

# The Screenshot as a Poetic Device: Tomasz Pułka's Graphic Posts on the *Cichy Nabiau* Art-Blog

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All collections of poems published by Tomasz Pułka during his lifetime and posthumously present the artist's oeuvre as purely "analogue," thus obliterating the important cultural context associated with the functioning of his poetry on the web. The poems that Pułka originally published on the Internet<sup>1</sup> were later republished (partially in altered versions) in printed books. However, other Internet works (including musical, textual and graphic publications on the *Cichy Nabiau* blog, three personal blogs,<sup>2</sup> the website [niedoczytania.pl](http://niedoczytania.pl) and the autobiographical column *Impresje rudnickie* (Rudnik impressions) published on the website of the publishing house Ha!Art have not been analysed by critics in more detail.

<sup>1</sup> Pułka published his works under many pen names (Tomaszek Halfka, [ftnsdh76aa9 dnh6sa789](https://ftnsdh76aa9.dnh6sa789), page down, halfka, ida niespój, Fernando Pessoa, Kopcimy Cygaro, Joachim Jernev) on [poezja-poska.pl](http://poezja-poska.pl), [nieszufłada.pl](http://nieszufłada.pl) and [litenet.pl](http://litenet.pl).

<sup>2</sup> See: [www.insertjazz.blogspot.com](http://www.insertjazz.blogspot.com), [www.techwych.blogspot.com](http://www.techwych.blogspot.com), [www.wehleiderrang.blogspot.com](http://www.wehleiderrang.blogspot.com) [date of access 28 April 2018].

What essentially justifies the practice of reading Pułka's digital and analogue works concurrently, i.e. interpoetically, are his graphic posts (screenshots) on the *Cichy Nabiau* art-blog, in which the poems interact with digital interfaces. Pułka tested the meanings of his poetry, placing it in the textual and graphic context of the user's interface. He would then take a screenshot of the interface. This strategy, in which two metaphorical planes, the language of poetry and the language of the interface, intertwine, inspires reflection on the relationship between textuality, digital image, the cultural significance of photographic practices and the status of the screen as a tool and creative space for writing poetry.

## The screenshot as a poetic device

The screenshot may be compared to the photograph taken in virtual space. What is displayed on the screen at the time of the screenshot is reduced (both technically and culturally) to graphics only. In addition, the photographed screen is "frozen" and the user cannot interact with the interface shown in the digital image. The hypertext, the deep structure of the dynamic screen, is flattened out.<sup>3</sup> Taking a screenshot is tantamount to "cropping" and saving a specific element of space; it expresses the subjective, individual view of the user who is constantly aware of the existence of "the space of the screen" and what remains outside.<sup>4</sup> Lev Manovich, commenting on the computer screen, points out that we refer to what we see on the screen in real time as an image only conventionally.<sup>5</sup> The screenshot is based on reversing this principle; it is an operation that allows one to freeze the selected image. While the screen in real-time still shows the present, it becomes readable again in the future, acting as a "visual souvenir."<sup>6</sup>

In order to describe the relationship between text, image, and technicalities involved in their coexistence on the screen, it is necessary to pay attention to the seemingly invisible and symbolically neutral element: the interface. The dictionary of media terminology defines the interface as "a device, an electronic system or a software used to exchange information between computer components, programs or between the computer and the user."<sup>7</sup> In the context of Pułka's poetic screenshot, this concept refers to different (inter)dependencies and meanings: the photographed screen is an "input-output device" and thus may be classified as a man-machine interface,<sup>8</sup> while taking the screenshot is the result of using the in-

<sup>3</sup> Lev Manovich, *The language of new media* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001), 76-77.

<sup>4</sup> See: Manovich, 91. Manovich emphasizes that the interface is non-transparent not only at the level of program design and data organization, but also at the level of usability. He calls the screen an "aggressive" medium: "It functions to filter, to screen out, to take over, rendering non-existent whatever is outside its frame;" see: Manovich, 100.

<sup>5</sup> Manovich, 112.

<sup>6</sup> Janusz Musiał, *Fotografia jako przestrzeń kulturowa. Obraz – media – autor*, Ph.D. thesis supervised by Andrzej Gwóźdź (Katowice: Wydział Filologiczny UŚ, 2008), p.121.

<sup>7</sup> Jasionowicz Marcin, "Interfejs" [Interface], in: *Słownik terminologii medialnej*, ed. Walery Pisarek, (Warsaw: Universitas, 2006). Piotr Kubiński emphasizes that "the advantage of this broad definition is that it brings out the communicative aspect of the phenomenon in question," see: Piotr Kubiński, "Graficzny interfejs użytkownika jako zjawisko semiotyczne," in: *Przekaz digitalny: Z zagadnień semiotyki, semantyki i komunikacji cyfrowej*, ed. Ewa Szczęsna, (Warsaw: Universitas, 2015), 68.

<sup>8</sup> Manovich, 80.

terface.<sup>9</sup> Most importantly, when we consider the poetic aspect, the screenshot often shows the interface of a particular software, for example, Microsoft Paint or a popular browser.

In the case of Tomasz Pułka's poetic screenshots, we can talk about a juxtaposition of two metaphorical planes: the language of the poem and the language of the interface (specifically the metaphors used for its design, which, just like natural language, give rise to certain models of the world).<sup>10</sup> Manovich, in the context of the language of cultural interfaces, gives examples of metaphors encoded in the digital culture at the level of interface design. The scholar distinguishes between the hierarchical model, based on logic; the network, hypertext, and centerless model, which is "based on metonymy;"<sup>11</sup> and the database model, which is based on the metaphor of the catalog.<sup>12</sup> Commenting on the graphical user interface, Jay David Bolter talks about the metaphor of the desk, emphasizing that the desktop "gives us the world as an information processing environment – an efficient office in which documents and data are effortlessly produced and digested."<sup>13</sup>

Bez tytułu [Untitled] (processed poem:  
Solec zdroj (2) from the collection Zespół Szkół [School])

The first version of the processed poem *Solec zdroj (2)* was published on [nieszufkada.pl](http://nieszufkada.pl) in February 2010.<sup>14</sup> Already after five minutes, Pułka added a comment in which he referred to the screenshot: "I did not paste it well. You can find the correct version here." The poem, which had been posted on the webpage five minutes earlier, was presented in the context of the user interface. The same graphic was also (half an hour later) posted as a separate entry on the blog *Cichy Nabiau*.<sup>15</sup> A poem with the same title (which was nevertheless partially rewritten) was included in the collection *Zespół Szkół [School]* (June 2010).<sup>16</sup>

A webpage devoted to poetry, as a communication space, was presented using the image of its interface (a communication tool), which draws attention to the communicative aspect of the poetic practice and internal ways of communicating meanings in the poem, but also the way poetry and the poet function in the collective imagination. The screenshot posted by the author documents the poem in a specific moment in time; it shows the poem just before its publication, where the poem is ready, but not yet accessible to a wider audience. By taking the screenshot of the [nieszufkada.pl](http://nieszufkada.pl) interface, Pułka shows not only his "workshop," but also the limitations that the poetic interface poses for the author at the time of writing.

<sup>9</sup> Manovich writes that "HCI also includes ways of manipulating this data, i.e. a grammar of meaningful actions which the user can perform on it", 80.

<sup>10</sup> Manovich, 90.

<sup>11</sup> Manovitch.

<sup>12</sup> Manovitch, 101.

<sup>13</sup> Jay David Bolter, *Writing space*, (New York: Routledge, 1991), 51.

<sup>14</sup> Kopcimy Cygaro [Tomasz Pułka], *Solec Zdrój (2)*, [www.nieszufkada.pl/klasa.asp?idklasy=143808&idautora=10461&rodzaj=5](http://www.nieszufkada.pl/klasa.asp?idklasy=143808&idautora=10461&rodzaj=5) [date of access 08 May 2018].

<sup>15</sup> PUŁKA\ [Tomasz Pułka], *Bez Tytułu*, [www.cichynabiau.blogspot.com/2010/02/blog-post\\_13.html?zx=5b2de8a8703e2d5a](http://www.cichynabiau.blogspot.com/2010/02/blog-post_13.html?zx=5b2de8a8703e2d5a) [date of access 8 May 2018].

<sup>16</sup> Tomasz Pułka, *Solec Zdrój (2)*, in *Zespół Szkół*, (Kraków: Ha!art, 2010), 37.

This screenshot demonstrates that the poet, while writing, is limited by the “grammar of meaningful actions that the user can perform”<sup>17</sup>, defined by the traditional poem. An avant-garde approach to the poetic tradition and the focus on the role of the poet and poetry are common themes in Pułka’s poetry.<sup>18</sup> The screenshot with the poem *Solec zdroj (2)* is a visual rendition of this reflection. The text of the poem is surrounded with all that is usually invisible in a paper volume, which is nevertheless rooted in thinking about a classic poetic text. This function is fulfilled by showing the image of the poem with the interface windows: the title is framed (it is worth paying attention to the spatial metaphor of the frame which points to the notions of bordering, limiting, closing). The title is placed above the text, but it must be definitely shorter; the text must be read vertically.<sup>19</sup> The title must be expressed by words (and not, for example, rendered by means of images or sounds). One can also decide not to provide the title, as indicated by the comment “if the text has no title, leave this field empty.” There is no such commentary next to the “Text” field, where one types in the main, obligatory, part of the poem. Pułka frames the screenshot so that the message “Record file (mp3)” is still visible. However, we do not see an empty field; Pułka merely demonstrates that there is such a possibility, thus referring to the oral tradition of poetry and to the fact that the interface of *nieszuflada.pl*, but also the poet’s interface, conditioned by traditional practices, allows one to recite or sing poetry.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, poetry can be recorded, but what caused Pułka’s “error” is that it cannot be drawn or photographed. Only in the commentary does the author post the “correct” version of the poem in the graphic file. The error, caused by the limitations of the webpage, illustrates that it is not possible (or at least it is not possible at first) to show the image as seen through the eyes of the other participant in the communicative act. Pułka’s poetical practice may be described by means of the metaphor of the reverse, which appears in the title of the poet’s debut collection of poems.<sup>21</sup> The poet shows the reverse of the interface, the communicative space as seen through the eyes of the creator. Also, in the text of the poem, sensual perception and emotional reactions (“tenderness”) have been inverted (shown “in reverse”). Their “value” is reversed as well. Pułka postulates checking one’s point of view, “copying eyewitnessing,” and questioning one’s perspective.

The next reversal, showing the reverse, takes place in the next part of the poem. Two lines placed at the bottom of the screen may exemplify how the perception and the method of “constructing” the text postulated in the first part can be practically implemented. The sen-

<sup>17</sup>Manovich, 90.

<sup>18</sup>See: Tomasz Pułka, “Manifest dobrodzieja”, in *Cennik*, (Poznań: Wydawnictwo WBPiCAK, 2012), 32-33.

<sup>19</sup>Pułka questioned the basic principles of writing poetry. It is exemplified by a poem in which the title is at the end. See: Tomasz Pułka, “Tytuł na końcu” in *Wybieganie z raju. 2006-2012*, ed. Joanna Mueller, Krzysztof Sztafa, (Stronie Śląskie: Biuro Literackie, 2017): 238. Antoni Zając wrote about the nonlinear character of Pułka’s poems. See: Antoni Zając, *Światło rozgaszone do białości. Poet(e)ologia Tomasza Pułki – uwagi wstępne*, [www.malyformat.com/2017/08/swiatlo-rozgaszone-do-bialosci-poeteologia-tomasza-pulki-uwagi-wstepne/#\\_ftnref1](http://www.malyformat.com/2017/08/swiatlo-rozgaszone-do-bialosci-poeteologia-tomasza-pulki-uwagi-wstepne/#_ftnref1) [date of access 14 May 2018].

<sup>20</sup>The opposition between seeing and hearing as well as the motif of the seen word and the written word are strongly present in Pułka’s posthumous collection of poems *Cennik*. See: Pułka, *Cennik*.

<sup>21</sup>Tomasz Pułka, *Rewers*, (Nowa Ruda: Mamiko, 2006). Igor Stokfiszewski wrote about the notion of the reverse; see: Igor Stokfiszewski, “Tezy o postpoezji”, in *Zwrot polityczny*, (Warsaw: Krytyka Polityczna, 2009), 113-131.

tence "Martwa natura przedstawiająca naczynia suszące (bierność) swojej mokrości" [Still life showing dishes drying (the passivity of) their wetness] describes a certain image (the content is available thanks to the sense of sight). However, both the still life and the dishes are subjects that have been partially, at least at the level of language, personified by grammatical forms ("showing" and "drying"). The ambiguity of the word "showing" is also interesting in this context. One can show oneself to others or show something to someone. Something can be shown in the picture. Subsequent layers of meaning are revealed after combining "showing" with "eyewitnessing." Both words suggest visual perception, the perception of what is visible. In Polish, both words also involve a spatial context, as indicated by the forms "pre-" in "przedstawić" [showing] and "na-" in "naoczność" [eyewitnessing]. The last sentence reads "Czego nie wywołasz wymieni osnowę" [What you won't call, will change the warp]. It refers to the language of computer science (one can call a command or call a software function), but it refers to the metaphor of the reverse. The content will change depending on the meaning you choose. Your recommendations (as the subject endowed with agency) and your decisions will "change the warp." In this context, it is worth paying attention to the opposition of sight and speech. "Calling," which results in the loss of agency, the loosening of the "warp," refers to shouting and to emotional, uncontrolled, anxious and loud speech. "Eyewitnessing," in opposition to "calling," symbolizes looking and perception over which one may have control. It is "checked by copying."

Pułka also suggests reversal by graphic means. The single empty parenthesis that separates the words "(situation)" and "(passivity)" in the printed volume has been multiplied to fifteen in the digital version. In the screenshot, this graphic element resembles a road, a tunnel, or a channel – it makes communication and movement possible, but also suggests semantic distance between both concepts. The words "situation" and "passivity" can be treated as keywords, summaries, or notes on the margins of the main text of the poem. The graphical arrangement of the words suggests that "situation" may turn into "passivity." The brackets indicate that both spatial and temporal (in the digital version of the poem the temporal aspect is "multiplied") conditions are necessary for such a transition.

The poem printed in the traditional book form was deprived of one more textual element. The fragment "Łuszcz jak i pozostali członkowie grupy Kaliber 44 był uzależniony od marihuany" [Łuszcz and other members of the hip-hop group Kaliber 44 were addicted to marijuana] serves as a motto and a quote. It appears at the very beginning of the text. Putting quotation marks around the sentence without providing the source seems intriguing. If we copy and paste the sentence into Google, it turns out that the quote comes from Wikipedia – an online encyclopedia with numerous anonymous contributors meant to promote the sharing of knowledge.<sup>22</sup> Pułka introduces the context of psychoactive substances, which is inscribed in the poem read *à rebours*. Psychedelic substances may be the gateway to sensual feeling in reverse. The motto/quote, which only appears in the digital version of the poem, was inserted

<sup>22</sup>In the current version of the Wikipedia article, the sentence reads: "Łuszcz, as well as other members of Kaliber 44, abused marijuana." See: [www.pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magik\\_\(raper\)](http://www.pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magik_(raper)) [date of access 11 May 2018]. However, on the Internet, we can find the version of the sentence used by Pułka. See: [www.photoblog.pl/raptownerealia/52754482/26-s-p-magik.html](http://www.photoblog.pl/raptownerealia/52754482/26-s-p-magik.html), [www.f.kafeteria.pl/temat/f1/jest-tu-jakis-fan-hiphopu-kto-to-by-l-magik-i-jak-zginal-jakis-kaliber44-p\\_4247091](http://www.f.kafeteria.pl/temat/f1/jest-tu-jakis-fan-hiphopu-kto-to-by-l-magik-i-jak-zginal-jakis-kaliber44-p_4247091) [date of access 11 May 2018].

into the text by means of the copy-and-paste operation. It further highlights the motif of copying and fragments related to programming language. Pułka thematizes the manner in which he creates text. He does not copy anything in the printed version of the poem, thus emphasizing the unique status of the text in digital space.

Strajk Śmieciarzy [Garbage strike] (using poems *Ambitna* [Ambitious] and *Groźna* [Dangerous] from the collection *Autarkia* [Autarky])

In his graphic post *Strajk śmieciarzy*,<sup>23</sup> Pułka posted two poems from *Autarkia*, which follow one other in the same order as in the printed version.<sup>24</sup> In the digital version, Pułka did not include the titles of the poems (*Ambitna* and *Groźna*<sup>25</sup>), extracting them from the coherent<sup>26</sup> conceptual space of the entire collection. However, (as the title *Autarkia* suggests), we are still dealing with the questions of economy, the individual, and society.

Glitch aesthetics,<sup>27</sup> the fact that the file posted by Pułka is broken, draws attention to the graphic elements of the screenshot. The texts of both poems are blurred. It means that reading them is not an obvious perceptual choice. The user “reads” the text as an element of the picture, which draws attention to the materiality of the language sign. Pułka’s *screenshot* has been titled twice. The title of the blog post is *Strajk śmieciarzy*, while the file attached to the blog entry is titled *funkcja2* [function2]. The title of the file can be compared to a note that helps one catalog digital elements in a personal archive (due to the fact that it is not directly visible to the reader of the blog, but also due to the very functionality of file names). In contrast, the file name *funkcja2* does not directly duplicate other titles or lexical elements from the quoted poems; instead, it refers to relations between work (function as a position which involves performing specific duties), unnecessary matter, and the economic system (function of a given program), which regulates relations between these elements.

Pułka took a screenshot of a TV series. The poet did not take the screenshot of a specific interface that is easily recognizable to other users, but of a “general” application used for playing or editing video files. Due to the subjective and “cropped” framing, it is difficult to determine the relationship between the text and the video image in the interface. Poems pasted by the poet may, for example, be in a place intended for the subtitles or description of the film. By taking the screenshot of the interface, including the icons by means of which one can edit the film, Pułka shows the video screen in the interactive environment of the computer screen. Manovich, writing about the dynamic (cinema, television) screen, drew attention to

<sup>23</sup>PULKA\ [Tomasz Pułka], *Strajk śmieciarzy*, [www.cichynabiau.blogspot.com/2011/04/strajk-smieciarzy.html](http://www.cichynabiau.blogspot.com/2011/04/strajk-smieciarzy.html) (date of access 20 May 2018).

<sup>24</sup>Pułka, “Ambitna”, “Groźna”, in: *Wybieganie z raju 2006-2012*, 343-344.

<sup>25</sup>In the original Polish text, the titles of the quoted poems are distinguished by their female grammatical forms. Other titles in *Autarkia* do not imply a female subject.

<sup>26</sup>Paweł Kaczmarek emphasized the conceptual nature of *Autarkia* in his critical commentary. See: Paweł Kaczmarek, “Sinusoida: O metodzie poetyckiej Tomasza Pułki”, in: Pułka, *Wybieganie z raju. 2006-2012*, 406.

<sup>27</sup>See: *Glitch art is dead*, ed. Aleksandra Piękosz, Piotr Płucienniczak, (Web / Cracow: Rozdzielczość Chleba, 2016).

“the viewing regime,” which “is possible because a single image (...) occupies the screen.”<sup>28</sup> “A screen’s image strives for complete illusion and visual plenitude, while the viewer is asked to suspend disbelief and to identify with the image.”<sup>29</sup> Pułka took the screenshot of the opening scene of a popular TV series, whose title explains the title of the blog post: “Mr. Monk and the garbage strike.”<sup>30</sup> In the scene, a TV reporter is walking through a city full of waste and garbage and talking about the longest garbage strike in the history of San Francisco. The context of the dynamic screen in Pułka’s screenshot, the theme of TV reporting, and a pop-cultural take on a social problem point to the relationship between the message of the media and the garbage strike, which is a visible (manifesting itself in the garbage seen on the streets) breakdown of the economic system.<sup>31</sup> In the series, the garbage strike is presented not as a problem of the employees, but as a problem of the people of San Francisco; the city, quite unexpectedly, has become a hostile space. The TV reporter in the opening scene says that “so far the people of San Francisco can be very proud of themselves. No one is panicking. In fact, it seems everybody is rising to the occasion, coming together and taking this latest crisis in stride.”<sup>32</sup> Detective Monk, who is trying to reassure the striking garbagemen, says: “I am not technically a sanitation worker although I have always felt like one in spirit.” He later adds: “I know money is important. But that’s not why you guys became garbage men, is it? You’re doing God’s work out there. You’re keeping the streets clean for the people. Right? You do it, say it with me, ‘for the people.’”<sup>33</sup> At the end of the episode, the smiling and hard-working garbagemen are praised for their great work by the detective who solved the case, restoring peace in the city. Then, the garbagemen thank Mr. Monk, saying, “Anything you want, Mr. Monk, you let us know.” Thanks to his excellent memory and his analytical abilities, Mr. Monk has improved the lives of San Francisco residents, restored order and averted the crisis. The same ease in manipulating the problem shown in the TV series is suggested by placing the image of the effects of the strike in the context of the interface that may be controlled intuitively. This is further emphasized by the fact that the icons (i.e. the tools that allow you to control the image and thus the problem) are the sharpest and the most legible element from all the elements visible in the screenshot.

In *Strajk śmieciarzy*, Pułka does not frame the image evenly and does not erase unnecessary elements of the interface. Although the poet does not directly refer to creative techniques used in glitch art, when analysed in the context of the theme of the poems and the scene form *Mr. Monk*, the poor quality of the graphics posted on the blog and the uneven framing of the screenshot (the screenshot does not even show some of the icons in full) imply glitch aesthetics. It manifests itself in blurred graphics and pixelated images. The authors of critical texts collected in the anthology *Glitch art is dead* point out that glitch exposes the “seams of technology,”<sup>34</sup> “reflects (...) the knowledge of technology operates and reveals (...) how limited

<sup>28</sup>Manovich, 96.

<sup>29</sup>Manovich.

<sup>30</sup>*Mr. Monk and the Garbage Strike*, season 5, episode 2, dir. by Jerry Levine, written by Andy Breckman, Daniel Gaeta, 2006.

<sup>31</sup>See: Piotr Płucienniczak, “Control Cannot Hold: Polityka hałasu, ekonomia usterek”, *Halart*, no. 37 (2012): 66-76.

<sup>32</sup>*Mr. Monk and the Garbage Strike*.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibidem*.

<sup>34</sup>Jakub Mihilewicz, “Glitch is dead”, in: *Glitch art is dead*, 72.

it is.”<sup>35</sup> A glitch “makes the invisible visible.”<sup>36</sup> The *glitched* image of a street flooded with rubbish demonstrates the seams of the waste management system, the seams of the economic system and the seams of the urban ecosystem. In this context, living in a metropolis is similar to using a computer, a technology in which “hardware disappears,”<sup>37</sup> similarly to how all actions that help maintain order are no longer visible for the people. Both glitch and garbage are by-products.<sup>38</sup> The blurry pixelated graphic file is e-waste, “garbage without matter,” a worthless digital object.<sup>39</sup> The double title, *Strajk śmieciarzy* and *funkcja2*,<sup>40</sup> seems to suggest that the digital and systemic glitches are not worthless.

The texts of the two poems in the screenshot seem to confirm the interpretative tropes related to glitch aesthetics and pop culture. The two-verse poem, which reads “Naprawić rude miasto, truje się „Czytelnik”/kropla rosy jak mój sąsiad robi z tego notatki” [Fix the red city, it is poisoning itself like the “Reader”/ a drop of dew as my neighbor is taking notes], can be read in direct reference to the episode of *Mr. Monk*. The first half of the first verse sounds like a postulate, the problem that is discussed in the TV series. The verb “fix” suggests the existence of a glitch, while the mention of the “red city” can be linked to industrial production, and thus also environmental pollution, rust, and dirt. In the second part of the verse (it is poisoning itself like the “Reader”), the image of a corrupt city is maintained, by means of references to environmental pollution. The protagonist of the poem, “the Reader,” may refer to the potential viewer of the pop-culture product. The viewer/ the “Reader” realizes what the problem is which is. It is commented on in the next verse, which reads: “a drop of dew as my neighbour is taking notes.” Dew symbolizes the beginning of a new day, cleansing, and natural order; when combined with taking notes, they indicate the beginning of noticing (realizing) that the problem exists. Taking notes involves using words, but also (just like reading) it is a “personal” action – which refers us to the title of the collection: *Autarkia*. By placing quotation marks around the word reader, Pułka distances himself from the quoted word. In connection with “poisoning,” Pułka further poses questions about the (personal) practice of reading, suggesting that it may be harmful. The questions of community and individuality return in “my neighbour.” The possessive pronoun and the noun that is associated with the physical everyday “togetherness” in space is contrasted with the practice (as individual as reading) of writing or taking notes.

Literary meta-reflections in the context of social problems also appear in the second poem included by Pułka in the screenshot. The subject in the first two verses presents himself by means of description, outlines his position, comparing himself to a jumping lamb. When

<sup>35</sup>Matthew Austin, “We can be heroes”: On the nature of glitch art,” in: *Glitch art is dead*, 83.

<sup>36</sup>Austin, 82.

<sup>37</sup>Mihilewicz, 71.

<sup>38</sup>Tomasz Misiak writes about noise as a product and noise as excess: Tomasz Misiak, “Pięć pojęć szumu: Audiowizualne gry w Compression Sound Art Johannes Kreidler”, *Halart*, no. 37 (2012): 76-82.

<sup>39</sup>Aleksandra Kil, “Teoria cyberśmieci: O napięciach między materialnością i niematerialnością w refleksji nad nowymi mediami”, *Teksty Drugie* no. 3 (2014): 162.

<sup>40</sup>The title of the file (*funkcja2*) can be read as a meta-creative commentary on recycling artistic waste e-matter. Piotr Puldzian Płucienniczak thus writes about glitch: “It is undoubtedly a kind of alternative economy – it is as if we are bartering trash found in the opencast mine or building a house from bottles, artificial flowers, and tires.” See: Płucienniczak, 70.



read literally, it creates an energetic image. When read in the context of religion, it is a rather mocking vision. The subject is “Ocalony dzięki kwalifikacjom” [Saved thanks to qualifications], i.e. professional skills, and ”wiesza porządkowe / przesłaniem estetyki” [hangs the order / by the message of aesthetics], which can be read as sentencing people who care about order (municipal services) or more abstractly, ordinal (hierarchical) numbers, to death. Therefore, the message of aesthetics is a tool for killing hierarchy and order. The speaking “I” seems to be inconsistent. He “chełpi się stratą” [boasts of loss], thus claiming that he is better than others and emphasizes his importance. However, Pułka plays with the ambiguity of the word “loss,” which refers to the loss of something valuable, an emotional loss, suffering, but also a material loss, or negative financial results. Meanings collide further. “we / wczesnych spiżowych zjednoczeniach” [in / early bronze unions] brings to mind an image of an armed struggle which takes place in the common interest of united subjects. In the context of the subsequent meta-reflections, Pułka’s “bronze unions” bring to mind Horace’s “monument more lasting than bronze.” Pułka again uses other people’s words and quotes the phrase “Neither art nor literature,” which is also quoted in other poems in the same collection. The speaking “I” offensively responds with a disrespectful, broken, though poignant question: “So what?” This strange dialogue can be interpreted as a conversation about the function literature plays, especially as regards its role in social criticism (which often corroborate accusations of “engaged” texts being non-literary). The answer reveals Pułka’s ironic approach to the social image of literature. The ironic clash consists in the ambiguity of the words used in a sequence: “Kieliszek, wpływ, gest” [Glass, influence, gesture]. They all treat literature as entertainment. The last two words particularly show the relationship between the language (and functioning in society) of literature and economy. Pułka presents these relationships at the level of specific words that are usually used to comment on art. The word “influence” (in addition to assuming a hierarchical order) refers to the relationship between artists: one of them has power and authority; the other is influenced. The other meaning of the word “wpływ” in Polish is also “income” or “a sum of money paid into the cash register.”<sup>41</sup> The gesture of the poet or artist is often said to describe the purpose of his artistic activity as well as the unique nature of his performative work. The word “gesture” also means “a generous act”<sup>42</sup> which echoes the moment of “bragging” we have witnessed before. In the broader context of Pułka’s poetry, it is worth noting that the original meaning of the word “gesture” is the movement of the hand.<sup>43</sup> The final verse of the poem is even more bitter: “Projektant kobiecych porozumień” [Designer of women’s agreements]. It suggests the superiority of a single entity over a collective entity that is supposedly self-governed and amicable. He, the “Designer” (in the singular), prepares a plan that is to be executed by others.

The digital version of *Strajk śmieciarzy* creates a new aesthetic context for Pułka’s texts. *Glitch*, defined as visual stylization, but also a crack in the economic system, error, dirt, and digital waste, draws attention to other cracks also found in the poems *Ambitna* and *Groźna*.

<sup>41</sup>*Słownik języka polskiego PWN*, ed. E. Sobol (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2006), 1165.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibidem*, 228.

<sup>43</sup>Paweł Kaczmarski writes about the connections between the hand, the leg, and the head as one of the interpretative concepts for the analysis of Pułka’s poetry. See: Kaczmarski, “Sinusoida: O metodzie poetyckiej Tomasza Pułki”, 408.

The graphic posted by Pułka on the blog allows you to read poems in terms of oppositions: dirt - cleanliness, individual - community, waste - something valuable, hierarchy - network, art - economy.

## Conclusion

The analyzed screenshots in which Tomasz Pułka quoted his own poems are but two examples; there are many more similar works. I have found at least three online. Pułka used three poems from the collection *HWDP jako miejsce na ziemi* in the *Wiersz Polecenia* [Command Line] series.<sup>44</sup> It was published on the *Cichy Nabiau* blog<sup>45</sup> and on *litternet.pl*<sup>46</sup> in the form of screenshots. Conceived of as a dialogue, it was copied stanza after stanza to the Windows command line interface that allows you to communicate with the operating system.<sup>47</sup> The poem *Dla Alberto Caeiro*<sup>48</sup> [For Alberto Caeiro] in the digital version was published as a screenshot. We can see the Google Translate interface and the automatic translation of Pułka's poem into Portuguese. Fragments of one of Pułka's poems, *Łuk* [Arch] from the collection *Zespół Szkół*,<sup>49</sup> were copied to a hypertext post entitled *Casanova*.<sup>50</sup>

In the case of Tomasz Pułka's artistic practice, the dialogue between the poem in the screenshot and the poem in the interface takes place between the text of the poem, the text of the interface, the possibilities of the image of the interface, and the emerging metaphors. Pułka transfers the text of a poem from the printed page into digital interfaces, platforms, and files, showing the computer in the era of post-media<sup>51</sup> and commenting on the image of virtual reality experience by the user who is aware of technological limitations. A look from the perspective of the software reveals metaphors contained in seemingly neutral and transparent communication systems.

The screenshot "documents" a temporary and elusive virtual experience by means of an operation that can be performed only at the level of the operating system. Taking screenshots of Google Translate as well as video and text editors on the webpage devoted to poetry is the only way of recording these experiences. The interfaces of these programs do not allow one to save the digital image. Pułka takes screenshots of tools, of what can be called a digital transition space. The juxtaposition of the original and the translated text in Google Translate is usually not a final product, but a merely a draft. The act of typing the text of the poem into the interface of *nieszufkada.pl* is also a transitional step. The final product, the publication of

<sup>44</sup>Pułka, "Wiersz Polecenia (1,2,3)", in: *Wybieganie z raju 2006-2012*, 266-270.

<sup>45</sup>See: [www.cichynabiau.blogspot.com/2012/03/?guestAuth=APWGbHphitIX0bxkR1ari\\_hu\\_UbmlO8gL7Ge0cVajkpDhliFZ4Ft5u9m7rCfoCr1a2EEqUrOarNyGJEBSGA4CpdEOR7V](http://www.cichynabiau.blogspot.com/2012/03/?guestAuth=APWGbHphitIX0bxkR1ari_hu_UbmlO8gL7Ge0cVajkpDhliFZ4Ft5u9m7rCfoCr1a2EEqUrOarNyGJEBSGA4CpdEOR7V) [date of access 20 May 2018].

<sup>46</sup>[www.halfka.litternet.pl/teksty](http://www.halfka.litternet.pl/teksty) [date of access 06 July 2017].

<sup>47</sup>See: Paulina Chorzewska, *O trzech plikach .jpg Tomasza Pułki*, [www.malyformat.com/2017/08/o-trzech-plikach-jpg-tomasza-pulki](http://www.malyformat.com/2017/08/o-trzech-plikach-jpg-tomasza-pulki) [date of access 20 May 2018].

<sup>48</sup>Pułka, "Dla Alberto Caeiro", in: *Wybieganie z raju 2006-2012*, op. cit., 299.

<sup>49</sup>Pułka, "Łuk", in: *Zespół szkół*, 21.

<sup>50</sup>PULKA\ [Tomasz Pułka], *Casanova*, [www.cichynabiau.blogspot.com/search?q=casanova](http://www.cichynabiau.blogspot.com/search?q=casanova) [date of access 12 June 2018].

<sup>51</sup>See: Piotr Celiński, *Postmedia: cyfrowy kod i bazy danych* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2013).

the poem on the webpage devoted to poetry, is usually more significant. Such an approach coincides with several characteristics of Pułka's poetry (distinguished by critics): the destruction of subjectivity<sup>52</sup> and the use of parallax. Paweł Kaczmarski thus comments on the latter: "for Pułka, on the most general level, it is a synonym of the necessary (or rather inevitable) linguistic and cognitive distortion as well as the non-translatability of perceptions and experiences into an idiolect, a poetic gesture or a communicative act."<sup>53</sup>

In his screenshots, Pułka presents poetry in a digital, hypertext, network, and interactive writing field,<sup>54</sup> only to reduce it to graphic images: the flattened screen arrests the temporality and spatiality of the computer screen. The visual space within which the poem functions emphasizes certain interpretative tropes, but it does not change it dramatically. Rather, it duplicates, strengthens, and visualizes communicative structures. As has been demonstrated, it introduces a self-referential context, which also involves engaging with the social functioning of literature and the expectations we have of it.

translated by Agnieszka Kocznur

<sup>52</sup>See: Eliza Kącka, *Ja, którego nie ma*, [www.malyformat.com/2017/08/ja-ktorego-nie-ma/](http://www.malyformat.com/2017/08/ja-ktorego-nie-ma/) [date of access 30 Oct. 2019], M. Koronkiewicz, "Posłowie" in: Tomasz Pułka, *Podczas siebie: Wybór Wierszy* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo WBPiCAK, 2018), 117-127.

<sup>53</sup>Paweł Kaczmarski, "Wzdłuż linii załamania", *Dodatek LITERAcki* no. 8(9) (2011): 16.

<sup>54</sup>See: Bolter

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# KEYWORDS

TOMASZ PUŁKA

*digital literature*

glitch aesthetics

**interface**

**ABSTRACT:**

I analyze graphic posts by Tomasz Pułka (posted by the author on the *Cichy Nabiau* blog) which also contain Pułka's poems published in printed poetry collections. I examine two medialities of Pułka's poetry, concentrating on the screenshot, a digital artistic practice used by Pułka to introduce his poetry (i.e. metaphorical texts) into the spaces of various interfaces (which are also metaphorical in their design).

*L i t e r n e t*

SCREEN

contemporary poetry

*screenshot*

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