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**The final opening of the heavy door  
[Review of:] Tymoteusz Karpowicz, *Dzieła  
zebrane*, eds. Jan Stolarczyk (vols. 1–10),  
and Joanna Roszak (vols. 7–9) (Wrocław: Biuro  
Literackie-Warstwy, 2011–2023)**

**Abstract:** This review is dedicated to the ten-volume edition of the *Dzieła zebrane* [Collected Works] of Tymoteusz Karpowicz, a significant Polish poet, playwright, literary and cultural scholar. It emphasises the scope and high quality of the editorial work carried out by Jan Stolarczyk in collaboration with Joanna Roszak. The text also synthetically discusses the content of the subsequent volumes published between 2011 and 2023, with a particular focus on the tenth volume *Eseje, poezja, publicystyka, wywiady* [Essays, Poetry, Journalism, Interviews], which concludes the complete edition.

**Keywords:** Tymoteusz Karpowicz, poetry, dramaturgy, essay, Polish avant-garde poetry of the 20th century

Tymoteusz Karpowicz (1921–2005) was a Polish avant-garde poet, playwright, essayist, literary scholar, and a long-time university lecturer at the University of Illinois in Chicago. His poetic work used to be categorised as belonging to the so-called linguistic current (alongside the work of Miron Białoszewski, Zbigniew Bieńkowski and Witold Wirpsza), although he himself shunned this ambiguous and imprecise label. He was one of the most

important poets of the second half of the twentieth century as he contributed to an artistic line previously charted by such disparate Polish authors as Cyprian Norwid, Bolesław Leśmian and Julian Przyboś. Among his most important works, one should point out *Trudny las* [Difficult Forest] (1964), *Odwrócone światło* [Inverted Light] (1972) and *Stoje zadrzewne* [Wood Rings] published in 1999 after twenty-seven years of poetic silence. In 2023, the tenth and final volume of the monumental edition of Karpowicz's *Dzieła zebrane* [Collected Works] was published, covering his entire poetic, dramatic, prose, essayistic and journalistic output, so it is worth taking this opportunity to formulate a few words by way of recapitulation, with particular attention paid to the contents of the volume that closes the edition.

Undoubtedly, tribute should be paid to the tireless, titanic editorial work of Jan Stolarczyk, who spent more than a dozen years organising the legacy of the author of *Inverted Light*, both those of its components that had previously appeared in print over the decades, as well as previously unknown texts, most of which were brought to Poland from Karpowicz's home in Oak Park near Chicago after the poet's death in 2005, and then deposited in the archives of the Ossoliński National Institute in Wrocław. I was given the opportunity in 2015 to participate for several months – together with Magdalena Kokoszka of the University of Silesia in Katowice, author of pioneering publications on Karpowicz's poetic works<sup>1</sup> – in the activities of organising and partially inventorying the collection belonging to the poet and his wife Maria, which consisted, in addition to manuscripts and various private documents, of countless books and albums in the fields of literature, philosophy, art history and science in the broadest sense. Due to this extremely valuable experience, I am able to assess the scale of perseverance and admirable effort expended by Stolarczyk during his long-term work of creating and finalising the edition of *Dzieła zebrane* [Collected Works]. It is worth noticing that he also dealt with the oeuvre of Tadeusz Różewicz, whose works – including the twelve-volume edition of *Collected Works* (2003–2006) – were published by him at Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie as the editor-in-chief in 1987–2007, and later, after Różewicz's death in 2014, he prepared books of his poems for publication at Biuro Literackie, such as *Ostatnia wolność* (2015) and *Credo* (2020).

The first six volumes of Karpowicz's *Dzieła zebrane* [Collected Works] were published by Biuro Literackie between 2011 and 2015, while the remaining four volumes saw the light of day between 2019 and 2023 thanks to the publishing house Warstwy. The choice of these Wrocław publishing

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Magdalena Kokoszka, *Antologia niemożliwa. Przypadek „Stojów zadrzewnych” Tymoteusza Karpowicza* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Para, 2011).

houses was not accidental. Before flying to the United States in the late 1970s, the poet had been associated with Wrocław for nearly three decades: he graduated from the University of Wrocław with a degree in Polish Studies and earned his doctorate with a dissertation on the lyricism of Bolesław Leśmian. His poems, dramas and his doctoral monograph, *Poezja Niemożliwa. Modele Leśmianowskiej wyobraźni* [Impossible Poetry. Models of Leśmian's Imagination] were published by the Ossolineum Publishing Institute based in Wrocław, and he himself worked in the poetry section of the renowned *Odra* magazine, where he was involved, among other things, in the promotion of young talents, among whom his greatest discovery turned out to be Rafał Wojaczek. Currently, his former Wrocław home at 29 Krzycka St., finally renovated in 2021 and commonly referred to as "Karpowicz's Villa", houses the Olga Tokarczuk Foundation, pursuing by statute one of Karpowicz's dreams, "for the villa to become a space for writers and translators from all over the world".<sup>2</sup> In Wrocław, in the Alley of the Distinguished at Osobowicki Cemetery, there is also the grave of Karpowicz and his wife, a symbolic passage from the work *Otwieranie* [Opening] functions as his epitaph: "And it is impossible to open the universe wider than human arms".

It is worth briefly describing the contents of the components that make up the entire edition of the *Dzieła zebrane* [Collected Works]. Volume one (2011) consisted of poetic volumes published by Karpowicz in 1948-1964: *Żywe wymiary* [Living Dimensions], *Gorzkie źródła* [Bitter Springs], *Kamienna muzyka* [Stone Music], *Znaki równania* [Equation Signs], *W imię znaczenia* [In the Name of Meaning], *Trudny las* [Difficult Forest]. Volume two (2012) reprints Karpowicz's *magnum opus*, which is considered to be the giant 1972 poem of over 400 pages *Odwrócone światło* [Inverted Light], on which he had worked for many years and which was received by literary critics of the time not without ambivalence and even controversy regarding, among other things, excessive hermetism and somatism which they found hard to accept. Volume three (2013) contains an "impossible anthology" (Magdalena Kokoszka's term) entitled *Śtoje zadrzewne* [Wood Rings], another monumental work by Karpowicz, which was originally published in 1999 by Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie [Lower Silesia Publishing House] thanks to Stolarczyk's determination; it was the first poetry volume published by Karpowicz after twenty-seven years of silence, which revived the interest of readers and researchers in this somewhat familiar oeuvre. In 2013, Biuro Literackie also published a fourth volume covering unknown poetic works from 1970-2005, mostly preserved in manuscripts or type-

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<sup>2</sup> Cited: "O nas. Willa Karpowiczów," Fundacja Olgi Tokarczuk, accessed January 15, 2023, <https://fundacjaolgitokarczuk.org/willa-karpowiczow>.

scripts. This was followed in 2015 by volumes five and six, which include Karpowicz's extensive output as a playwright, as well as radio plays and theatrical adaptations that he had developed.

It was not until 2019 that the publication of the subsequent parts of the *Dzieła zebrane* [Collected Works] edition was reissued, which were mainly devoted to the essayistic works of the author of *Poezja niemożliwa* [Impossible Poetry]. The last four volumes in a new, refreshed graphic design were given the collective title *Essays*. The publishing was handled this time by Warstwy, the Wrocław-based publishing house, where Stolarczyk was joined for the purposes of the subsequent volumes (with the exception of the last one) by Joanna Roszak, a poet and researcher affiliated to the Polish Academy of Sciences, and author of important works on Karpowicz's lyricism, and populariser of his poetic work.<sup>3</sup> It so happened, incidentally, that in 2019, I reviewed the first volume of this essayistic series for "Topos",<sup>4</sup> so now it comes to me, in a way, to close this bracket and complete my own reflection. The several-year break in the realisation of the edition under discussion here was due not only to logistical considerations accompanying the change of the publisher, but also resulted from the need for a thorough organising and then editorial processing of Karpowicz's very rich and mostly dispersed (often remaining only in the form of manuscripts or translations into foreign languages) essayistic output. Particular attention and time was required to take into account the peculiarities of this writing, dense with complex intertextual references, often even overwhelming with the number of footnotes.

The first volume of *Eseje* [Essays] (2019) contains twenty-six texts arranged by Joanna Roszak according to thematic criteria, and written by Karpowicz over the course of about half a century: the oldest are from 1953 and 1956, while the newer ones were written a few years before Karpowicz's death in 2005. The protagonists of these articles and sketches are mainly poets: Stanisław Grochowiak, Bolesław Leśmian, Zdzisław Marek, Krystyna Miłobędzka, Cyprian Norwid, Julian Przyboś, Witold Wirpsza and Rafał Wojaczek, although we can also find texts on the works of Andrzejewski, Grotowski, Giedroyc, and on the life and death of Janta-Pończyński. The volume also includes Karpowicz's programmatic essays in the field of philoso-

<sup>3</sup> See: Joanna Roszak, *Synteza mowy Tymoteusza Karpowicza* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2011); Joanna Roszak, *W cztery strony naraz. Portrety Karpowicza* (Wrocław: Biuro Literackie, 2010); Tymoteusz Karpowicz, *Zmyślony człowiek*, selected by Joanna Roszak (Stronie Śląskie: Biuro Literackie, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Bartosz Małczyński, „Eseje u bram poezji. Słowo o nowym tomie „Dzieł zebranych” Tymoteusza Karpowicza,” *Topos*, no. 6 (2019): 112–115. I take the liberty of recalling some of the basic findings of the previous review in this discussion.

phy of culture, such as *Sue le pont d'Existence* (2001), *Sztuka niemożliwa* [Impossible Art] (1976) and *Ziemia- ojczyzna ludzi w galaktyce mitu* [Earth – the Homeland of Men in the Galaxy of Myth] (1995).

More than half of volume two (2020) is taken up by a reprint of the doctoral monograph *Poezja niemożliwa. Modele Leśmianowskiej wyobraźni* [Impossible Poetry. Models of Leśmian's Imagination] from 1975. Karpowicz had spent decades producing not only poetic works and dramas, but also conducting advanced literary and philosophical research as a tireless inquirer and erudite keenly interested in all sorts of forms of human activity, which he perceived in a universe of connections and interactions, in a vast reservoir of analogies and convergences. As a young master's student in the mid-1950s, he initially intended to write his doctoral dissertation on the work of any of the Enlightenment writers (Adam Naruszewicz or Ignacy Krasicki) under the supervision of prof. Tadeusz Mikulski, he also considered the possibility of creating a dissertation on the imagination of avant-garde poets, but eventually he spent nearly twenty years studying the poetry of Bolesław Leśmian, the fruit of which became not only the degree of Doctor of Humanities, obtained in 1973 at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Wrocław under the supervision of prof. Bogdan Zakrzewski, but also the monograph *Poezja niemożliwa. Modele Leśmianowskiej wyobraźni* [Impossible Poetry. Models of Leśmian's Imagination], published two years later by Ossolineum, which met with an ambivalent and not necessarily favourable reception in the literary circles of the time. The defence of his doctorate proved to be one of the turning points in the poet's biography. Obtaining his degree enabled Karpowicz to take up academic lecturing work outside the People's Republic of Poland, first in Germany and eventually in the United States. Until 1992, he taught literature at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where, among other things, he initiated the Norwid Society, under whose auspices he organised three international academic conferences dedicated to the works of Cyprian Norwid (1983), Bolesław Leśmian (1987) and Julian Przyboś (1992).

The reprint of the monograph *Poezja niemożliwa* [Impossible Poetry] is supplemented in volume two of the *Eseje* [Essays] by various longer or shorter essay and journalistic forms on the above-mentioned poets, but also devoted, for example, to the role of Adam Mickiewicz in the formation of Polish culture (Adam Mickiewicz – the Polish national poet) or describing the occurrence of various motifs and themes in earlier Polish poetry (*Pielgrzym i jego logos, Ogień i śnieg: dychotomie i dychomachie poezji polskiego baroku* [Pilgrim and his Logos, Fire and Snow: dichotomy and dichotomies of the poetry of the Polish Baroque]). In addition, there are occasional

community appeals formulated on behalf of the Norwid Society, conference speeches and a supplement of nearly twenty small poetic works, including prose poems, found by Stolarczyk in Karpowicz's archives.

The third volume (2022), compared to the previous ones, bears the slightly expanded title *Eseje, proza, recenzje* [Essays, prose, reviews]. Among the protagonists of the eleven sketches one can again find Cyprian Norwid (*Sir Galahad w polskim kontuszu, Zapalmy tutaj tę lampę*) [Sir Galahad in the Polish Nobleman's Robe. Let's light this lamp here], Julian Przyboś in dialogue with Rainer Maria Rilke (*Wojna dwóch róż – pokój dwóch róż*) [War of the Two Roses – Peace of the Two Roses], but also Frederic Chopin (*Ten, co Polskę głosił od zenitu...*) [The one who preached Poland from the zenith. ...], Krystyna Godlewska, and poets of the younger generation, including Stanisław Barańczak, Ryszard Krynicki and Adam Zagajewski (*Mów prawdę, poeto. Polska poezja najmłodsza poza cenzurą*) [Speak the truth, poet. Poland's youngest poetry beyond censorship]. The prose section, in turn, includes works from the folk series *Legendy pomorskie* [Pomeranian Legends], created by Karpowicz in the second half of the 1940s, as well as seven short stories that are poorly known to readers (*Wuj Antol, Nic się nie stało, Już raz tak biegł, Łzy krokodyla, Czas, kiedy rośnie góra, Wewnętrzny 09, Zawsze wigilijna*) [Uncle Anatol, Nothing Happened, Already Once Such a Runner, Crocodile's Tears, Time When the Mountain Grows, Extension 09, Always Christmas Eve One].

Throughout the 1950s, Karpowicz was active in literary criticism on an ad hoc basis, while in his later years he did so rather sporadically, as documented in the review section, which consists of more than twenty texts dedicated to authors such as Wilhelm Szewczyk, Gustav Morcinek, Leonid Leonov, Vera Panova, Lilian Seymour-Tulasiewicz Bolesław Taborski, Mieczysław Jastrun, Zbigniew Jankowski, Bolesław Lubosz, Eugeniusz Kabatc, Józefa Radzymińska, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Bogusława Latawiec and Kazimierz Chmielowiec. Supplementing the third volume is a transcription of the lecture *Skrzydlaty Alef* [Winged Alef], delivered by Karpowicz on June 1, 2000 at the Museum of Architecture in Wrocław, and recorded on VHS tape by Tadeusz Złotorzycki. In 2006-2007 I had the opportunity and pleasure – together with Gabriel Marczak and Przemysław Romanski, then students of Polish Studies at the University of Wrocław – to work on the transcription of the lecture, published in Volume Three of Essays, which makes its presence among the published materials all the more gratifying.

In addition, the fourth volume (2023), planned as the tenth and last in the series of *Dzieła zebrane* [Collected Works], was given a necessary, editorially functional extension in the title: *Eseje, poezja, publicystyka, wywiady* [Essays, Poetry, Journalism, Interviews]. At the same time, it is the most ex-

tensive of all the previously published volumes, as it is 630 pages long and is divided into six parts: I. Essays, II. Poetry, III. Cultural and literary journalism, IV. Socio-political journalism, V. Interviews, VI. Supplements. Significantly, the vast majority of the ten volumes of the edition contain detailed editorial notes relating to Karpowicz's texts (in many cases published for the first time) and explaining their genealogy and biographical context, or indicating various difficulties in determining the version of the writing. These commentaries, written by Stolarczyk in a matter-of-fact, often essayistic, inviting style, are undoubtedly a fundamental and extremely rich source of reliable information, hitherto unavailable or difficult to access, on the life and work of the author of *Światło odwrócone* [Inverted Light]. One can even say that on the occasion of the creation of this edition of the *Dzieła zebrane* [Collected Works] and, as it were, on its margins, a small, highly erudite compendium of knowledge about Karpowicz's biography and writings has been created, which will certainly in future remain the main point of reference for researchers dealing with this work. Reading through the editor's notes and comments, one cannot help feeling that Stolarczyk's study is more than just another edition of the writings of a particular author. For it is both a form of friendly tribute to Karpowicz, as well as an expression of personal respect for the vast output of this multifaceted author, with pages numbering in the thousands.

Part one of the latest volume of *Dzieła zebrane* [Collected Works] contains an extensive sketch, *Kierunki współczesnej poezji polskiej* [Directions of Contemporary Polish Poetry], probably written around 1964 and reconstructed by Stolarczyk on the basis of two surviving translated versions (Serbo-Croatian and English). Given the nature of the synthetic and cross-sectional approach we are dealing with in the case of this sketch, it seems accurate to assume that it was written "with foreigners in mind"<sup>5</sup> in order to popularise knowledge of Polish post-war poetry abroad. In the course of the description, Karpowicz used the criteria of "distinctiveness" and "uniqueness" to point out poetic "individualities whose work most clearly shows the new tendencies".<sup>6</sup> The sketch is divided into several titled subsections devoted in turn to such poetic personalities as Julian Przyboś *Poezja rygoru* [Poetry of Rigor], Tadeusz Różewicz *Kamienna wyobraźnia* [Stony Imagination], Miron Białoszewski *Obroty mowy* [Revolutions of Speech], Zbigniew Herbert *Potomek kultury* [Descendant of Culture], Jerzy Harasymowicz *W cieniu pałeczki Prospera* [In the Shadow of Prosper's Stick] and Stanisław Grochowiak *Piękne niechlujstwo* [Beautiful Sloppiness]). The essay part is

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<sup>5</sup> Jan Stolarczyk, „Komentarze do utworów,” in Tymoteusz Karpowicz, *Eseje, poezja, publicystyka, wywiady*, vol. 4, ed. Jan Stolarczyk (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Warstwy, 2023), 592.

<sup>6</sup> Karpowicz, *Eseje, poezja, publicystyka, wywiady*, 13.

completed by a several-page sketch *Oddech jako poznanie w poezji Bolesława Leśmiana* [Breath as Cognition in the poetry of Bolesław Leśmian], which is an attempt to describe Leśmian's pneumology in philosophical terms, referring, among others, to the thought of Edmund Husserl and Tertullian.

The tenth volume includes Karpowicz's previously unpublished juvenile poems from 1942–1946, dedicated and gifted on the occasion of his name day in 1952 to Professor Tadeusz Mikulski, under whom the poet was an assistant professor at the University of Wrocław. From the early 1950s, moreover, comes *Oda do wąsów* [Ode to a Moustache], a form of poetic parody of a work of the same title by Franciszek Dionysius Kniaźnin. The poetic cycle closes with eleven poems covered by the common title Poems of Recent Years.

In the next section, we find just over thirty pieces of cultural journalism (usually several pages long, but in some cases just a few sentences), through which we get to know Karpowicz not only as a versatile writer, open to a variety of genres and genre registers (poetry, prose, drama, philosophical essay, scientific article and review, etc.), but also as an activist involved in the literary life of post-war Poland and an ardent debater and polemist. A comparable passion for argumentation can be seen in his socio-political journalism, which consists of some twenty texts, among them some whose message, especially in the current circumstances of the ongoing war in Ukraine, resounds today with the unique power of a warning.

Karpowicz was sensitive to the danger of the threat coming from Russia from an early age.<sup>7</sup> When he was still a child, having been born near Vilnius, he realised “that what was coming from the East could be terrible”.<sup>8</sup> The poet was shaken by the outbreak of the first war in Chechnya in late 1994. In order to formulate his own view on the issue that deeply tormented him, he produced a large-scale poem *Moja Czeczenia* [My Chechnya] in 1995–1996 (first printed in “2B” 1996, no. 9/10) and dedicated it to “the bravest of nations – the Chechen nation”, and he did so to “somehow, emotionally, help” the freedom fighters, as he put it in a letter to Krystyna Miłobędzka and Andrzej Falkiewicz.<sup>9</sup> In *Moja Czeczenia* [My Chechnya] Karpowicz spins a re-

<sup>7</sup> I took up this theme, as well as the question of Karpowicz's attitude to Martial Law, the communist authorities and the Solidarity movement, a decade ago in the Introduction to: Bartosz Małczyński, „Wstęp,” in Tymoteusz Karpowicz, *Utwory poetyckie (wybór)*, introduction and elaboration by Bartosz Małczyński, (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 2014), XXV–XXVIII. Herewith, I cite a few passages as a reminder.

<sup>8</sup> Karpowicz, *Eseje, poezja, publicystyka, wywiady*, 505. This statement comes from an interview conducted by S. Bereś in 2000.

<sup>9</sup> Maria Karpowicz, Tymoteusz Karpowicz, Andrzej Falkiewicz, and Krystyna Miłobędzka. *Blisko z daleka. Listy 1970–2003*, compiled by Jarosław Borowiec in collaboration with Krystyna Miłobędzka, afterword by Joanna Orska (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 2021), 299.



flection on current events, weaving it into historical and cultural contexts. Among the characters who appear in *Grozny*, we recognise Lermontov, Goethe, Mickiewicz, Byron, Tolstoy, Haji-Murat, as well as a “demon” and Cain. In the poem there are accusations against Europe, which assumes the position of an embarrassed spectator, in a situation where “a particle of the earth’s freedom perishes” and the Moscow clock strikes the hour of death.<sup>10</sup> Karpowicz referred to the ongoing Chechen conflict and its possible significance for the Old Continent, or even the entire globe, in 2000, in a conversation conducted by Małgorzata Matuszewska during the poet’s first visit to Poland in many years:

Osobiście uważam, że to, co tam się rozgrywa, to w pewnym sensie jest laboratoryjne przerabianie przyszłości Europy, a potem być może świata. Jeśli będziemy nieczuli na tragedię narodu, który ponad 200 lat walczy o swoją wolność, i pozwolimy, ażeby Rosjanie opanowali ten naród, to znaczy, że pozwolimy sobie na rośnięcie w nas potwornej politycznej, ludzkiej znieczulicy. [...] A to nie jest sprawa wewnętrzna, tylko sprawa losu człowieczeństwa.<sup>11</sup>

[Personally, I believe that what is being played out there is, in a sense, a laboratory reshaping of the future of Europe, and then perhaps the world. If we are insensitive to the tragedy of a nation that has been fighting for its freedom for more than 200 years, and allow the Russians to overrun this nation, it means that we will allow the monstrous growth of political and human indifference within us. [...] And this is not an internal matter, but a matter of the fate of humanity.]

In December 1980, in a letter to Heinrich Kunstmann, he accused the authorities of the Soviet Union of a policy of programmatic intimidation, carried out against weak and lonely countries, as well as the deliberate conflict of their citizens, calculated to provoke fratricidal struggles from which tangible benefits could be derived.<sup>12</sup> In turn, in correspondence with Tomasz Tabako, editor of the ambitious magazine “2B”, with which Karpowicz collaborated in the US, he explained in an emotional tone the sources of his hatred of Russia, which also influenced his departure from Poland to the United States: “Maybe because it swallowed my father [the poet’s father, Mateusz Karpowicz, probably died as a prisoner of war in Soviet captivity in the early 1920s – note B.M.]. Because the Russian nation, so irrational, threatens Europe, humanity. And because only America, the powerful one, can stop Russia in this fearful desire to swallow Europe.”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Tymoteusz Karpowicz, *Słoje zadrzewne. Teksty wybrane*, Afterword by Andrzej Falkiewicz (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1999), 312–321.

<sup>11</sup> Karpowicz, *Eseje, poezja, publicystyka, wywiady*, 501.

<sup>12</sup> Heinrich Kunstmann, and Tymoteusz Karpowicz, *Listy 1959–1993*, compiled by Marek Zybura (Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza Atut, 2011), 422.

<sup>13</sup> Cited: Tomasz Tabako, „Horror metafizyczny,” *Odra*, no. 3 (2008): 67.

In the early 1990s, in response to the siege of independent Lithuania by Soviet tanks, he wrote an emotional sketch, *Litwo, ojczyzno moja!...* [Lithuania, My Homeland!...], in which he described Russia as a Super-Goliath, deftly sprinkling salt on unhealed wounds and sowing fear all around (“the only grain that Super-Goliath has in excess”). The text also made an accusation against Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who “still sees in these hordes a shield for Poland’s sovereignty”.<sup>14</sup> In 1990 Karpowicz sent an open letter to Mazowiecki. He criticized in it the toleration of the presence of Soviet troops on the territory of the Republic and recalled the historical past between the nations (especially the unexplained Katyń affair and the “occupation” of Polish society during the communist period). In the final part of the letter he warned: “Let’s not delude ourselves – it would take centuries to change the essence of Russia’s policy, because the mindset of Russians would have to change, and the essence of this is the distrust of their neighbours.”<sup>15</sup>

The two texts quoted above, testifying to Karpowicz’s strongly emotional involvement in geopolitics, as well as the excerpts quoted from conversations with Stanisław Bereś and Małgorzata Matuszewska, are included in the latest volume of *Dzieła zebrane* [Collected Works]. There is also a series of sketches written under the influence of the events of December 1981, revealing the attitude of the poet, who was already in the United States at the time, towards the authorities in the declining period of the People’s Republic of Poland, especially his attitude towards the Solidarity movement and the decision to declare Martial Law in Poland. As early as the first paragraph of the sketch *Boskie ziarna i diabeł* [Divine Seeds and the Devil], written – as the text precisely indicates – “on Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> December, 4:30 p.m.”,<sup>16</sup> Karpowicz puts Wojciech Jaruzelski on trial, comparing his decision made on 13<sup>th</sup> December with the historical acts of violence against the Republic. Let us use longer excerpts from this text:

Polskę najeżdżano wiele razy. U prapoczątków jej państwowości najeżdżały ją plemina germańskie, wojowie czeskiego księcia Brzetysława, hordy tatarskie Batu-Chana, które w roku 1241 obnosiły na pice uciętą głowę Henryka Pobożnego (Legnickie Pole). Potem pustoszyli ją, serdecznie zaproszeni do Polski przez Konrada Mazowieckiego, Krzyżacy, dalej Turcy, na progu wieku XVII Szwedzi. W 1772 najechali Polskę zbiorowo sąsiedzi: Rosja, Prusy i Austria, by ostatecznie w 1795 roku pozbawić ją bytu państwowego (na przeciąg 123 lat). W cywilizowanym wieku XX włamały się do Polski i ją pustoszyły stalowe kohorty Hitlera – od zachodu, a od wschodu – Stalina. Ale nigdy jeszcze Polska nie została najechana przez swój własny rząd, siły zbrojne tego rządu. Stało się to dopiero teraz, w grudniu 1981 roku [...].

<sup>14</sup> Karpowicz, *Eseje, poezja, publicystyka, wywiady*, 375–378.

<sup>15</sup> Karpowicz, *Eseje, poezja, publicystyka, wywiady*, 371–374.

<sup>16</sup> Karpowicz, *Eseje, poezja, publicystyka, wywiady*, 345–349.

Człowiekiem, który wydał rozkaz najazdu na naród polski w imię Polski, jest obecny naczelny wódz sił zbrojnych Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej, zarazem premier rządu polskiego, równocześnie I Sekretarz Komitetu Centralnego PZPR oraz przewodniczący nowo kreowanej, pozakonstytucyjnej Wojkowej Rady Ocalenia Narodowego (czytaj: junty wojskowej) generał broni Wojciech Jaruzelski. Tą drogą, jako pierwszy tego typu wódz polski, generał Jaruzelski wszedł do historii.<sup>17</sup>

[Poland has been invaded many times. At the very beginning of its statehood it was invaded by Germanic tribes, the warriors of the Czech prince Bretislav, the Tatar hordes of Batu-Khan, who in 1241 triumphantly carried off the severed head of Henry the Pious (Legnickie Pole). Then it was ravaged by the Teutonic Knights, cordially invited to Poland by Konrad Mazowiecki, further by the Turks, and at the threshold of the 17th century by the Swedes. In 1772 Poland was invaded collectively by its neighbours: Russia, Prussia and Austria, to deprive it once and for all of its existence as a state in 1795 (for a period of 123 years). In the civilised 20th century, Hitler's steel cohorts broke into and ravaged Poland – from the west, and Stalin's from the east. But Poland has never before been invaded by its own government, the armed forces of that government. It happened only now, in December 1981 [...]. The man who gave the order to invade the Polish nation in the name of Poland is the current Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of the People's Republic of Poland, at the same time Prime Minister of the Polish government, at the same time First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party and Chairman of the newly created, extra-constitutional Military Council of National Salvation (read: military junta) Lieutenant General Wojciech Jaruzelski. By these means, as the first such Polish leader, General Jaruzelski entered history.]

In the remainder of the sketch, Karpowicz reports, as it were, “in the heat of the moment” – without avoiding his characteristic hyperbolic register and a tone full of bitterness – the news of mass arrests in Poland, the brutality of the regime's army, the pacification of the Solidarity movement, the liquidation of the news channels, and accuses the “free world” of the West of mercantilism and an inability to stand up to Moscow, if only in the defence of its own long-term, strategic interests:

Żadna radiostacja, nawet najbardziej prymitywna, „Solidarności” nie działa. Junta wojskowa zalewa narodowi usta czerwonym gipsem. Żadne wolne słowo nie przebija żelaznej kurtyny. Nawet w czasie okrutnej okupacji hitlerowskiej działało wiele tajnych radiostacji polskich, poza Trzecią Rzeszę wydostawały się polskie pisma podziemne, publikacje, dokumenty. Dlaczego teraz jest inaczej? Czy kohorty Jaruzelskiego są sprawniejsze i brutalniejsze od kohort Hitlera? [...] Jeśli jest jakieś miejsce na świecie, gdzie panuje ogromna radość z powodu najazdu zdegenerowanych Polaków na swój naród, to tym miejscem jest przede wszystkim Moskwa. Generał Jaruzelski i jego kohorty zrealizowały marzenia Kremla: Polacy dokonali samoinwazji. Cyniczna gra ukartowana między Kremlen a Komitetem Centralnym PZPR, gra polegająca na straszaniu narodu polskiego i świata (iluż się na to straszanie nabrało!) inwazją radziecką, by osłabić opór narodu polskiego przeciwko atakowi własnych

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<sup>17</sup> Karpowicz, *Eseje, poezja, publicystyka, wywiady*, 345–349.

kohort [...]. Do tej chwilowej „wygranej” przyczynił się również wolny świat, niezdolny do uznania groźby moskiewskiej interwencji w Polsce za bezpośrednie, militarne zagrożenie egzystencji tego świata. [...] Wielu uznało, że lepsza jest „inwazja domowa” niż rosyjska, skoro jest ona nieunikniona. I tak oto na Kremlu zabrzmiał dzwon zwycięstwa. Świat wolny, zajęty interesami nie bardzo chce słuchać, dla kogo bije ten dzwon.<sup>18</sup>

[No “Solidarity” radio station, even the most primitive one, is working. The military junta is flooding the nation’s mouth with red plaster. No free speech pierces the Iron Curtain. Even during the cruel Nazi occupation, many secret Polish radio stations operated, and Polish underground writings, publications, documents got out of the Third Reich. Why is it different now? Are Jaruzelski’s cohorts more efficient and brutal than Hitler’s? [...] If there is any place in the world where there is great joy over the invasion of degenerate Poles against their people, that place is primarily Moscow. General Jaruzelski and his cohorts have realised the Kremlin’s dreams: Poles have carried out a self-invasion. A cynical game was rigged between the Kremlin and the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party, a game of scaring the Polish people and the world (how many fell for this intimidation!) with a Soviet invasion in order to weaken the resistance of the Polish people against the attack of their own cohorts [...]. The free world, unable to recognise the threat of Moscow’s intervention in Poland as a direct military threat to the world’s existence, has also contributed to this temporary “victory”. [...] Many decided that a “home invasion” was better than a Russian one, since it was inevitable. And so the bell of victory sounded in the Kremlin. The free world, preoccupied with business, doesn’t really want to listen to whom this bell tolls for.]

In the finale of the text, the poet, referring to Adam Mickiewicz’s *Dziady, Part III*, and contrasting the metaphysical reflection with an admixture of bitter irony, compares Jaruzelski to the devil spitting on the “seeds of faith and freedom” sown on Polish soil by God:

I dzieje się to wszystko właśnie w grudniu, miesiącu Betlejem, miesiącu odradzającej się miłości między ludźmi i nadziei na pokój. Przestrzeń międzyludzką wypełniają coraz gęściej słowa urzekającej kolędy: „Cicha noc, święta noc...”. A nad Wisłą? A w Polsce? Chcąc dołączyć się do chóru kolęd świata sam generał Jaruzelski zacznie też nucić polską, łagodną kolędę-kołysankę: „Lulajże Jezuniu, lulajże, lulaj...”. Tylko w tym śpiewie Jezusowa kołysieczka będzie ciągle przybierać kształt trumienki. [...] Pokój ludziom dobrej woli. Ale nie złej.<sup>19</sup>

[And all this is happening just in December, the month of Bethlehem, the month of rebirth of love between people and hope for peace. The space between people is filled more and more densely with the words of the enchanting carol: “Silent night, holy night...”. And on the Vistula river? And in Poland? Wishing to join the chorus of carols of the world, General Jaruzelski himself will also start humming a Polish, gentle carol-lullaby: “Lulajże Jezuniu, lulajże, lulaj...”. Only in this singing will Jesus’ cradle constantly take the shape of a coffin. [...] Peace to the people of good will. But not the ill one.]

<sup>18</sup> Karpowicz, *Eseje, poezja, publicystyka, wywiady*, 346–348.

<sup>19</sup> Karpowicz, *Eseje, poezja, publicystyka, wywiady*, 349.

In turn, in the sketch *The Nation as a Hostage*, Karpowicz intercedes for those imprisoned during Martial Law (including Lech Walesa), while claiming that Jaruzelski turned Poland into a “giant prison, in which more than thirty million citizens are kept”, and that Leonid Brezhnev, then the leader of the USSR, is heading for “the final solution of the Polish question”.<sup>20</sup> The December events are also alluded to in the text *Ręka i ślepy miecz* [A Hand and a Blind Sword], in which Karpowicz formulated his hopes in relation to US President Ronald Reagan’s international policy toward the Polish cause (“One should wish him to find enough strength and determination to break the sword out of the hand of the right opponent”).<sup>21</sup>

Many excerpts from the unfinished volume *Rozwiązywanie przestrzeni* [Dissolution of Space] contain more or less clear allusions to the political situation in the People’s Republic of Poland, often woven into romantic and eschatological contexts. The horror-filled realities of the first half of the 1980s were recorded in the prose poem *Prostująca*,<sup>22</sup> dedicated to Barbara Sadowska – a poet, anti-communist opposition activist, mother of Grzegorz Przemyk, a 19-year-old beaten to death by the Citizen’s Militia in May 1983. On Christmas Eve 1984, two months after Security Service officers assassinated Father Jerzy Popieluszko, Karpowicz wrote and soon published on the back cover of New York Weekly (1985, no. 1) the martyrological poem *Zraniona hostia*, dedicated to “the memory of Father Peter-Man-Pole”, where the names of Norwid and Chopin appeared alongside the references to *Dziadów część III* [Forefathers’ Eve Part III], as well as the characteristic figure of “a general doubly losing his eyesight”, depicted among drunken soldiers “in sausage halos” and militiamen hounding new “little herods”.<sup>23</sup> During the ongoing Martial Law in his homeland, Karpowicz, in a letter to Kunstmann dated 31<sup>st</sup> December 1982, lamented that “Poles have inflicted this fate on Poles”, and Germans still want to “warm themselves with Russian gas”.<sup>24</sup>

Karpowicz’s political passion, now revealed in its full glory thanks to the presentation in the tenth volume of the *Dzieła zebrane* [Collected Works] of his journalistic statements, is in my opinion one of the most interesting dimensions, which has still not been described in depth, of the biography and thought of the author of *Moja Czechnya* [My Chechnya]. The politicality of some of Karpowicz’s poetic and dramatic texts in relation to the reflections formulated in his journalism is certainly an area worth thorough investigation. In a letter of 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1991 addressed to Andrzej Falkiewicz and

<sup>20</sup> Karpowicz, *Eseje, poezja, publicystyka, wywiady*, 351–352.

<sup>21</sup> Karpowicz, *Eseje, poezja, publicystyka, wywiady*, 358.

<sup>22</sup> Karpowicz, *Stoje zadrzewne. Teksty wybrane*, 260–261.

<sup>23</sup> Karpowicz, *Stoje zadrzewne. Teksty wybrane*, 204 and 206.

<sup>24</sup> H. Kunstmann, T. Karpowicz, *Listy 1959–1993*, 424. See Małczyński, „Wstęp,” XXV–XXVI.

Krystyna Miłobędzka, Karpowicz admitted "I am, however, passionate about politics. I was constantly writing, content-wise without value, some kind of political attack, once against Jaruzelski, once teasing Mazowiecki because of his proclivity for Moscow and Lithuania".<sup>25</sup> Finally, we should add that Karpowicz's statements on various topics (his own and others' works, philosophy of literature, historical and socio-political issues, etc.), which appeared in numerous conversations with the poet, published in the latest volume of *Dzieła zebrane* and conducted over the years by, among others, Ryszard Sawicki, Wanda Sorgente, Ewa Sułkowska-Bierezin, Mieczysław Kurpisz, Małgorzata Matuszewska, Stanisław Bereś, are of great value. Taken as a whole, these texts make it possible to complete and deepen the portrait (and self-portrait) of Karpowicz as a poet, playwright, philosopher, literary scholar, publicist and, above all, a man keenly and seriously concerned with matters of existence, art, history, politics and geopolitics.

Beginning with the publication of *Stoje zadrzewne* [Wood Rings] in 1999, the revived interest in Tymoteusz Karpowicz's work at that time seems not to have died down. Since then, and now that a whole quarter of a century has passed, more than a dozen comprehensive monographs on the poetry and drama of the author of *Reverse Light* have been published, as have dozens of scholarly articles and critical-literary essays, and several significant anthologies of his poetry. In recent years alone, first-rate studies have been published by Magdalena Kokoszka (*Pochwała lekkości? Leśmian – Przyboś – Karpowicz* [In Praise of Lightness? Leśmian – Przyboś – Karpowicz], 2021), Karolina Górniak-Prasnal (*„Otwieranie wszechświata”. Polska powojenna awangarda poetycka: Tymoteusz Karpowicz i Krystyna Miłobędzka* [Opening the Universe. Polish post-war poetic avant-garde: Tymoteusz Karpowicz and Krystyna Miłobędzka], 2022), and Łukasz Józefowicz (*Poetyckie ciała: agon Tymoteusza Karpowicza z Julianem Przybosiem* [Poetic bodies: the agon of Tymoteusz Karpowicz with Julian Przyboś]), a doctoral thesis written in 2019, defended a year later at the University of Warsaw. In addition, publications by Władysław Włoch, a poet and literary researcher from Rzeszów (b. 1941), whose three monographs published in a short period of time at his own expense are an admirable exemplification of interpretative originality, meticulousness and insight,<sup>26</sup> can be considered as an inspiring phenomenon. Work on Karpowicz's epistolography is also constantly in progress, as

<sup>25</sup> Karpowicz, Karpowicz, Falkiewicz, and Miłobędzka, *Blisko z daleka. Listy 1970–2003*, 171.

<sup>26</sup> Władysław Włoch, *Aby lepsze wyśpiewać z nielepiej... (nad „Stojami zadrzewnymi” Tymoteusza Karpowicza)* (Rzeszów: self-published, 2015); Władysław Włoch, *Ciągi dalsze... (z ineditami Tymoteusza Karpowicza moje obcowanie)* (Rzeszów: self-published, 2017); Władysław Włoch, *Wysokie przełaje... (rzecz o „Historii białoziemnego źródła” Tymoteusza Karpowicza)* (Rzeszów: self-published, 2017).

exemplified by the recently published collection of Tymoteusz and Maria Karpowicz's long, bilateral correspondence with Andrzej Falkiewicz and Krystyna Miłobędzka.<sup>27</sup> What is more, Karpowicz also has his poetic continuators, for example in the person of Jacek Wilczewski, the author of a cycle entitled *Odwrócone światło ver. 22/23* (I owe the electronic manuscript to Magdalena Kokoszka, for which I would like to thank her!), which is a rather ambitious attempt to develop, and partly also to imitate the idea of a "constantly self-creating poem".<sup>28</sup>

At the end of my review of the fourth volume of *Dzieła zebrane*, published a decade ago in the online literary magazine "biBLioteka" under the auspices of Biuro Literackie (the publisher of the first six volumes of this edition),<sup>29</sup> I referred to a fragment of a poem entitled *Obroty* [Revolutions], which can be described as Karpowicz's poetic testament. It contains a request of the author, full of humbleness and good-naturedness, addressed to future recipients and thus guardians, new host-interpreters of his work: "then - / make only the golden deer drink / and feed the birds / that I left / behind the heavy door".<sup>30</sup> In 2024, after the publication of the tenth volume of Tymoteusz Karpowicz's *Dzieła zebrane*, it can now be said with certainty that the 'heavy door' of his work has been – thanks to the many years of effort and personal dedication of Jan Stolarczyk and with the partial participation of Joanna Roszak – finally and once and for all opened for further reception.

Translated by Anna Wylężałek

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<sup>27</sup> Karpowicz, Tymoteusz Karpowicz, Andrzej Falkiewicz, and Krystyna Miłobędzka. *Blisko z daleka. Listy 1970-2003*.

<sup>28</sup> Jacek Wilczewski, *Odwrócone światło ver. 22/23*, electronic manuscript, 84.

<sup>29</sup> Bartosz Małczyński, „Otwarcie ciężkich drzwi. Słowo o czwartym tomie „Dzieł zebranych” Tymoteusza Karpowicza,” *BiBLioteka. Magazyn literacki*, accessed Dezember 14, 2013, <https://www.biuroliterackie.pl/biblioteka/recenzje/esej-bartosza-malczynskiego>.

<sup>30</sup> Karpowicz, *Słoje zadrzewne. Teksty wybrane*, 236.

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**Das endgültige Öffnen einer schweren Türe**  
**[Rezension:] Tymoteusz Karpowicz, *Dzieła zebrane***  
**[Gesamtwerke], hrsg. v. Jan Stolarczyk (Bd. 1-10), Joanna**  
**Roszak (Bd. 7-9) (Wrocław: Biuro Literackie-Warstwy,**  
**2011-2023)**

**Abstract:** Die Rezension ist der zehnbändigen Ausgabe von *Dzieła zebrane* [Gesamtwerke] von Tymoteusz Karpowicz, einem bedeutenden polnischen Dichter, Dramatiker und Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaftler, gewidmet. Es wird der Umfang und die hohe Qualität der von Jan Stolarczyk in Zusammenarbeit mit Joanna Roszak geleisteten editorischen Arbeit hervorgehoben. Der Text erörtert auch synthetisch den Inhalt der zwischen 2011 und 2023 erschienenen Folgebände, mit besonderem Schwerpunkt auf dem zehnten Band *Eseje, poezja, publicystyka, wywiady* [Essays, Poesie, Journalismus, Interviews], der die Gesamtausgabe abschließt.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Tymoteusz Karpowicz, Lyrik, Dramaturgie, Essayistik, polnische Avantgarde-Dichtung des 20. Jahrhunderts

**Ostateczne otwarcie ciężkich drzwi**  
**[Recenzja:] Tymoteusz Karpowicz, *Dzieła zebrane*, red. Jan**  
**Stolarczyk (t. 1-10), Joanna Roszak (t. 7-9) (Wrocław:**  
**Biuro Literackie-Warstwy, 2011-2023).**

**Abstrakt:** Recenzja jest poświęcona 10-tomowej edycji *Dzieł zebranych* Tymoteusza Karpowicza, wybitnego polskiego poety, dramaturga, badacza literatury i kultury. W recenzji zwrócono uwagę na zakres i wysoką jakość prac redakcyjnych przeprowadzonych przez Jana Stolarczyka we współpracy z Joanną Roszak. W tekście została także omówiona syntetycznie wartość kolejnych tomów wydawanych w latach 2011-2023, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem tomu dziesiątego *Eseje, poezja, publicystyka, wywiady*, zamykającego całą edycję.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Tymoteusz Karpowicz, poezja, dramaturgia, eseistyka, polska poezja awangardowa XX wieku.