1967), *Laor* (1967) and *Arw* (1975-1980). The last piece started as a screenplay about the life of the painter Andrzej Wróblewski (1972-1957), commissioned by the film director Andrzej Wajda, but in the end it turned into a long experimental poem.

However, when analyzing the issues of digital literature in more detail, it is essential to look back to the period of the Great Avant-garde and the work of many Polish Constructivists, such as Henryk Berlewi (1894-1967), Mieczysław Szczuka (1898-1927), Teresa Żarnowerówna (1897-1949) and Władysław Strzemiński (1893-1952). It is also necessary to consider the statements of the Formists, especially the radical pronouncements of the artist Tytus Czyżewski (1880-1945) in his manifesto of 1921, which were visibly reflected in his architectural, inter-medial poetry – visual and verbal representations of multi-sensory reality, as well as his poems about the “mechanical instinct” – concerning various processes in the field of biology and automatics.

As declared by Czyżewski, "Contemporary poetry must work out a new, distinct form sensitive to the needs of contemporary readers, hungering after nervous, synthetic emotions (...). The artists will use the subject as little as possible and will construct as much as possible" and "contemporary poetry [is] the synthetic art of the 20th- and 21st-century man". Despite his obvious ignorance of the coming technological revolution which will occur several decades later, Czyżewski mentions the 21st-century man, foreseeing a reality completely dominated by technology. His uniquely rhythmical poems invite a digital approach. Multiplicity and randomness appear in the piece *Oczy tygrysa* [Eyes of the tiger], the problems of mathematics are present in *Poemat liczb* [A poem of numbers], a repetition scheme appears in *Muzyka z okna* [Music from the window], simultaneity is much used in *Szpital obłąkanych* [Mental asylum], spatiality is part of *Hymn do maszyny mego ciała* [An anthem to the machine of my body] and multifacetedness is a feature of *Noc - dzień* [Night - day]; all of which seems like a detailed map for the future digitalization of these poems.

Looking for the roots of HTML literature in the Great Avant-garde, it is also worth mentioning the importance of the pioneering achievements of such celebrated artist as Władysław Strzemiński⁴ in the field of lettering and so-called functional printing. He tirelessly believed in the importance of new artistic ideas and he

³ S. Czycz, *ARW*, Korporacja Ha!art, Kraków 2007.

⁴ Władysław Strzemiński, Polish avant-garde painter, formulated his influential theory of Unism [pol. Unizm] in the late 1920s in relation to painting, but subsequently extended its theoretical application to sculpture, architecture, and typography in 1931-1933. The general principle of Unism, pertaining to all forms of artistic expression, was the requirement of “unity between the artwork and the place of its creation”.

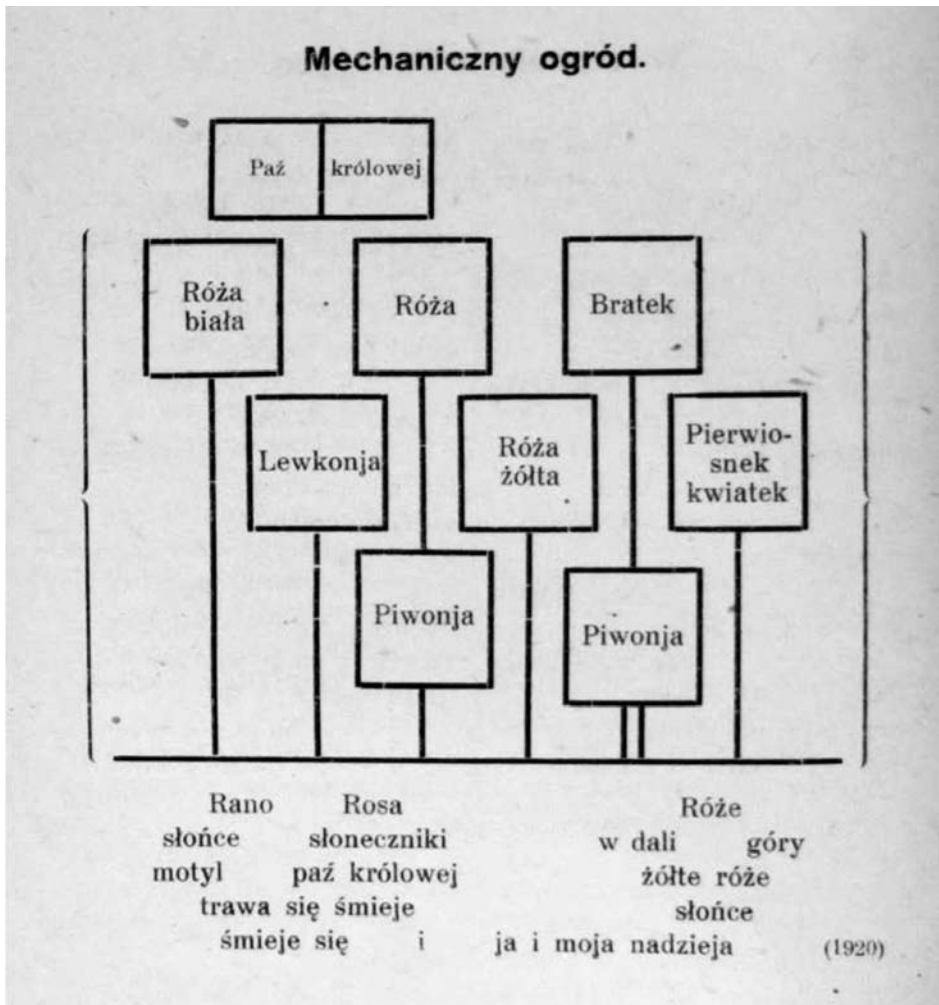


Figure 3. Poem „Mechaniczny ogród” [Mechanical garden] by Tytus Czyżewski from his book *No - dzień. Mechaniczny instynkt elektryczny*. Kraków 1922, Czas Publishing House

refused to ever discontinue his insightful explorations in the domain of art. His own functional print projects managed to integrate the meaning of words and phrases with their graphic form, so that they may be even called visual poetry. His book covers established a model of text composition, where the lettering is an important element of the structure, cf. *Z ponad* [From above] by Julian Przyboś, published in 1930). This artist saw progress, in both artistic and social terms, as the guiding force of action, and he constantly strove to go even further in his understanding of art. The connection between visual arts and poetry, strongly

emphasized in the manifestos of the avant-garde group "a.r."⁵, was for Strzemiński not only the matter of layout, typesetting, and design, but also the question of treating the typographic composition as something that enables us to understand the internal rules of the work's structure. Strzemiński believed that modern art speaks a universal language, and as a result the artists who create images produce the same effect as the artists who compose their works with words.⁶ In his article entitled *Druk funkcjonalny* [Functional typography], he wrote: "A typographic composition should be similar in structure to a literary work".⁷

The convergence of visual and verbal arts may be achieved through a variety of means, by freely connecting the domains that at first seem entirely distant from one another. In this context, the discussions on poetry conducted by Strzemiński with Tadeusz Peiper and Julian Przyboś, as well as the formation of the "a.r." group in cooperation with poets, gain a deeper meaning. Searching for the ways of bringing together painting and poetry was seen by Strzemiński as an obligation, from which he did not want to release himself, both in his theoretical statements and his artistic practice.

Summarizing the pioneering work of the Great Avant-Garde movement, one can refer to the claim of Leon T. Chwistek, a painter and art critic, member of the Formism Movement⁸, that modern artists always tend to adapt art to the changing reality:

Formist poetry is closely connected with the extension of language, a typical impulse of all new poetic movements. An essential role is also played by the intangibility of the described subject matter. These factors are a sufficient

⁵ The „a.r.” artistic group (“revolutionary artists”, or “real avant-garde”), active in 1929-1936, was one of the most influential Polish avant-garde groups of the interwar period. It was created by poets and artists – former .associates of the Kraków *Zwrotnica* magazine and ex-members of the avant-garde groups Blok and Praesens. Members of “a.r.” included the sculptor Katarzyna Kopro, the painters Władysław Strzemiński and Henryk Stażewski, and the poets Jan Brzękowski and Julian Przyboś. The group’s programme chiefly reflected the views of Strzemiński. In two leaflets entitled *Komunikaty a.r.* [‘a.r. bulletins’] the group declared itself in favour of a ‘laboratory’ version of Constructivism and avant-garde art that influenced social life in an indirect and gradual manner. Read more in: Z. Baranowicz, *Polska awangarda artystyczna 1918-1939*, Warszawa 1975, pp. 158-188.

⁶ See more: J. Zagrodzki, *Władysław Strzemiński - obrazy słów*, PWSFT, Łódź 2015 and *Zmiana pola widzenia*, ed. P. Kurc-Maj, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź 2014.

⁷ W. Strzemiński, „Druk funkcjonalny”, *Grafika* 1933, no 2, pp. 37-45.

⁸ Formism (previously known as Polish Expressionism) was an avant-garde art movement, developed in Kraków, active in Zakopane and Lwów (partially also in Warsaw and Poznań) from 1917 to 1922. Participating artists included Tytus Czyżewski, Leon Chwistek, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, Zbigniew Pronaszko, Andrzej Pronaszko, Konrad Winkler, August Zamoyski, Jan Hrynkowski, Tymon Niesiołowski, Jacek Mierzejewski. The group proclaimed a departure from Realism, and argued for the superiority of form over content.

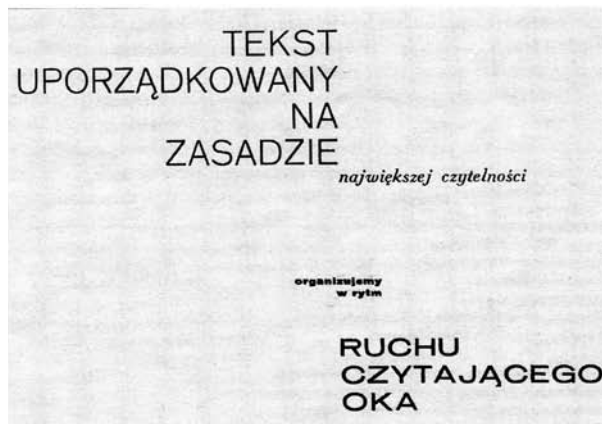


Figure 4. Sample designs from the book edited by Władysław Strzeмиński, *Functional typography*, in: *Zmiana pola widzenia*, Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki 2014, p. 44

basis for stimulating the poets' spontaneous creativity, leading them in the right direction regardless of any theories.⁹

Contemporary writers similarly seek to integrate their vision of language and literary content, adding 21st century technologies into the mix. Hence today's broad definition of literature subsumes hypertext poetry, interactive, generative, and visual poetry.

However, in Polish electronic literature, the word is more valued than the form, since the latter is based on relatively simple software, created by the author himself (Radosław Nowakowski) or with the help of only one other person (cf. Sławomir Shuty, collaborating with Mariusz Pisarski on his hypertext novel *Blok*, Kondrad Polak was helped by Piot Marecki in his work on the first i-phone novel, *Schemat*. It is interesting that those helpers are journalists, critics and publishers, not IT specialists). Shuty has no understanding of hypertext; he does not know its history or the mechanism of its operation. He seems to have been invited to do a project and taken it on without much reflection. Interviewed by Urszula Pawlicka, Shuty admits: "Unfortunately, I do not follow the developments on the hypertext scene, and I am not familiar with the discourse on this topic".¹⁰ Radosław Nowakowski admits: "I haven't read any hypertext novel. I have never gained any theoretical background. I did have a practical one in the form of my books".¹¹ This is another feature that distinguishes Polish hypertext scene. Obviously, there are pros and cons of such a situation. While the form of their works may not be technologically sophisticated, the content is highly valuable, and when reading foreign digital works, we may get an impression that they are only meant to play on form, and the content remains secondary or even irrelevant.

Most Polish digital works in fact carry a message independently of technology. This makes one wonder why they are made digitally, when they would still be fully-fledged works without this. We come to realise that those hypertext works are simply rendered in the digital mode, and were not designed specifically as digital from the start. Furthermore, their authors have not created their texts in close cooperation with IT specialists, as it is done in the United States. Their works are

⁹ In the original Polish, Chwistek used phonetic spelling, which made the text look very fresh and unconventional: „poezja formistyczna łączy się ściśle z zagadnieniem rozszeżenia języka, co jest stałą cechą każdej ludzkiej się do życia poezji. Prucz tego odgrywa zasadniczą rolę neuhwytność samych zdażeń. Czynniki te są wystarczającą podstawą do pobudzenia żywiołowej twórczości poetuw, prowadząc ih niezależnie od wszelkiej teorii na właściwy teren” (L. Chwistek, „O poezji”, Nuż w brzuchu 2 jednodniuwka futurystuw wydańe nadzwyczajne, Krakuw – Warszawa 1921).

¹⁰ U. Pawlicka, *O czynie, który wyprzedza myśl. Ze Sławomirem Shutym rozmawiała Urszula Pawlicka*, <http://niedoczytania.pl/o-czynie-ktory-wyprzedza-mysl-ze-slawomirem-shutym-rozmawiala-urszula-pawlicka/> (19/07/2017).

¹¹ R. Nowakowski, *Rashomon do potęgi entej*, in: *Litemet.pl*, ed. P. Marecki, Rabid, Kraków 2003, p. 11.

published for free on the Internet, or turned out by the independent publishing house Ha!art, proclaiming itself to be interested in everything that is not economically lucrative; they are known mainly to the researchers in media studies and culture, less often philologists. Interestingly, digital literature abroad is discussed as part of the comparative literature courses at the faculties of philology, but as for Polish such literature, the persistent belief is that it cannot be classified as a separate literary genre, and it is largely ignored. It is discussed by small groups of devotees (e.g. at the meetings organised by the Liternet Foundation) or at small conferences (e.g. *Od liberatury do e-literatury* in 2009); critical writings on digital literature always turn out the same names. A researcher looking for some sources finds many stumps, compilations, re-hashed versions of the same article etc. This is aptly illustrated by the quotation from *Zwał* by Shuty, which sums up such an academic scene as "the world of mini quotes, samples, collages and borrowings [which] resembles fishing for the more appetizing pieces in a goulash soup...".¹²

There are two major terms in Polish for "HTML literature" of the 21st century: Jerzy Ablewicz's *liternet*, and *e-liberature* coined by Agnieszka Przybyszewska. *Liternet*, which is a blend of *literature* and *Internet*, encompasses both "literature on the Internet", i.e. digitalized literature, and "world wide web literature", i.e. digital literature. *E-liberature* is a term based on the concept of *liberature* (literature whose material form is as essential as its content) proposed by Katarzyna Bazarzik and Zenon Fajfer, and denotes liberature created on/for the Internet, in which this fact is a fundamental element. Among the forms of this kind of literature it is worth mentioning collaborative fiction, e.g. *Krótką historią Iwony Tramp* by Krysztyna Kofta (2000/2001) or *Rok bez siedmiu minut* (2001) by Jerzy Pilch. New hypertext literature includes, most importantly, *Blok* (2006) by Shuty, which is partly a hypertext novel, and many others, like *Tramwaje w przestrzeniach zespolonych* and *Kooky Ja Said* by Dr Muto, *Gmachy Trwonienia Czasu* by xnauta, rh+ by Joanna Roszak or *Carlos* by Jarosław Szatkiewicz. *Koniec świata według Emeryka* by Radosław Nowakowski would fall into the category of e-liberature, as would another hypertext project by the same author, entitled *Liberland* (2010), in which he declares:

This is my state. My country. Neither democracy, nor a kingdom. A textdom. A hypertextdom. A work in constant progress. Endless construction. Infinite reconstruction. A tale having its beginning in the middle and being developed and spread in all directions. A free book for a free reader. You pay almost nothing visiting this country, only the time you waste on reading. You can even earn a little for you can always spend the same time doing something even more needless and unnecessary.¹³

¹² S. Shuty, *Zwał*, W.A.B, Warszawa 2004, p. 126.

¹³ R. Nowakowski, *Liberland*, <http://liberatorium.republika.pl/liberlandia.html> (21/07/2017).

As summed up in one critical source¹⁴,

[Polish digital literature] differs from such foreign literature in the conscious serendipity of its interrelations and bolder, I'd say swashbuckling, charges into the unknown. Polish hypertext authors seem to shun reconstructive, post-structural or postmodernist inspirations. They find their points of reference in visual literature, concrete poetry (Szczerbowski), literature as a new literary genre (Nowakowski) or naive and primitive forms (Shuty).

There are three major formations to be mentioned in regard to Polish electronic poetry: Perfokarta, Cichy Nabiau and *Rozdzielczość Chleba*. An attempt at a chronological presentation of the scene would yield the following order of events¹⁵: 2003 is marked by the online publication of Michał Kaczyński's volume *warszawa płonie* (2002) in which the verbal content is enriched by illustrations and graphic layout. Two years later, Roman Bromboszcz and Tomasz Misiak (with occasional collaboration of other artists on projects), launched a non-commercial collective KALeKa (a blend of the Polish words *kalka* 'calque' and *kaleka* 'cripple'), which combines poetry, sound and animation, resulting in visual, sound, and text poetry. In 2005 the same authors formed Perfokarta, a group known not only for working out the theoretical grounds of cyber poetry, but also for their practical application in the form of cyber-projects, which paved the way for electronic poetry in Poland. In 2006 Nescitus (Paweł Kozioł) published *Low Fidelity. Hiperpoemat*, a hypertext narrative poem in construction. One year later, Zenon Fajfer created his kinetic acrostic *Ars Poetica*. 2008 was marked by two events: the launch of the art blog of Cichy Nabiau, and the publication of the volume *digital. prayer* by Roman Bromboszcz, which experimented with typography. In 2011 Tomasz Wilmański started writing concrete digital poetry (*EMOH2*), Leszek Onak and Łukasz Podgórní established the publishing project *Rozdzielczość Chleba* (replacing Cichy Nabiau's *Dom Szkocki*) and launched a magazine of the same title; Roman Bromboszcz published his volume *Hx*. A year later, three digital poetry volumes were published: another one by Bromboszcz entitled *U-man i masa; noce i pętle* by Podgórní, and *Zespół Szkół* by Tomasz Pułka. The same year saw the publication of animation poetry *C(n) Du It* by Katarzyna Giełżyńska and the volume entitled *918-578* by Bromboszcz. There was also an attempt at adapting the Formist poetry of Tytus Czyżewski¹⁶ by Pawlicka and Podgórní, resulting in the project entitled *Cyfrowe Zielone Oko*, which features hypertext, interactive, visual, and generative poetry.

¹⁴ P. Marecki, M. Pisarski (eds.), *Hiperteksty literackie. Literatura i nowe media*, Korporacja Ha!art, Kraków 2011, p. 7.

¹⁵ Chronology after U. Pawlicka, *(Polska) poezja cybernetyczna. Konteksty i charakterystyka*, Korporacja Ha!art, Kraków 2012.

¹⁶ Tytus Czyżewski (1880-1945) - Polish avant-garde painter and poet; his first poetry volume is *Zielone oko*.



Figure 5. Cichy Nabiau, *Cyber%ul 2014 (S)hit Mix*, <http://rozdzielchleb.pl/cichy-nabiau-cyberzul-2014-shit-mix/> (30/06/2017)

While the earlier, more experienced Polish authors of digital literature (Shuty, Nowakowski) did not draw inspiration from its foreign representatives, the younger ones soak up all the novelties from abroad ("smartliterature" = literature + smartphone, Twitterature = literature + Twitter, cyber-poetry).

A certain infatuation of the younger authors with the foreign trends can be also seen in the marketing and promotion of books: book trailers (e.g. *Biuro zagubionych zabawek* by Iwona Czarkowska, animation (Roman Bromboszcz), viral marketing. The last one can be found in Konrad Polak's work entitled *Schemat* (a hyperlink takes us to the webpage of the Ha!art publishing house, where we find *One hundred million million poems* by Raymond Queneau, which is on offer), smartphone novels, described by *Słownik Gatunków Literatury Cyfrowej* as

literary works adjusted to the systems, interfaces and reading habits typical of mobile devices, like smartphones, which – in terms of their advanced technology and use – may be regarded as placed between the systems, interfaces and reading habits typical of desktop and portable computers, and traditional mobile phones. A distinguishing feature of this genre of works is a special physical text placement; a composition which complies with screen limitations (e.g. literature delivered in portions and in sessions, small screen to display the text) and also a multi-platform way of distribution.¹⁷

Apart from smartphone novels, there are also smartphone short stories by Piotr Kowalczyk, who writes under the pseudonym Niżej podpisany (Nick Name in English). We consider him to be the most interesting, multidimensional, and experimental of all Polish digital writers. This digital storyteller is relentless in his search for novelty: his current interest is in poetry based on bar codes (using a mobile phone, we will be scanning bar codes from products and leaving comments using a special application called StickyBits, making the best of the mundane and the ethereal¹⁸). For all the reasons mentioned above, we have decided to look more closely at his work.

Nick Name's short stories making up the collections *Password Incorrect* and *Failure Confirmed* belong to the category of so-called "geek fiction". The introduction to *Password Incorrect* presents the stories as follows:

5 short, sometimes funny and sometimes mean stories ideal to rediscover the joy of reading a book as shiny and beautiful as a brand new cell phone. A look

¹⁷ *Słownik Gatunków Literatury Cyfrowej*, entry by M. Pisarski, <http://www.ha.art.pl/prezentacje/42-sownik-terminow-literatury-cyfrowej/2129-sownik-terminow-literatury-cyfrowej-powiesc-na-smartfona.html> (20/07/2017).

¹⁸ U. Pawlicka, *W roli przedskoczka. Z Piotrem Kowalczykiem rozmawiała Urszula Pawlicka*, <http://niedoczytania.pl/w-roli-przedskoczka-z-piotrem-kowalczykiem-rozmawiala-urszula-pawlicka/> (20/07/2017).

from a distance at the absurdity of our present day lives: fights with the less and less comprehensible equipment, pursuit of the latest technological news, pitfalls of our modern lifestyle, useless inventions and issues racing in all directions at breakneck speed. A lot of entertainment and a little food for thought. Just perfect for the moment when you're finally bored with exploring the alarm settings on your new iPhone.¹⁹

Another one of his stories begins in a similar way:

Because this story will be painfully banal, it will be also painfully short. Peter Maria Kędzierzyna of the Tschekan coat-of-arms bought himself the newest model of a 25th generation cell phone from Siemens-BenQ Nokia-LG ABC 123, incorporating all achievements of the human race up to the time when Bill Gates became an honorary president of the United States.²⁰

Nick Name is also the author of *Tech Quotes*, in which he replaces the human perspective by the technological one, i.e. the viewpoint of robots, computers, gadgets etc. This lets us know what technology would make of us. The following are two bits of such robot wisdom. The first one is the Robot Proverb: "The most dangerous thing about humans is that they are so irrational"²¹, the second one is an observation by an Intel Microprocessor: "Man's microprocessor is called 'brain' and it's an awful waste of space".²² On the one hand, those are playful and tongue-in-cheek; on the other, a bitter reflection "that we humans are not the only ones to be right and own truth".²³

Another experiment of Nick Name is *One Picture Stories*. They are picture stories created for an iPhone, which Kowalczyk calls iPhone Stories. These images show the influence of technology, especially the social media, on our lives. Kowalczyk is also a literary twitterer – he creates literary works of up to 140 characters (which is the limitation imposed by Twitter). One example of this twitterature is: "A bottle of bug fixes, please. 'Universal?' 'No, Android only, I'm on a diet.'"²⁴ The author demonstrates that despite the limited form, the content does not have to be minimalistic; on the contrary, it becomes an incentive for unconventional creative description of today's world. He says about Twitter fiction: "Our lives are turning digital and the stories are designed to grasp the dynamics of the process. I have been creating them since early 2009. This site is mobile-friendly, you can

¹⁹ Feedbooks, <http://www.feedbooks.com/book/3127/password-incorrect> (20/07/2017).

²⁰ P. Kowalczyk, *Password Incorrect*, transl. A. Etmańska, BookRix Edition, Munich 2008, p. 3.

²¹ P. Kowalczyk, *Password Incorrect Blog*, <http://www.passwordincorrect.com/2011/05/22/tech-quotes-what-would-technology-say-about-humans/> (21/07/2017).

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ P. Kowalczyk, Twitter Fiction, <http://twitterfiction.passwordincorrect.com/> Posted on 30 June, 2013. (20/07/2017).

open it from your phone”.²⁵ Polish and foreign twitterature began to appear in 2009, and its culmination is *#VSS Anthology. A Twitter Anthology of Very Short Stories # Vol. 1*, a world anthology of microprose made public on Twitter, published by Brent Millis in 2010, which also features works by Nick Name. He also has a blog at <http://www.passwordincorrect.com/> where he writes about e-literature, sharing his experiences as the author of digital literature, and giving tips on how to write for mobile devices and how to publish one’s work. In all his writings, Nick Name perceives the world of new technology with irony, and looks at it with a sneer, a smile, and puts it into perspective. He often employs humour: “Between his 798,785th and 798,786th tweet, Alan even managed to talk to his family: ‘I’m hungry, please retweet’”.²⁶ The author also frequently relies on hashtagging (#), which is used to tag posts to facilitate the location of tweets relating to the same tag, and to create so-called hashtag stories, which he describes as an “attempt at reaching the most intimate emotions”.²⁷ Hashtag stories, in the words of the author, are a simple recipe for a mash-up (a new work created on the basis of already existing ones) which is a huge challenge, not only because of the limitation imposed by the number of signs, but also by the character and number of the available tags. Such stories can be also classed as hypertext, because hashtags are nothing more than links that send us to other variations of the same tag. This is one example of a hashtag story: “#iremember #inhighschool #crashlove #ashes #IAmAGrownUp”.²⁸ Twitterature has a lot in common with the tradition of micro-stories, which are characterized by lack of description, or even anti-description, speed, brevity, fragmentation, creative minimalism. The difference is in the medium, the mode of writing/ reading, and in a more precise and rigorous sign limitation (140); it is a kind of digital hyper-micro-story, a micro-story befitting the 21st century.

Let us make here two short digressions. Another twitterature author, though not as creative as Kowalczyk, is Piotr Wereśniak, the author of *Twitter Fiction. 37 ultra short stories in English and Polish*. This bilingual collection came out in the late summer of 2009. This is a sample story: “The big whale was lying on the beach and looking at the stars. ‘Can someone write about me on Twitter?’ he thought.”²⁹ Closely related to Twitterature is text messaging poetry, represented e.g. by *Esemesy z dnia na dzień. Książka dla wszystkich i dla nikogo* [Text messages from day to day. A book for everyone and no one] from 2003 by Marek Oktawian Bulanowski, who “inhabits the Polish lang, which he trits az a uzeful enaf tul to

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ B. Millis (ed.), *#VSSAnthology. A Twitter Anthology of Very Short Stories # Vol. 1*, Smashwords Edition, Los Gatos (CA) 2010, p. 27.

²⁷ U. Pawlicka, *W roli przedskoczka...*

²⁸ B. Millis (ed.), *#VSS Anthology...*

²⁹ P. Wereśniak, *37 ultra short stories in English and Polish*, s.n., s.l. 2009, p. 13.

pursue kreatif aktywities"[inhabits the Polish language, which he treats as a useful enough tool to pursue creative activities].³⁰

Coming back to Kowalczyk again, it is worth mentioning that his work is also interesting for those interested in translation and new technology. In his *Google-translated fiction*, also known as *Transtories*, the author makes use of the automatic Google translator. The challenge consists here in writing the story in Polish in such a way that mistakes can be avoided in Google translation and the text can be translated into all 50 different languages that Google supplies; this is a kind of literature created specifically with Google in mind. It is worth emphasizing that both the Polish and the English versions come out at the very same time. As the author himself points out, it is about drawing our attention to the fact that "the Internet and new technology eliminate communication barriers between people".³¹ The fragment below comes from the story "04.Video from Cairo" posted on 9 February 2011:

Adam Labbe watched the news from Egypt, when he heard a loud rumble from outside. Without thinking, he quickly ran to the window. A speeding ambulance crashed into an old van, carrying a cage of birds. A cloud of white doves rose into the air. Then came a new message: "we need you in Cairo, immediately, a matter of life and death!"³²

It comes together with a Google map indicating the spot where the described event took place (Google Maps also featured in Charles Cummings' story "21 steps"). More interestingly, other young generation writers, even not necessarily the digital ones, also find inspiration in Google. For example, Dorota Masłowska's book *Honey, I Have Killed Our Cats* shows her inspiration by the errors in Google translations. As she has put it, "our mother tongue is Google Translator"³³, and her book is filled with artificial phrases, calques, and language mutilations resulting from mechanical translation. Nick Name's works also provide a distorting-mirror linguistic image of people's addiction to novelties and technological gadgets. Even the author describes himself as a techno-absurdist. The Internet is his source of inspiration, something that enables him to create, but also the object of criticism, irony and sarcasm. The author explains that these two opposing worlds can come together:

Because a large portion of our daily stresses and strains comes from using technology, and because it has a way of imperceptibly influencing our lives,

³⁰ M. Bulanowski, *Strefa blogeratury*, <http://bulanowski.pl> (21/07/2017).

³¹ U. Pawlicka, *W roli przedskoczka...*

³² P. Kowalczyk, *Transtories*, <http://transtory.passwordincorrect.com/04-video-ffom-cairo> (21/07/2017).

³³ D. Masłowska, *Kochanie, zabiłam nasze koty*, Noir sur Blanc, Warszawa 2012, back cover.

I want to express and immortalise it by the very medium – among other things Twitter and hashtags – a communication means that it started.³⁴

The majority of Polish Internet users have not yet accepted „HTML literature”. They often react to it with disregard and mockery. Polish e-literature is often more visible and much more appreciated abroad than in Poland, which is quite absurd, as such literature has roots in the Polish avant-garde. It is a real pity that the Polish public is so conservative, It is high time to break the mould and tame the beast of new technologies in literature; not indiscriminately, but in the manner of the HTML writers – so that the new technologies do not paralyze us.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baranowicz Zofia (1975) *Polska awangarda artystyczna 1918-1939*, Warszawa: PWFIA.
- Bulanowski Marek, *Strefa blogeratury*, <http://bulanowski.pl> (21/07/2017).
- Chwistek Leon (1921) *O poezji*, "Nuż w brzuchu 2 jednodniówka futurystów wydanie nadzwyczajne", Kraków - Warszawa.
- Czyż Stanisław. (2007) *ARW*, Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art.
- Feedbooks, <http://www.feedbooks.com/book/3127/password-incorrect> (20/07/2017).
- Kowalczyk Piotr (2008) *Password Incorrect Blog*, <http://www.passwordincorrect.com/2011/05/22/tech-quotes-what-would-technology-say-about-humans/> (21/07/2017).
- Kowalczyk Piotr (2011) *Transtories*, <http://transtory.passwordincorrect.com/04-video-from-cairo/> (21/07/2017).
- Kowalczyk Piotr (2011) *Twitter Fiction*, <http://twitterfiction.passwordincorrect.com/> (20/07/2017).
- Kurc-Maj Paulina (ed.) (2014) *Zmiana pola widzenia*. Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki.
- Le Nart Agnieszka (2012) *Stanisław Dróżdż*, <http://culture.pl/en/artist/stanislaw-drozdz> (8/08/2017).
- Marecki Piotr, Pisarski Mariusz (eds.) (2011) *Hiperteksty literackie. Literatura i nowe media*, Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art.
- Masłowska Dorota (2012) *Kochanie, zabiłam nasze koty*, Warszawa: Noir sur Blanc.
- Nowakowski Radosław (2003) *Rashomon do potęgi entej*, in: P. Marecki, *Liternet.pl*, Kraków: Rabid.
- Nowakowski Radosław (2013) *Liberland*, <http://liberatorium.republika.pl/liberlandia.html> (21/07/2017).

³⁴ U. Pawlicka, *W roli przedkoczka...*

Pawlicka Urszula (2010) *O czynie, który wyprzedza myśl. Ze Sławomirem Shutym rozmawiała Urszula Pawlicka*, <http://niedoczytania.pl/o-czynie-ktory-wyprzedza-mysl-ze-slawomirem-shutym-rozmawiala-urszula-pawlicka/>(19/07/2017).

Pawlicka Urszula (2012) *Polska poezja cybernetyczna. Konteksty i charakterystyka*, Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art.

Pawlicka Urszula (2013) *W roli przedszkoczka. Z Piotrem Kowalczykiem rozmawiała Urszula Pawlicka*, <http://niedoczytania.pl/w-roli-przedszkoczka-z-piotrem-kowalczykiem-rozmawiala-urszula-pawlicka/> (20/07/2017).

Pawlicka Urszula (2015) *Literatura cyfrowa a literackość i komunikacja literacka*, in: E. Szczęsna, ed., *Przekaz digitalny. Z zagadnień semiotyki, semantyki i komunikacji*, Kraków: Universitas, pp. 261-280.

Pisarski Mariusz (2010) *Polish cybertext histories. An introduction to the Polish part of 'Cybertext Yearbook'*, http://www.techsty.art.pl/magazyn/magazyn7/cybertext_yearbook_2010.html (18/07/2017).

Shuty Sławomir (2004) *Zwał*, Warszawa: W.A.B.

Strzemiński Władysław (1933) *Druk funkcjonalny*, "Grafika", no. 2, pp. 37-45.

Wereśniak Piotr (2009) *37 ultra short stories in English and Polish*, s.l.: s.n.

Zagrodzki Janusz (2015) *Władysław Strzemiński - obrazy słów*, Łódź: PWSFT.

MIĘDZY ZNAKIEM A SŁOWEM WE WSPÓŁCZESNEJ POLSKIEJ LITERATURZE „HTML”. POSTAWANGARDOWI SPADKOBIERCY MODERNISTYCZNEJ TYPOGRAFII (streszczenie)

Jednym z bardziej wyrazistych trendów polskiej literatury XXI wieku jest literatura cyfrowa, czyli HTML. Chcąc oddać główny zamysł piśmiennictwa HTML należy wziąć pod uwagę dzieła odznaczające się zautonomizowaniem słowa oraz wyizolowaniem słów z kontekstu językowego i rzeczywistości pozajęzykowej tak, „żeby słowo samo w sobie i dla siebie znaczyło” - jak twierdził już od końca lat 60 XX w. przedstawiciel polskiego *language art'u* (czyli poezji konkretnej) Stanisław Dróżdż. Autorki upatrują protoplastów takiego traktowania wypowiedzi literackiej w okresie Wielkiej Awangardy - można odwołać się tu do wystąpień polskich formistów i konstruktywistów (początkiem są literackie manifesty i wiersze Tytusa Czyżewskiego z 1921 r., kontynuacją działania polskich konstruktywistów, takich jak Henryk Berlewi, Mieczysław Szczuka, Teresa Żarnowerówna oraz Władysław Strzemiński; na szczególną uwagę zasługuje ten ostatni artysta). Współcześnie, w XXI w., z podobnego traktowania „wyzolowanego słowa” słynie twórczość Piotra Kowalczyka (występującego pod pseudonimem Niżej podpisany, ang. Nick Name), autora *iPhone Stories*, *Twitter Fiction*, *Tech Quotes*, *Transtories*, oraz *Short stories for geeks*.

Słowa kluczowe: Wielka Awangarda, "literatura HTML", sztuki wizualne, XX i XXI wiek, polska poezja awangardowa.