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„Opening the World”.
Polish Postwar Avant-garde Poetry:
Tymoteusz Karpowicz and Krystyna Miłobędzka

**Summary**

The aim of the thesis is to present the innovative interpretations of the poetry by Tymoteusz Karpowicz (1921–2005) and Krystyna Miłobędzka (1932–), based on the method of relational reading, i.e. a way of interpretation in which the two projects of postwar avant-garde can enter into a dialogue and become a context for each other. This approach is supported by the conviction that there is an influential dialogical capability in the poetry by both authors, although it has not been sufficiently exposed in previous research. Therefore, the relational reading emerge from the assumption that the belief of incomprehensibility of Karpowicz’s and Miłobędzka’s works can be revised or questioned. The proposed mode of reading allows to observe a resemblance of attitudes, ambitions and visions of poetry articulated by both authors, but also to justify their assumpted location in the history of literature, as well as to put each of these poetic projects in a broader perspective. The research is focused on chosen poems from different periods of the artists’ life, but also the unpublished texts from Karpowicz’s and Miłobędzka’s archives from the Manuscripts Department of the Ossolineum, which have not been examined before.

This is a wide-scale analyse of the artistic strategies, tools of poetic expression and concepts of language. Moreover, the thesis is thought to present a friendly acquaintance of two poets in real life and to characterise the bonds between their poetic projects. The dissertation is also an expanded study of postwar Polish avant-garde – its traditions, conceptions, practices and its influence on the newest poetry. In this contexts the poems of Karpowicz and the poems of Miłobędzka seem to be at once highly original and to some degree representative for some general tendencies in the literature after World War II.

The thesis is to describe and examine two poetic projects – partly related, but significantly diverged – which are performed both in the textual and in the existential field, thus they are named here the “linguistic-existential projects”. The authenticity of the poetic vision depends on its foundations in the direct poet’s life experience, who is aware that the sphere of creation and the sphere of being are inseparably bonded. This fact, in turn, affects the specificity of the relationship with a reader.

For this is a strictly interpretative study, the discussions on the literary terms step aside the attentive analyses of poetic texts, including nontextual contexts. The works of Karpowicz and Miłobędzka are consistently described as the examples of Polish postwar avant-garde, however the other crucial terms for the literature of 20th century, like neo-avant-garde, arrière-garde or modernism are evoked as a point of reference. As regards the methodology, the thesis is based on the recognitions of Polish researchers as well as the Anglo-American critics (M. Perloff, G. Bruns, J. McGann, J. Hillis Miller).

The analyses and interpretations submitted in this study are put into a light of the “impossible poetry” concept, which stems from Karpowicz’ essays and corresponds with Miłobędzka’s thought. It is a model of transgressive poetry, affirming the movement and change, testifying new forms of expression. This kind of poetry can be considered as a transgressive poetry, since it is aimed to transcend the literary conventions and the boundaries of effability accepted by a specific interpretive community. The poems by Karpowicz and Miłobędzka are presented in the light of the tradition of premodern and modernist poetry represented by Norwid, Leśmian and Przyboś. From this perspective, impossible poetry can be recognized as a practice of writing that relies on the epistemological experiment and a chance, indicating the invention of language, which is struggling to reconcile the cognitive and existential aporias of the postmodern era. The crucial motif in the analyses of Karpowicz’s and Miłobędzka’s poetry is the gesture of opening that appears in the title as well as in the poetry and the other texts by both authors. The gestures of opening can be observed when the poet decides to widen the possibilities of poetic speech, for instance, experimental displacements in the field of poetics or in the visual and the material layer of the text, but also the strategies of poetic language’s development. In turn, the reader’s attitude of openness means his acceptance for the possible misunderstandings or lack of communication, but also for the new quality of reading experience.

First part of the thesis presents main assumptions, state of research, theoretical and methodological background and it serves as an introduction for further reading. The first chapter includes a state of research on the poetry by Karpowicz and Miłobedzka, as well as the crucial recognitions of modern poetry’s critics from the field of modernism, avant-garde and neo-avant-garde. The second chapter is thought to discuss the most important literary, philosophical and biographical contexts and to prepare the Reader for the poetry’s analyses, thus this fragment is focused on essays, correspondence and interviews of both authors.

The second and fundamental part embraces the attentive analyses of chosen poetic texts by Karpowicz and Miłobędzka. Each subchapter is concerned on the specific aspect of their poetry, whereby the subchapters are formed into broader thematic blocks. In this way both poetic idioms and both conceptions of poetry, when read simultaneously, enter into a dialogue and at the same time expose their individuality. The aim of this part is to identify the effects of various techniques aimed for language’s hermetization. The third chapter discuss the issues of representation, possibilities and boundaries of world’s depiction in poetry as well as the utopian idea of creating the holistic language that could be capable to express the whole human experience. In the fourth chapter the poems concerning the topics of nature and culture are analysed, and the interpretations are put into the contexts of intertextuality, anthropological reflection on everyday things or the postmodern non-anthropocentric awareness. The fifth chapter demonstrate various strategies of expression related to the material, visual and performative dimension of the poetry of postwar avant-garde, i.e. the authorial poetic genres, the creative role of a poet who can be considered as a book’s designer or a “researcher” in the laboratory of language, as well as the typographical aspects of the poetic books by Karpowicz and Miłobędzka. In the sixth chapter the question of self-creation and autobiographical textual strategies are undertaken, so it is claimed that in both poetic project the sylleptic “I” is created. The sylleptic “I” means a variable, aporetical subject, operating both in the textual field and the actual experience. The chapter concerns also on the poetics of reception and it contains the remarks on the range of reader’s activity and the effects of experiments performed by the author.

Third part embraces the summary on the most important problems, the conclusions from the analyses and the propositions for further research ideas in the field of Karpowicz’s and Miłobędzka’s poetry.

In the whole dissertation the metaphor of *opening* is clearly exposed – not only bonds it the interpretation as regards the topic, but also it stands up for the chosen method of reading. The intention of this thesis is to display how these two poetic idioms, considered to be hermetic, could become open for the reader due to exposing their mutual background, biographical bonds and the textual dialogue conducted by Karpowicz and Miłobędzka.