Czesław Miłosz
Multiple Worlds, Game of Forms

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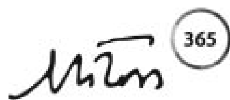

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Opening remarks

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The International Symposium, *Czesław Miłosz: Multiple Worlds, Game of Forms,* held at the University of Toronto on September 24, 2011, was a child of many parents. A result of trans-oceanic and inter-provincial cooperation between the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Toronto, the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in Canada and the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Poland, it generated support from many institutions. They included government sponsors, academic units, and private enterprise. Such a long list of sponsors and organizers testifies to the intensive interest in making this symposium possible as a part of the Czesław Miłosz Year. Announced by the Polish Parliament as a celebration of the centenary of the poet's birth, it became a year-round festival of conferences, performances, poetry evenings, and installations all over the world.

The organizers of the Toronto symposium decided to condense the celebration to one day, but to include in this day a variety of forms and approaches to Miłosz's oeuvre. Hence, those gathered at the symposium encountered the performative reading of Miłosz's poetry and biography by the students of the University College Drama Program at UofT. This multi-media, interactive, and post-dramatic performance – conceptualized by Antje Budde of UC Drama and Centre for Comparative Literature, Teresa Rybarczyk, the owner of Eurodeco Planning Consultants, and Tamara Trojanowska of UC Drama and Slavic Department, and directed by Antje Budde – engaged various forms of Miłosz's texts and reinterpreted his poetic, personal, and national identities. The evening spent with Piotr Sommer, his poetry and poetic imagination, provided an interesting counterpoint to the students' performance and Czesław Miłosz's legacy.

Understandably, this volume leaves these two events aside and presents only the results of academic deliberations. As a conference proceeding, celebratory in its origin, it immediately raises an issue about its intellectual coherence and overall framework. The main task of the conference was to rethink critically the versatility of Miłosz's writings, the complexity of his thinking, and their impact on our understanding of literature and the world today. Thus, the volume opens with Ryszard Nycz's text, *Czesław Miłosz: Twentieth-century Poet in the Public Realm* that both outlines the main problematics of the present reception

of Miłosz's oeuvre and discusses its place in the context of current sociology, anthropology, and philosophy of culture. Six articles, grouped in two sections, follow Nycz's text. The first three explore the dialectical tensions in the poetic practice of Miłosz. While the second triad contextualizes his exilic predicament.

Since Ryszard Nycz's essay sets the tone for the whole volume, it is useful to summarize its main ideas. Nycz focuses his reading of Miłosz's stance on the public engagement of literature in the world on the poet's preoccupation with two closely related issues: one of human experience in and of the modern world and the other of the temporality of such experience. He presents Miłosz as a writer whose stance towards these issues is paradoxically both anti-modernist and anti-traditionalist. Nycz defines the aim of Miłosz's poetic project as the creation of "the koine of the twentieth-century experience," a testimony to the epoch, in which the present is seen and experienced as post-past. He then maps out the main frameworks for such testimony with the help of three conceptual diagnoses of the contemporary society: Anthony Giddens' post-traditional society, Urlich Beck's post-utopian "risk society", and Jürgen Habermas' post-secular society. Nycz then points to those elements in Miłosz's writings that support these three diagnoses, which, not surprisingly all are of interest to the authors of the other essays collected in this volume.

For example, Miłosz's interest in the specificity of Polish culture, identified by him as the culture of shame, is discussed in Małgorzata Smorąg-Goldberg's article about the culturally fateful reciprocal readings of Miłosz and Gombrowicz. The narrative conception of identity reappears in Bożena Karwowska's essay about Miłosz's strategies of coping and the exilic challenges to it. Themes related to the role of religion take a pronounced place in Kris Van Heuckelom's text, whereas the ideas of the importance of human relationships receives a novel reading in Marek Zaleski's essay, *Miłosz: See Under Love.*

In it, Zaleski analyzes the unexpected resonances of love in Miłosz's thinking. The author revisits the poet's relationship with his master and teacher, Juliusz Tadeusz Kroński, and weights its impact on the poet's apocalyptic thinking about the world, which brings future into the present and thus enables the unity of opposites. With the help of Arendt, Plato, St. Augustine, Hegel, Derrida, and Agamben, Zaleski weaves a fascinating story of the concept of love in the philosophical and historical thinking of the two friends, but also in its final transformations in Miłosz's poetry. In this volume, the significance of Miłosz's friendship with Kroński reappears in the essay by Małgorzata Smorąg-

Goldberg, where it plays its role in Miłosz's dialectical relationship to historicity.

What links Marek Zaleski's text with the other two in the section *Miłosz, the Versatile Thinker* is its interest in reading different dialectics underlying Miłosz's thinking about the world. In *Czesław Miłosz and the So-called Lyrical 'I' in Modern Poetry,* Włodzimierz Krysiński traces dialectical transformations within modern poetry and contextualizes Miłosz's polyvocal, intellectual, ironic, and self-aware poetic discourse within the changes of poetic language and the function and form of the lyrical "I". He thus argues for the post-lyrical paradigm of Miłosz's poetry and for the poet's position close to, but also separate from, quasi-philosophical writing. Examining historical context Krysinski sees that Miłosz is not alone in conceptualizing this post-lyrical paradigm, however he also identifies it as a site of Miłosz's originality.

In contrast to Krysiński's broad contextualization of Miłosz's poetic practice, Kris Van Heuckelom's *Czesław Miłosz: Between Pastiche and Confession* is a very careful and inspiring close reading of one of the late, seemingly simple, poems by Miłosz, "Rays of Dazzling Light" ("Jasności promieniste"). The author extrapolates his findings from a meticulous analysis of the poem's rich cultural contexts and intertextual relations. This allows him to interpret the tensions between two artistic gestures and aesthetics as well as the philosophical registers of the whole volume in which Miłosz's poem was published: one of literary pastiche, the other of religious confession. It also points to the tensions between two drastically different worldviews: one close to nihilism, the other to soteriology. In a way, Van Heuckelom's analysis provides an excellent example of the connection discussed by Ryszard Nycz between Miłosz's preoccupation with temporality and the poet's "almost unconditional affirmation of reality," and also refers to what Marek Zaleski sees as the main impulse of Miłosz's, namely his agreement with the world.

While the previous section focuses on dialectics, the next one pays particular attention to the crisis that informs the formation of identity in the exilic context. Marie Bouvard focuses on Miłosz's first confrontation with the New World and with its obliviousness to what the poet considers a fundamental experience, namely historicity. Małgorzata Smorąg-Goldberg looks at Miłosz's exilic experiences historically, while Bożena Karwowska reads them typologically.

In Marie Bouvard's essay, Miłosz appears first and foremost as a survivor of the historical hecatomb in Europe whose confrontation with the New World right after the Second World War results in astonishment at the ahistorical

temporality of American culture and civilization. Miłosz sees it as almost utopian in its belief in progress, but also in its deficit of historical anxieties and traumas. Seemingly unaware of the fluidity and fragility of all power and order, America becomes a convenient counterpoint to the old continent where an ongoing civil war in Greece serves as an example of civilizational eschatology.

Following in the footsteps of the inspiring historical research on specific, particularly influential years (to mention, for example, Margaret MacMillan's *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed The World* or a monumental *New History of French Literature* edited by Denis Hollier), Małgorzata Smorąg-Goldberg focuses on 1951, or the *Consequences of the 'Miłosz Affair.'* She maps out the main intellectual forces at play in the Polish émigré community, including their main battlefields (Kultura), targets (Marxism, the West, Polish culture and patriotism), and players (Miłosz, Gombrowicz, Giedroyć, Kroński) and discusses how each of these shaped Polish culture in exile and how their project later impacted the future Poland.

Finally, in Reading *Miłosz in Exile,* Bożena Karwowska traces the most characteristic changes in our reflection on exile from the focus on individual experiences to social dimensions and importance of the exilic. She looks at Miłosz's oeuvre and life through the lens of Marc Robinson's description of the main phases of exile. She thus sees the Polish poet as both an individual writer coping with the challenges these phases present and as a member of a international collective of exilic writers, and more broadly as a member of a post/migrant community, whose need to cope is not unique, though the results of the coping strategies may vary vastly.

What the three last essays share relates back to Ryszard Nycz's thesis of the fundamental importance of temporality for contemporary experience, though these authors relate it most of all to the role of history in Miłosz's life and writing strategies. What also connects the latter two is the recognition of the fundamental importance of the dialectics of crisis for Miłosz's writings. In both, this dialectic can be identified as an ambivalent and tense relationship to belonging. In Smorąg-Goldberg's article, it pertains to the strongly conflicted impulses to adapt to historical changes, to the spirit of time, and to flee from poisonous historicity. In Karwowska's essay it is illustrated in the equally conflicted coexistence of the exilic and post/migrant identities in Miłosz's strategies of coping with the exilic predicament.

All the essays in this volume clearly announce that Miłosz needs to be read not in a declarative fashion, but in a questioning mode; not with the tools leading to unequivocal conclusions, but with those capable of probing the often excruciating ambivalence of his works; not within a stable and predictable sets of dichotomies, but within a fluid network of coexisting though often conflicting concepts; finally, not within intra-cultural but rather inter-cultural contexts. ▪

Miłosz, The Public Figure

Czesław Miłosz: The Twentieth-Century Poet in Public Space

Ryszard Nycz
Jagiellonian University

Abstract

This article considers Czesław Miłosz's poetry in broad cultural categories, which are (according to the author) better suited than intra-cultural categories when it comes to specifying the poet's statement on the changing status and functions of poetry in the XXth century. Hence, aesthetic views are formed by Miłosz's protest against avant-garde modernism from the one side and against traditionalism from the other and the views on social function of literature (poetry) are formed by his defence of the place, attributes and tasks of poetry in the public sphere. Whereas the specificity of contemporary experience of human temporality is formed through Miłosz's formula of experiencing contemporality as a post-past (considered in the context of echoing diagnoses of sociologists and philosophers of culture of the XXth century – Giddens, Beck, Habermas).

Da capo (al fine)

The poetry of Czesław Miłosz is forever changing places in the public sphere – and changing its meanings and even the qualities identified in it by readers coming from different circles and different generations. At first, toward the end of the interwar period, Miłosz's poetry was recognized as one of the most distinguished products of the younger generation. Just after the war, it was treated as a crucial attestation of the poetic consciousness of the era. Then its artistic and intellectual position was established in slowly expanding circles of specialists, fans, and in the literary world, earning the status of world phenomenon after Miłosz was awarded the Nobel Prize, as well as the status of national treasure and point of orientation for contemporary Polish literature. In recent years, it has begun to gradually take on more and more historical meanings, in both meanings of the word.

It looks as though it is precisely this phase – a vital turning point, and not without a certain dramatic element – that we are dealing with now. The more Miłosz's work strengthened its historical position in the snowballing critical editions of archival materials, uncollected works and correspondence, systematic readings of his work, specific interpretive conjectures and meticulous investigations of previously unheeded components, the more – especially in the central – most poetic portion, conceived as a kind of holistic formula for poetic

speech – it is removed from today, ceasing to inspire it or to be seen as relevant to the work of the latest, increasingly removed, generations of poets.

In one of his "post-Nobel" conversations from the early eighties, Miłosz mentioned that while he was being seen as the poetic answer to Sienkiewicz, he felt more like a kind of Leśmian dressed up as a "father of the nation".[1] But over the years the clear irony of that self-definition definitely faded. Miłosz's poetic diction (understood here as the way in which Miłosz brought together preferred elements like the linguistic, the thematic, the existential, and those relating to worldview) now seems – particularly in the eyes of the young generation[2] – as far removed as Leśmian's is from today's interests, sensibilities, and tastes.

Without going into the details (or justifications for a diagnosis that is, however, accurate) of this complicated situation, it is nevertheless fitting to note that it does not at all result from the fact that the way of speaking Miłosz adopts in his later poetry may be felt to be anachronistic, or in any case not actively engaging with current mainstream poetic inventiveness, that employing other styles lay out of his reach (his masterful use of the colloquial-conversational idiom in his early work appears rather to suggest a conscious choice). It results even less from this that what is going on in his later poetry is not important, original, as well as relevant to the poetic explorers and translators of today's Zeitgeist. In order to see this, however, we must return, even at the risk of great oversimplifications, to the elementary qualities of that poetry, and to the task it set itself, as well as to the figure of the writer. Miłosz himself wrote numerous times about what was most important to him and to his work. In *Unattainable Earth,* for example, we read:

> It isn't true that what we think about the world now, in this twentieth century of ours, can lead us to theories on an eternal human condition. Never before have people lived in conditions like ours, or in the shadow of questions like ours. While recognizing resemblances and respecting tradition, it is important to recall that we are in fact trying to define a new experience.[3]

1 Miłosz, Czesław (2006) *Rozmowy polskie 1979 – 1998.* Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków. p. 63.

2 A symptomatic – although it is difficult to say how representative – example might be the anthology Borowczyk, Jerzy, and Michał Larek (eds) (2011) *Powiedzieć inaczej. Polska poezja nowoczesna. Antologia,.* Wydawnictwo WBPiCAK, Poznań, which does not include Miłosz.

3 Miłosz, Czesław (2002-2009) *Wiersze,* tom I – V. Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków. Vol. IV, p.74.

Let us note, first, that Miłosz defines himself here as a writer whose work not only chronologically and mentally belongs to the twentieth century, of which he was aware: "We were going toward the end of the twentieth century, where I will be shut in like a fly in amber"[4], but also aims to be its articulation and consciousness. Secondly, let us note that as a writer he is engaging precisely with the most significant public issues, both global and local, collective and individual. And let us note, thirdly, that he locates the specificity of his era in "new experience," and the task of his oeuvre is in announcing and defining that experience. What follows is an attempt to explain the meanings of these three theses, resulting from that basic self-portrait (as well as from the current of literary and artistic investigation and humanist reflection with which it identifies itself), as well as a consideration of their most general consequences for a literary and cultural situating of Miłosz's work.

A Modern Anti-Modernist

In saying that Czesław Miłosz is a twentieth-century poet, I want to assert, first and foremost, that his aesthetic attitude and world view, as well as his poetic diction, cannot be reduced to any of the current historical-literary definitions, which assign the place and meaning of a given work on the literary map of the era, that is, treating it as a poetry that is contemporary, classical, avant-garde, metaphysical, religious, political, etc. As to the specifics of its assignment, the old elements of its critical campaign are useful, characterizing it as a combination of anti-modernism and anti-traditionalism. And both of course have many names and many faces, but I turn now to only the most important of these.

Miłosz's critique of (aesthetic) modernism is aimed above all at a conception of the literary arts as an autonomous verbal construction, isolated from – and precluded from impacting – existential-epistemological as well as historical-civilizational processes. The issue is, then, a conception of a "literary absolute," Romantic in origin, which from Mallarmé through modern proponents of "pure poetry," was a kind of self-contained game and altogether self-referential construction that then led to the post-modern linguistic efforts and experiments conducted in poetic laboratories cut off from the world. This is a poetry blocked off from the ordinary reader, a barrier of incomprehensibility or intentional difficulty. Miłosz talks about "a schism and a misunderstanding between

4 ibid. IV p. 9.

the poet and the great human family"[5] having been produced, while scholars speak of an "epistemic trauma",[6] as well as devoid of, or giving up, any relation to reality. This is "the idea of a poem as an autonomous, self-sufficient unit, no longer describing the world but existing *instead* of the world".[7]

Traditionalism, meanwhile, which becomes for Miłosz an important sequence of things not to do, has clearly conservative goals. (I pass over in silence here all the passé variations of epigones and various versions of anachronistic writing.) This is the position of those twentieth-century artists who, not well disposed toward "modern technological civilization," critical of their day and age and of what the future may bring, seek the remedy for their era's illness in surrendering to a "myth of return," in indicating the norms that were binding in the past, deviation from which has brought about the crisis of modernity, hence this need for return (here "the model of time is regressive, the future does not promise anything good".[8]

Miłosz, meanwhile, maintaining a firm stance against aesthetic modernism and many characteristics of modernity, positions himself just as determinedly against the introduction of what is valuable in it into the domain of prior eras. He is a poet of the city – "of human society in the great cities of the modern era"[9] – and the most aware and consistent in Polish literature. He is an active, though not uncritical, participant and observer of the world and of all the modern, scientific, technological and civilization-related transformations. He is, finally, the poetic exegete of a particular "new experience" that is the participation of man in the twentieth century, an experience that cannot be subsumed under traditional forms of experience or simply identified with its standard modern form (the deliquescence of the substantial), or even defined in any uncomplicated, positive way.

Poetry of the Public Sphere

Although modern literature from its beginnings played a foundational role in the shaping, functioning and constructing of the meaning of the public sphere, its contemporary relationship to that sphere is far from harmonious

5 Miłosz, Czesław (1984) *The Witness of Poetry (Charles Eliot Norton Lectures).* Harvard University Press, Cambridge. p.26.
6 Vargish, Thomas, and Delo E. Mook (1999) *Inside Modernism. Relativity Theory, Cubism, Narrative* Yale University Press, New Haven.
7 Miłosz, Czesław (1984) op. cit.p.19.
8 ibid. p. 34.
9 Miłosz, Czesław (2002-2009) op. cit. p.134.

and symbiotic, as it once was. Jürgen Habermas argues that it was precisely the literary public sphere that was fundamental to the emergence of the sphere of public citizenship in the eighteenth century (then completed by its political component). It was the "prototype of the political public sphere functioning in the domain of literature," relying on a "process of self-awareness, of recognition by private people of the primary experiences of their new privacy."[10] The public sphere, so conceived, is differentiated from the private realm, with its enclave of intimacy, as from the sphere governed by public authority, often simply identified with the realm of public opinion.

The institutions of the literary salon, the café, associations, and epistolary circles all created a community of a reading and discussing public that made pronouncements on questions that, generally speaking, exceeded personal interest (and the scope of intimacy), as well as the interest of the authorities (and the scope of ideological governance by the state), creating a kind of space of open debate concerning the common good. Literature had a mediating function as much in the intimate sphere as it did in political power, assuring, first, models of public articulation, and second, of individual exemplification, both advancing critical self-presentation and public debate. In the public sphere, organized around the discussion of literature, where "subjectivity issuing from the intimacy of the small family" not only "comes to an understanding with itself," but also takes up a critique of public power,[11] there begins to be a model of conscious citizenship of the subject as well as of critical social community.

According to Habermas, that integrating, critical social function of literature disappears in the period of the avant-garde, which is accompanied by a kind of twilight of traditional models of the public sphere.[12] What follows, then, is a gradual falling apart of the literary public sphere, manifesting itself in the disintegration and atomization of the reading and discussing public. This is divided up into closed circles of specialists participating in the processes of progressive professionalization as well as hermetization of the language of literature, art, and philosophy, oriented toward the deepening of the concerns specific to it, and a mass of consumers, for whom these circles are not only incomprehensible, but also irrelevant, for they do not treat the issues and experiences of the whole.

10 Habermas, Jürgen (1991) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society.* MIT Press, Cambridge.

11 ibid.

12 Habermas, Jürgen. ibid. Cf: Sennett, Richard (1977) *The Fall of Public Man.* Knopf, New York.

I have invoked as briefly as possible the role of modern literature in the constitution of the public sphere, because it would seem that only against this backdrop does Miłosz's position become clear. It, in fact, aims consciously and consistently in all of its manifestations of his work, including (and perhaps especially, because here is where it is most difficult) in his poetry, at sustaining and developing – right at the time of modernity, in the period of the avant-garde and post-avant-garde – a conception of practicing and understanding literature as a public matter, as the art of articulating public issues, and as a medium and avenue for the organization of intellectual life in the public sphere. Considered in the context of this "program," Miłosz's distaste for literature as an expression of intimate privacy, as a language laboratory experiment refusing to fulfill its mimetic obligations, as an instrument of rhetorical persuasiveness in the service of ideology or authority, takes on additional meanings. Similarly, it must be seen as resistance "to incomprehensible poetry," not conducive to comprehension and resonance in the ordinary, albeit educated, reader.

A consideration of this consciously shaped poetic world view allows for a cool and more comprehending distance to be taken by the young and still younger generations of Polish poets in the face of the old master. This is particularly true of those focused on the difficulties of articulating their private experience and on inquiries into the nature and representational possibilities, as well as impossibilities, of the linguistic medium. Miłosz's idea of poetry, meanwhile, grows out of a decided distaste for shutting oneself inside a solipsistic circle of experiences, whether personal, or of the language of art. (It is no accident that there is no personal diary among Miłosz's works.) In fact, he sets up, on the one hand, "such a transformation of personal experiences that they become universal, accessible to all," and on the other hand, meanwhile, a striving toward the simplification "of the desire of mimesis, that is, fidelity to the particular," and this in such a way that "in every thing seen and touched by us we can feel the presence of generations past."[13]

Seen from this perspective, the "more capacious form" of Miłosz's design is essentially a project of conceiving poetry as the *koine* of the twentieth-century experience. It is the development of a poetic discourse that connects literary genres, the lyric, the epic, the dramatic, the reflexive, as well as distinct sociolects and discursive registers. It is also poetry that becomes not a passive carrier,

13 Miłosz, Czesław (2002-2009) op. cit. pp.31, 61, 10.

but an active bearer of the "spirit of the times," lending shape and crucial meaning to the problems of the shared and individual experience of man. This, then, in brief, is the project of a "poetry [that] is a palimpsest that, when properly decoded, provides testimony to its epoch."[14]

New Experience: Present as Post-Past

The experience of twentieth-century man is not even so much an important problem as it is a powerful cluster of highly complex and rich problematics, which Martin Jay's book, among others, addresses; there is almost no contemporary scholar or philosopher at the international level who has not spoken about the issue or the role and meaning of reactivation of this category).[15] Miłosz's varied considerations, attempts at poetic conceptualizations, observations, and reflections on this topic are scattered throughout all of his work, but without a doubt the main medium of his interest is the experience of human temporality, its transformations, as well as the particular contemporary form that he tried to define and describe. "I have always been fascinated by time [...]. Because time is the only foundation of immortality, the foundation of the specific qualities of man in comparison with nature," Miłosz confided to Renata Gorczyńska in conversation.[16]

In his Nobel acceptance speech, Miłosz made precisely this motif one of his main theses, in speaking of the antidote to social amnesia, to the progressive loss of memory in the post-industrial and most highly developed societies of the West, seeing it in the cult of memory nursed by the community of Central-Eastern Europe with such a difficult experience of twentieth-century history. This is above all a memory of wounds – and, as the poet ads, "perhaps there is no other memory besides the memory of wounds" – which means that, let us remark, reality testifies to its existence above all in liminal experiences and traumatic scars and traces. Evoking the past, awareness of its presence in the present, the sustaining of an active memory, become then not only the condition of knowing and uncovering meaning, but also take on the character of a specifically ontological base that protects man from being shut inside the mirages of language and simulacra of the imagination: "memory is therefore this

14 Miłosz, Czesław (1984) op. cit.p.11.

15 Jay, Martin (2005) S*ongs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

16 Miłosz, Czesław (2002) *Podróżny świata. Rozmowy z Renatą Gorczyńską*. Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków.

strength of ours, of all of us from 'the other Europe,' it protects us from speech that contorts around itself, like a vine contorts around itself when it doesn't find support in a wall or a tree trunk".[17]

In *Witness of Poetry*, the six published Charles Eliot Norton lectures at Harvard, Miłosz formulates a general thesis that "humanity as an elemental force, the result of technology and mass education, means that man is opening up to science and art on [an] unprecedented scale".[18] This process, in Miłosz's mind, will lead to "a new dimension entered on by elemental humanity – and here I expect some surprise from my audience – the dimension of the past of our human race".[19] The global prognosis with which he closes his arguments is as follows: "Humanity will live off itself increasingly, will increasingly contemplate its entire past, seeking in it the key to its own mystery and entering into the spirit of generations past through empathy"; "with every day, more signs can be seen that now, at this moment, and on a scale never witnessed before, something new is being born: humanity as an elemental force conscious of transcending Nature, for it lives by memory of itself alone, that is, by its history alone".[20]

Miłosz's reasoning is of course not immune to oversimplifications, like the equating of memory and history, the overstated oppositions, like between nature and mankind (though his writings tend to correct this) or an overly "geometrical" rhetoric based on symmetrical inversions of the direction of the development being predicted, like the phrase "newly gained historical consciousness," which is supposed to also mean a retreat from the evolutionary world view – which will not necessarily prove to be correct, etc. Perhaps for this reason his prediction of the gradual progress of domination of contemporaneity by memory of the past met with only the polite "surprise of his listeners", though he clearly was expecting more of a reaction, and only casual interest among the readers of the published version of his lectures.

For my part, I consider Miłosz's argument to contain a very perceptive, accurate – and far-sighted – diagnosis of the transformations of the experience of human temporality in the contemporary period, or late-modern period, which is still just as relevant and important even today, bringing dispersed and apparently divergent issues together in consistent inquiry. In order to realize

17 Miłosz, Czesław (1992) *Beginning with My Street: Essays and Recollections.* Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, New York. p. 356.

18 Miłosz, Czesław (1984) op. cit.p.108

19 ibid. p.109.

20 ibid. p.110, 116.

the full extent to which this is the case, however, we must first invoke, as briefly as possible, the negative set of references for these considerations, that is the model of temporal relationships functioning in modernity, and change the language of the analysis, calling on expert witnesses to formulate this sort of global diagnosis of transformations in mentality on an individual and collective level: sociologists, anthropologists, and philosophers.

In fact, we can formulate it this way: modernity left us with an inheritance of understanding man as an "unfinished project", to paraphrase Habermas, basically focused on the future, attempting to manage it and "colonize" it, anticipating it and subordinating it to the now. The past, models of tradition, experience stored in memory, no longer organizes the now, nor does it allow for the anticipation of the future. History thus ceases to be *magistra vitae*. In order to become a fully-fledged object of study, of rational, secular knowledge, it must be established as the "past in itself," and be cut off from all connection with the now as well as with the future.

Today – and here I invoke three key sociological-philosophical assessments – we are witness to a fundamental reimagining of these relationships and of the human experience of temporality. We are living – argues Anthony Giddens – in a *post-traditional (or "detraditionalized") society,*[21] where the past has ceased to be tradition, has ceased to be culturally inherited paradigms organizing the present and shaping thinking about the future. We also live in a *post-utopian "risk society,"* as Urlich Beck shows,[22] a society disappointed by all rational visions of the future that subordinate the now and the past and lock up in the domain of closed issues and completed courses of occurrences, isolated from the present, to whose truth (knowledge of what really happened) the student gains access by way of his disinterested, professional, purely cognitive analytical procedures. We live, finally, in Habermas' formulation, in a *post-secular society*.[23] Society is post-secular because, although it is laical, it recognizes the legitimacy of the existence of religious communities in an age of progressive secularization, and also because it reveals a hidden or effaced – and precisely religious – dimension of the past, a past that lies in the most invisible layer of

21 Giddens, Anthony (1994) *Living in a Post-Traditional Society* in Beck, Ulrich, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash (eds) *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition, and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order.* Stanford University Press, Stanford.

22 Beck, Ulrich (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity.* SAGE Publications, London.

23 Habermas, Jürgen (2003) Faith and Knowledge in Habermas, Jürgen. *The Future of Human Nature.*: Polity Press, Cambridge.

the present, that is, in ritual, habitual, and unconsciously used conceptual dictionaries, postures, and practices.

These three ideas – among today's best-known and predominant models of contemporary social life – resolutely diagnose the spirit of the times as an era without its own (positive) definition. It might be called, in accordance with a nomenclature doggedly advancing itself, post-traditionalism, post-utopianism, post-secularism, even post-past, in reference to what it comes from, what it isn't, but what doggedly taints it, what it retroactively organizes, and in which it even discovers a kind of foundation, direction and guiding sense for the future of its activity. Although they are distinct conceptions, formulating pictures of the whole from different points of view, it would appear that they are in fact complementary, more than alternative to one another, related attempts at description, also supporting each other in terms of temporal experience.

Thus in the place of inherited tradition there appear today ritualized or staged ceremonies as well as compulsive reactivations of a consciously renounced past. A triumphant return of the repressed occurs. The long reach of the past attains us, the past turning out to be actively and really present in the present, given that it results in real effects, determining and often even stigmatizing our present and future actions. This is an open past, because it is unprocessed, and at the same time it makes demands and eludes understanding; it is a past that troubles the perception of reality and all rational actions and projects for the future are caught up in its net of doggedly, "independently," returning ruminations on erstwhile traumatic events.

In a risk society, in turn, the location of activity focused on the extrapolation or "colonization" of the future – an activity that becomes unforeseeable, that is exposed to the danger of encountering the unknown, the risk of the insistence of what takes on the guise of "organized irresponsibility" – there then arises an activity focused on the "past in itself," formerly isolated from contact with the now. The invasion of the discursive and imaginary politics of memory and history, which ceaselessly reconstruct and narrativize the past from the point of view of the now, has brought home not only the deep dependence of images of the past on the interests, prejudices, the ways of reading in any given time, but also the difficulty of finding foundations other than ethical world view-based foundations that would draw the line of the resistance as well as the protection of past reality against its free instrumentalization by the present.

Finally, the retreat from the laical myth of a lastingly "disenchanted", to use Weber's term, society, ruled exclusively by the power of reason, has led to a reevaluation of key categories of modernity as well as to a reactivation of their effaced, or renounced, religious genealogy. One consequence of this has been showing the religious basis for moral impulses, in the place of discipline shown to ethical codices, the traces of an eschatological thinking in the rituals of everyday life, and finally the fact of the practical grounding of a sense of the meaningfulness of human activity not in a transcendent or transcendental order, but, as proponents of the advent of a society of experience[24] in the buildup of the past deposited in the unconscious layers of today's practical activity.

I have attempted to summarize these three visions of contemporary life – as post-traditional, post-utopian, post-secular – not only because according to these categories the investigations of Miłosz we are considering here reveal their accuracy and weight with greater ease, but also because in his work they become very clearly sides or dimensions of that same, particular experience of modern man. These themes come and go in different configurations and guises through all the many forms of literary and intellectual activity undertaken by Miłosz. Without going into a detailed discussion of them, which would need to turn into a reinterpretation of his entire oeuvre, it is important to pause here on an exemplary indication of the three *Leitmotifs* of this work, taken from those three dimensions of seeing the present as post-past.

One of the key problematic issues, which ceaselessly works its way through to the surface in the most unexpected places in Miłosz's discourse, is without a doubt the question of the character or the design of the Polish culture, particularly its individual and shared forms that have been supplanted by memory, mentally defective, based on past offenses and psychotic fears, which with the strength of traumatic experience break through the barriers of rationalistic downplaying and affective stifling, demanding in vain a definition, an understanding, a working through. Thus in *The Separate Notebook*,[25] we get a picture of Polish culture as a culture of shame: not so much unfolding as drifting in the shadow of old fears of debasement in the eyes of the other, and in their own

24 Lash, Scot (1999). *Another Modernity, A Different Rationality.* Oxford: Blackwell. Cf: Lash, Scott (1999) *Reflexivity and its Doubles: Structure, Aesthetics, Community* in Beck U. et al. (1994) cited in 21. Lash employs the conception of Gerhard Schulze. See Schulze, Gerhard (1999) T*he Experience Society.* SAGE, London.

25 Miłosz, Czesław (1986) *The Separate Notebooks.* Ecco, New York.

eyes; born of a lack of faith in themselves and in the effectiveness of their own activity; leading to conformist mimicry, which projects responsibility onto others and frees them from their own responsibility; a paralyzing sense of their own worth and a will to bring things about:

> In the shadow of the Empire, in Old Slavonic long-johns,
> You'd better learn to like your shame,
> because it will stay with you.
> It won't go away even if you change your country
> and your name.
> The dolorous shame of failure. Shame of the muttony heart.
> Of fawning eagerness. Of clever pretending.
> Of dusty roads on the plain and trees lopped off for fuel.
> You sit in a shabby house, putting things off until spring.
> No flowers in the garden – they would be trampled anyway.
> You eat lazy pancakes, the soupy desert called
> "Nothing-served-cold."
> And, always humiliated, you hate foreigners.

Equally rich and varied are the themes of observing the past, their own, others' pasts, the collective past, as an open, or rather in the ceaseless process of being shut, being defined, being reinterpreted ex post, through the present's deeds and actions. What's done is done, as the saying wisely goes, but the meaning of what happened, the place it belongs or where it will end up, always depends on the current whole of the accomplished (or unaccomplished), ceaselessly changing in the process of life activity. That key thesis of a narrative conception of identity was discovered early by Miłosz (in the 1970s), and gradually related not only to the individual and to his own, but also to the collective, identity. And that allows for it to be treated also as worthy of testing therapy for ailments and illnesses, bearing in mind the above traumatized national, or collective, memory:

> I am not who I am. My essence escapes me. Here A does not equal A. The lasting achievement of existential philosophy has been that it has made us aware that we ought not to think about our own past as being permanently established, because we are not trees or rocks. In other words, at every moment my

> past is changing, depending on what meaning is being given to it by my decisions and actions now, in this moment.[26]

Finally, themes related to the presence, open and covert, of religion and religious tradition in the daily life of individuals and the collective so stand out in all of Miłosz's work, and actually dominate the final period of his work, that perhaps no specific example is required. He dedicated multiple works, particularly *The Land of Ulro,* to realizing both the right and the need for the presence of religion in contemporary secularized society. He spoke and wrote many times on the religious genealogy of key conceptions of modernity ("in European culture everything started from transpositions of the Bible"[27]), like the religious infrastructure of historical consciousness ("a purely historical dimension doesn't exist because it is at the same time a metaphysical dimension"[28]), or the poetic stance, testifying to reality (civilization, and therefore poetry, are "eschatological to the core"[29]). He was also aware of the "protective, life-giving value" of sustained, traditional, habitual-customary ties, forming the foundation of the continuation as well as of the development of the community. It is not out of the question that it is precisely to this that they owe the significance they attained in his work. There are some ways of life, some institutions, that became a target for the fury of evil forces, above all, the bonds between people that exist organically, as if by themselves, sustained by family, religion, neighborhood, common heritage. In other words, all that is disorderly, illogical humanity, so often branded as ridiculous, because of its parochial attachments and loyalties".[30]

In sum, that experience of the post-past, whose specific traits provide the mentality of the era with its hallmark of particularity and newness – this is just the experience of the three manners in which the past is present in the present: the present haunted by the ghosts, or specters, of the past; the present engaged with and even fascinated by the possibility, the necessity, the danger, the retroactive ordering of the past; the present that in its own past discovers its foundation, constituting as much a stable basis in the element of transformation as a base for sensible action. There are many indicators that a present thus

26 Miłosz, Czesław (2002-2009) op. cit. p.120.
27 Miłosz, Czesław (2002) op. cit. p.146.
28 Miłosz, Czesław (1984) op. cit.p.71.
29 ibid. p.37
30 Draugsvold, Ottar G. (2000) *Nobel Writers on Writing.* McFarland & Company, Inc. Jefferson, NC. p.145.

understood – as post-past – continues to constitute the current form, also our form, of contemporary experience.

Miłosz's recognition, let us note here, diverges decidedly from the predominant assessments of "the spirit of the times," even taking the opposite direction. This can be seen clearly when we realize that as the key form of the experience of modernity the feeling of "liquification" of what is substantial is normally recognized. This is a theme that traverses through the whole of the twentieth century, fully realizing this critical form of experience and evident already in the definition of modernity formulated by Georg Simmel, among others (on the fusion of everything in the "fluid element of the soul") at the beginning of the century, in the Marxist-spirited ("all that is solid melts into air") analysis of the experience of modernity by Marshall Berman in the latter half of the century, or in the analyses of "liquid modernity" by Zygmunt Bauman from the turn of the twenty-first century.

Seen in this light, Miłosz's analysis of the late-modern experience as post-past demonstrates not only its originality, its intriguing polysemy, but also its cognitively operative virtues. We can in fact understand the thesis on "inventing" substance in (from) fluidity in at least three ways: (1) as a pragmatic discovery that what man recognized as substance is a sedimented mixture of the historical; (2) as recognizing under the surface of fleeting forms a transcendental, divine base; (3) as acknowledging that written into the unconscious layers of individual and social experience (corporeal practices, involuntary impulses, routine behavior, perceptual schemata, mental prejudices…) the eschatological perspective is the only form of mediated presence of "something greater" that is available to man – a "something greater" whose existence we can in fact only attest to by faith, faith in reality, faith in the realness of "another dimension."

These are, we might say, variants for the atheist free-thinkers, for the doctrinally faithful, as well as for those seeking something that still falls outside of doctrine. Miłosz, especially in the late period, positioned himself clearly in the second category, but those belonging to the other two categories can find many places and understandings in his texts. What connects these forms in Miłosz's work is "an orientation that is close to him"; "such that *man lives in time and must in some way build eternal or lasting values out of time*"[31]

31 Miłosz, Czesław (2002) op.cit. p.144.

(emphasis added). This is what gives Miłosz's work its particular, recognizable character of an almost unconditional affirmation of reality, which precisely because of this, is "not available to us without the mediation of language",[32] like the past – for in fact, "what has passed is not accessible in any way other than in the double reworking performed by reason once and that it performs now"[33] – becomes available to literary representation, compliant to the art of poetic pronouncement.

Coda

Literature, poetry: a form of transmission of the post-past secured in the "letter" of the text on the lastingly open horizon of the present. Of transmission, in which what is unconscious or repressed in individual and cultural memory returns. Of transmission that interprets every contemporaneity according to its own responsibility and its own sensibility and information, as well as its own limitations and possibilities. Of transmission that finds, maintains, or even (if we believe Hölderlin) establishes the actual substance of historicity, giving support to human activity and to a sense of meaning. Miłosz's thinking on poetry as the art of expressing human experience led him to establishing the rules of his own poetic discourse as his particular poetic experience, which for him – and for us, still, as well – ultimately took the guise of a poetics of the experience of the post-past:

> What foundation? There is no foundation.
> Like a little spider I spin my web and travel upon it,
> I float carried by the wind above the glistening earth
> And with me go the forms of vanishing cities.[34] ▪

Translated from Polish by Jennifer Croft

32 Miłosz, Czesław (1984) op. cit.p.74.
33 Miłosz, Czesław (2002-2009) op. cit. vol.IV, p.79.
34 ibid. p.200.

Miłosz, The Versatile Thinker

Czesław Miłosz
Between Pastiche and Confession

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Abstract

This article takes as its point of departure Czesław Miłosz's persistent tendency to confuse the readers of his poetry with contradicting signals. In Miłosz's late literary output, this strategy gains particular resonance in the compositional characteristics of the poetry collection *To* (*This,* 2000). The second last book of poems Miłosz compiled himself, *To* opens with an eponymous text that expresses the aged poet's desire to "confess" and unveil the truth underneath his lies and delusions. At the same time, however, the collection closes with an ingeniously stylized poem – *Jasności promieniste* (*Rays of Dazzling Light*) – that openly seems to conflict with the ideas set out in the introductory text.The article then seeks to examine the particular stylistic and compositional properties of *Jasności promieniste,* not only in its immediate connection with the opening poem *To,* but also in its close engagement with some older texts of Polish culture that echo in the poem (in particular a number of traditional religious songs). Finally, what seems to arise from the poet's particular compositional interventions in the volume To may be called poetics of conscious self-delusion: the author willfully prefers to pretend – in a stylized poem reviving and transforming cultural and religious tradition – that the "unattainable curtain" (*Jasności promieniste*) will ultimately be lifted rather than to reconcile himself with the knowledge that "the wall will not yield to any imploration" (*To*).

To (*This*), or Czesław Miłosz's (Would-Be) Confession

The poetry of Czesław Miłosz has often been described in terms of unresolvable contradictions and dichotomies.[1] Significantly, the poet himself has contributed to the considerable success of such dualistic approaches by regularly emphasizing the split nature of his literary output. Its perhaps best known example is the oxymoronic concept of "ecstatic pessimism" Miłosz usually fell back on when trying to define his incessant lingering between the opposite poles of "anxiety" and "hope."[2] Like any other binary model, a dualistic approach to Miłosz's work faces, of course, the risk of simplifying the actual meaning of very distant

1 One of the first critics to note the split character of Miłosz's writings was the literary scholar Kazimierz Wyka. In two seminal articles on Miłosz's early poetry – *Płomień i marmur (Flame and Marble) and Ogrody lunatyczne i ogrody pasterskie (Lunatic Gardens and Pastoral Gardens),* devoted respectively to Miłosz's prewar book of poems *Trzy zimy (Three Winters)* and its postwar follow-up *Ocalenie (Rescue)* – Wyka paid particular attention to "the numerous antitheses on which his [Miłosz's] lyrics rely." (Wyka, Kazimierz (1985) *Płomień i marmur* in *Poznawanie Miłosza,* Jerzy Kwiatkowski (ed). Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków. p.11).

2 The first explicit reference to this schizophrenic state of mind can be found in the poem *Rok (The Year)* from 1965, in which the author refers to his "pieśni ekstatycznej rozpaczy" ("songs of ecstatic despair"). The very notion of "ecstatic pessimism" reappears several times on the pages of Miłosz's volume of essays *Ziemia Ulro (The Land of Ulro)* from 1977.

thematic and formal elements. In the meantime, however, Miłosz's poetry almost automatically imposes such an approach upon its readers because of – as Aleksander Fiut has justly remarked – "the two fundamental principles that govern Miłosz's thinking and imaginative language: antithetic composition and ambivalence."[3] Elaborating further on this characterization, the American Miłosz scholar Kim Jastremski has aptly called Miłosz "a poet greatly concerned with boundary areas – borders where two opposing ideas meet: home/exile, Self/Other, matter/spirit, reality/illusion, being/action, despair/faith, religion/politics, male/female, humanity/animality."[4]

A similar ambiguity pervades another field of tension that is central to Miłosz's poetry, namely the author's love-hate relationship with confessional writing. On the one hand, as Jan Błoński has noted:

> Miłosz belongs to those poets who either hide their own "I" or – which is more often the case – reveal it only in a partial and rebellious way. (…) The reader is astonished by the multiplicity and the unpredictability of masks, costumes, and styles he encounters while reading. It does not leave him, however, with the impression that the poet desires to hold something back from him. On the contrary, he likes to confide something to his readers, but each time this will be something different.[5]

On the other hand, as Joanna Zach has added, Miłosz's poetry (especially his later work) increasingly thematizes the poet's temptation to overcome some of the aforementioned inclinations and disclose himself to his readers in a more direct and sincere way.[6] As such, Miłosz's poetics of distance and irony remarkably intertwines with a desire for unmediated self-expression, or – in the poet's own words – "confession". Therefore, if we would attempt to delineate the continuum along which Miłosz's post-lyrical speaking subjects tend to express themselves, then the very notion of a confession could be opposed

3 Fiut, Aleksander (1998) *Moment wieczny. Poezja Czesława Miłosza*. Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków. p. 297.
4 Jastremski, Kim (2000) *Apokatastasis in the Work of Czesław Miłosz. Poetic Restoration of Wholeness*. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. p.26.
5 Błoński, Jan (1998) *Miłosz jak świat*. Znak, Kraków. p. 80.
6 Zach, Joanna (2002) *Miłosz i poetyka wyznania*. Universitas, Kraków. p. 7.

to the aesthetics of pastiche: while the former is most closely tied to the idea of self-expression, the latter entails a far-reaching elimination of the author's "I" and allows its writer to pass for someone else (or at least it creates the impression that the text involved has been written by someone else than the actual author).[7] As such, both notions – confession and pastiche – may be said to serve as two remote extremes between which Miłosz's poetry navigates.

The poet's persistent tendency to confuse his readers with contradicting signals gains particular resonance in the 2000 poetry collection *To* (*This*). Significantly, the volume opens with an eponymous poem that could be expected to set the tone for the entire book. Written in a confessional mode, the poem appears to lend its voice directly to the author, the poet Czesław Miłosz. In his capacity of author, the speaking subject unmasks himself as a liar and claims that his writing has been nothing but a "protective strategy," a way of erasing traces and preserving a fundamental taboo:

> Pisanie było dla mnie ochronną strategią
> Zacierania śladów. Bo nie może podobać się ludziom
> Ten, kto sięga po zabronione.[8]
>
> Writing has been for me a protective strategy
> Of erasing traces. No one likes
> A man who reaches for the forbidden.[9]

As the poet indicates, the confession he makes bears particular relevance for the "ecstatic" part of his literary output:

> Przywołuję na pomoc rzeki, w których pływałem, jeziora
> Z kładką między sitowiem, dolinę,
> W której echu pieśni wtórzy wieczorne światło,

7 For an interesting discussion of the notion of "pastiche" and its contemporary manifestations, see Nycz, Ryszard (2000) *Tekstowy świat. Poststrukturalizm a wiedza o literaturze,* Universitas, Kraków.

8 Quotations from Miłosz's poetry are taken from Miłosz, Czesław (2011) *Wiersze wszystkie.* Znak, Kraków.

9 Unless otherwise indicated, the English translations of Miłosz's poems are taken from Miłosz, Czesław(2003) *New and Collected Poems (1931-2001)* Harper Collins, New York. My own translations are marked (OT).

I wyznaję, że moje ekstatyczne pochwały istnienia
Mogły być tylko ćwiczeniami wysokiego stylu,
A pod spodem było TO, czego nie podejmuję się nazwać.

I asked help of rivers in which I used to swim, lakes
With a footbridge over the rushes, a valley
Where an echo of singing had twilight for its companion.
And I confess my ecstatic praise of being
Might just have been exercises in the high style.
Underneath was this, which I do not attempt to name.

Characteristically, the poet's desire to "confess" and unveil the truth underneath his lies and delusions runs like a motif through the entire volume and returns in poems such as *W czarnej rozpaczy (In Black Despair), To jasne (It Is Clear), Własne tajemnice (My Secrets), Przemilczane strefy (Zone of Silence), Ze szkodą (With Damage)* and *Daemones.* The striking recurrence of this motif should not convey the impression, however, that Miłosz is straightforward in his renouncement of his allegedly "untruthful" poetry. First of all, it should be noted that the incipit of the poet's confession in the eponymous poem *To* is set in the subjunctive mood. As such, the text expresses a desire to confess rather than a confession itself:

Żebym wreszcie mógł powiedzieć, co siedzi we mnie.
Wykrzyknąć: ludzie, okłamywałem was
Mówiąc, że tego we mnie nie ma,

If I could at last tell you what is in me,
if I could shout: people! I have lied by pretending it was
not there,

Quite paradoxically, the poet then proceeds to reveal the secret information he would have confided to his readers provided that he would have been able to.[10]

10 This brings into memory the ingenious strategy Miłosz employed in the well-known poem *Nie więcej (No More)* from 1957. While claiming to negate the very possibility of catching the phenomenal world in language, the poem actually entices its readers with a highly sensual description of reality (in this case a well-known painting by Vittore Carpaccio).

Even in this would-be-confession, however, the speaking subject deliberately remains ambiguous, not the least because the poet opts not to name explicitly what has remained hidden deep inside of him (using the undefined pronoun "TO" and a range of comparisons instead). In a similar vein, the very confession that pops up after the first-person singular performative verb "wyznaję" ("I confess") remains rather ambiguous, as the use of the modal construction "mogły być" ("might be") instead of "były" ("were") leaves open various interpretative possibilities.

The most challenging element of the eponymous poem *To*, however, is its close relationship with the poem that closes the same volume, namely *Jasności promieniste* (translated into English as *Rays of Dazzling Light*). In more than one way, both poems may be considered to be antithetical to each other. Whereas the opening text *To* ends with a powerful expression of the poet's feeling of desperation ("This. Which signifies knocking against a stone wall and knowing that the wall will not yield to any imploration."), the closing poem *Jasności promieniste* represents a completely different kind of knowledge – although the text resumes some of the threads that had been brought up in *To*. Therefore, in what follows, I will present a more detailed analysis of *Jasności promieniste*, not only in its immediate connection with *To*, but also in its close relationship with some older texts of Polish culture that echo in the poem.[11]

Jasności promieniste (*Rays of Dazzling Light*), or Miłosz's Implorations in a Higher Style

The poem *Jasności promieniste* undoubtedly takes up a particular position in the later poetry of Czesław Miłosz. Such a judgment ensues not only from the importance the author himself attached to the poem,[12] but also from the considerable interest it evoked among Polish literary critics. Highly characteristic in this respect is the following statement of Aleksander Fiut regarding the literary accomplishments of the aged Miłosz:

11 As such, the presented analysis elaborates further on some ideas I developed in an earlier article. See Van Heuckelom, Kris (2003) *Czesława Miłosza 'niebiańskie rosy czyste. Glosa do wiersza „Jasności promieniste"* in Soldatjenkova, Tatjana and Waegemans, Emmanuel (eds) *For East is East Liber Amicorum.* Peeters, Leuven-Paris-Dudley, pp. 195-209.

12 The poem was published for the first time in the beginning of 1998 on the pages of *Zeszyty literackie* (issue 61). In the very same year, Miłosz included the poem in his Antologia osobista (My Personal Anthology) (Miłosz, Czesław(1998) *Antologia osobista.* Znak, Kraków. p. 91).

> Sometimes the unusual condensation of meanings takes up the shape of a simplicity that deludes with its unpretentiousness. A simplicity of rhythm, rhyme and instrumentation. A simplicity of the most difficult kind since it not only masks the efforts that have been made to attain it, but hides everything that has been rejected for being superfluous. A good example of such a case is the poem *Rays of Dazzling Light,* one of the most beautiful poems Miłosz has ever written, his "Lausanne lyric".[13]

A similar comparison with the lyrical masterpieces from Adam Mickiewicz's Swiss period has been suggested by Marian Stala who expressed particular appreciation for the poem's "Mickiewiczian harmonies".[14] Such words of praise are indicative not only of the high artistic value of the poem, but also of its particular stylistic properties. Instead of being written – such as the opening poem *To* – in post-avant-garde free verse (or a "more spacious form" as Miłosz himself would call it), *Jasności promieniste* reveals an obvious attachment to traditional poetic techniques such as meter and rhyme.

The suggested similarities with Mickiewicz's "Lausanne lyrics" do not exhaust, however, the stylistic characteristics of the poem. Some other commentators have referred to the quite evident link between Miłosz's poem and the traditional Polish Christmas carol *Gdy się Chrystus rodzi (When Christ is born)*.[15] It seems, however, the poem does more than just quote and adopt a well-known phrase from a Polish Christmas tradition. In fact, the opening stanza indicates that Miłosz has ingeniously adopted a wide range of elements that can be traced back to the traditional repertory of Polish religious songs, not only on a lexico-semantic level, but also in terms of syntax and of style in general:

13 Fiut, Aleksander (1998) op. cit. p. 328.

14 Stala, Marian (2001) *Trzy nieskończoności,* Wydawnictwo Literackie. Kraków. p. 248.

15 See for instance Tischner, Łukasz (2011) *Życie spowite snem in Miłosz w krainie odczarowanej.,* słowo/obraz terytoria, Gdańsk. p. 75. In a similar vein, the American translators of the poem have added the following note to their translation of *Jasności promieniste:* "This poem resembles and quotes a well-known baroque carol." (Miłosz, Czesław (2003) op. cit. p. 769). As we will see, this statement is not entirely unproblematic, given the fact that Miłosz's poem indeed quotes the carol *Gdy się Chrystus rodzi,* but far from resembles it in terms of tone and composition. Moreover, it should be noted that the translators – in an obvious attempt to maintain some of the stylistic characteristics of the Polish original, especially the metrical rhyme scheme – were forced to change some of its lexico-semantic nuances. Whereas the entire translation seems to make a rather stiff impression, its most awkward part is probably the apostrophe "Light off metal shaken" in the opening line. Therefore, when referring to some of the phrases in the poem, I will fall back on a more literal translation.

Jasności promieniste,
Niebiańskie rosy czyste,
Pomagajcie każdemu
Ziemi doznającemu.

Light off metal shaken,
Lucid dew of heaven,
Bless each and every one
To whom the earth is given.

First of all, the use of the nowadays rarely employed iambic septenary refers us back to the prominent position of this particular metric pattern in the earliest stages of Polish literary output, especially in medieval religious songs. As Teresa Michałowska has indicated, the seven-syllable verse format was highly popular throughout the Middle Ages, for instance in church songs devoted to the Holy Mother and the Feast of Christmas.[16] As the following example indicates, the septenary format was often combined with rhyming couplets:

Radości wam powiedam,
Iżeć nową pieśń składam
O Krolewnie Niebieskiej,
u uciesze krześcijańskiej.[17]

Joy is what I am bringing to you,
Because I am composing a new song
About the Heavenly Queen,
To the delight of all Christians.

Another element that links *Jasności promieniste* to the long-standing tradition of the Polish religious song is its invocation in the form of a supplication. Just like *Bogurodzica* – undoubtedly the most emblematic Polish religious song – Miłosz's poem begins with an extended apostrophe, followed by an appeal for support in favor of all mortals ("everyone who experiences the earth").

16 Michalowska, Teresa (2002) *Średniowiecze.* Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa. p. 554.

17 Michałowska, Teresa (2002) *op. cit.*, p. 344.

However, whereas most religious songs of supplication call upon specific "agents" (such as Christ, the Holy Mother, the Saints …) to intervene, Miłosz's poem describes its addressee in a rather vague way. As I will show, a closer look into the traditional repertory of Polish religious songs helps to unravel the particular meaning and function of the double apostrophe used by Miłosz.

First of all, it is difficult not to notice the inextricable connection between the two elements that constitute the invocation in the beginning of the poem. In both cases, we have to do with a syntactic combination of noun and adjective in the vocative plural form. Moreover, on a phonetic level, both phrases reveal a close bond, not only because of the rhyming couplet and the exactly repeated metric pattern, but also because of the striking repetition of vowels. As a result, both parts seem to be partly synonymical, or at least interchangeable, within the confines of the invocation. The second part may be seen as an apposition to the first phrase, or the other way around (just like the extended invocation in *Bogurodzica* is composed of various appositions referring to the same *designatum*).

The close phonetic and syntactic bond between both lexical units gains additional relevance and significance on a semantic level. Particular attention should be paid to the image of "heavenly dew" appearing in the second line. As Hans Biedermann has indicated, the motif functions in many cultures as "the moisture traditionally believed to fall from the heavens to rejuvenate and revitalize."[18] As such, the symbolics of "heavenly dew" has come to play a significant role not only in the Kabbalah and in the Hermetic traditions,[19] but also in circles of alchemists (for whom "ros caelestis" counts as one of the configurations of the "aqua divina").[20] As it appears, however, instead of being embedded in these esoteric traditions, the phrase "niebiańskie rosy czyste" in Miłosz's poem should be linked first and foremost to the symbolic meaning of "dew" in the Old Testament, where it usually designates divine blessing and protection. This is for instance the case in *Genesis* 27, 28:

18 Biedermann, Hans (1994) *Dictionary of Symbolism. Cultural Icons and the Meanings Behind Them.* Meridan Book, New York. p. 95.

19 Chevalier, Jean and Gheerbrant, Alain (1990) *Dictionnaire des symboles: mythes, rêves, coutumes, gestes, formes, figures, couleurs, nombres.* Laffont, Paris. p. 825.

20 See Biedermann, Hans (1994) op. cit. p. 95 and Timmer, Maarten.(2001) Van Anima tot Zeus: encyclopedie van begrippen uit de mythologie, religie, alchemie, cultuurgeschiedenis en analytische psychologie. Lemniscaat, Rotterdam. p. 55.

> God give thee the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, abundance of corn and wine.[21]

A similar idea appears in *Deuteronomy* 33, 28:

> Israel shall dwell in safety, and alone. The eye of Jacob in a land of corn and wine, and the heavens shall be misty with dew.

As it appears, the apostrophe under analysis reveals particularly close semantic affinity to the *Book of Isaiah,* in which the symbolics of heavenly dew gives expression to the soteriological tenets of the Old Testament. One of the prophet's visions (*Isaiah* 26, 19) is formulated in the following way:

> Thy dead men shall live, my slain shall rise again: awake, and give praise, ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is the dew of the light: and the land of the giants thou shalt pull down into ruin.

The divine "dew of light" functions here as a revitalizing power expected to bring about the resurrection of the dead. In view of the close link between "dew" and "light" in this fragment from the *Book of Isaiah*, the phrases "jasności promieniste" and "niebiańskie rosy czyste" from Miłosz's poem could be very well merged into one syntactico-semantical unit ("jasne promieniste niebiańskie rosy czyste") expressing the physical embodiment of God's saving power – in the form of "radiant dew" sent down from heaven.

In spite of these remarkable similarities, however, it appears that the poet drew his inspiration most directly from another fragment of the *Book of Isaiah*, namely verse 8 from chapter 45:

> Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just: let the earth be opened, and bud forth a saviour: and let justice spring up together: I the Lord have created him.

21 Unless otherwise indicated, Bible quotations are taken from the 1899 American edition of the Douay-Rheims translation (The Holy Bible. Translated from the Latin Vulgate. Diligently Compared with the Hebrew, Greek, and Other Editions in Diverse Languages (1899). John Murphy Company, Baltimore and New York.

This fragment has come to play a particular role in Catholic liturgy because of its incorporation in a song that is usually referred to in English as the Advent Prose. Its original Latin text – taken from St. Jerome's 5th-century translation of the Holy Scripture – reads as follows:

> Rorate coeli desuper et nubes pluant justum.
> Aperiatur terra, et germinet Salvatorem.

As is indicated by an early-20th-century encyclopedia of Catholicism, "the text is used frequently both at Mass and in the Divine Office during Advent, as it gives exquisite poetical expression to the longings of Patriarchs and Prophets, and symbolically of the Church, for the coming of the Messiah. Throughout Advent it occurs daily as the versicle and response at Vespers. For this purpose the verse is divided into the versicle, "Rorate coeli desuper et nubes pluant justum" (Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just), and the response: "Aperiatur terra et germinet salvatorem" (Let the earth be opened and send forth a Saviour).[22] In accord with the text's prominent position in Roman Catholic liturgy, both the Latin and the Polish version of the song have gained considerable popularity in Poland and have come to function as the opening song of the Advent Mass (the so-called "Roraty").

The Polish adaptation of the song (published for the first time by Teofil Klonowski in 1867[23]) consists of five sections, each of which starts with the following double versicle:

> Niebiosa, rosę spuście nam z góry,
> Sprawiedliwego wylejcie, chmury.[24]

Whereas the sections 1 to 4 combine these lines from the *Book of Isaiah* with other quotations from the Bible, the fifth and final section of the song contains the quoted fragment from *Isaiah* 45, 8 in its entirety:

22 Henry, H.T.(1913-1914) *Rorate Coeli* in Herbermann, C.G (ed.) *The Catholic Encyclopedia. An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline and History of the Catholic Church,* The Encyclopedia Press, New York. v. XIII, p. 183.

23 Klonowski, Teofil(1867) *Szczeble do nieba czyli zbiór pieśni z melodyami w kościele rzymsko katolickim od najdawniejszych czasów używanych. Tom I.* L. Merzbach, Poznań.

24 The lyrics are quoted from: Śpiewnik liturgiczny (1991) (eds) Bartkowski, Bołesław et al. Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, Lublin. p. 120.

> Niebiosa, rosę spuście nam z góry,
> Sprawiedliwego wylejcie, chmury
> Roztwórz się, ziemio i z łona twojego
> Wydaj nam, wydaj już Zbawcę naszego!

It is difficult not to notice the striking convergences between the first stanza of Miłosz's poem and the incipit of the Advent song. Both of them are set in the form of an invocation, combining a noun in the plural form with an imperative. As such, the phrases "niebiosa", "chmury", "spuście" and "wylejcie" from the Advent song neatly correspond with "jasności promieniste", "niebiańskie rosy czyste" and "pomagajcie" in Miłosz's poem. An additional point of convergence between *Jasności promieniste* and the quoted fragment from the *Book of Isaiah* is the vertical spatial dimension dominating the structure of the invocation: in both cases, the reference to heavenly space ("heavens", "heavenly dew") is followed by a reference to earthly space ("let the earth be opened", "help everyone who experiences the earth").[25]

Significantly, however, Miłosz's poem fundamentally transforms the original sense of the Old Testament text. Instead of calling upon the heavens to drop down the saving dew of light (i.e., the Messiah), the first stanza turns the dew itself into the addressee of the supplication. This shift of focus also rises to the surface in the phrase that opens the invocation. Whereas the second apostrophe has been inspired by the aforementioned Advent song, the first phrase is taken from the well-known Polish carol *Gdy się Chrystus rodzi:*

> Gdy się Chrystus rodzi, i na świat przychodzi,
> Ciemna noc w jasności promienistej brodzi;
> Aniołowie się radują, Pod niebiosy wyśpiewują!
> Gloria, gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo![26]
> When Christ is born and enters the world,
> Dark night turns into radiant brilliance.
> Angels rejoice, Crying out under the heavens,
> Gloria, gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo!

25 Characteristically, a similar binary structure (heaven – earth) occurs in the other quoted fragment from the *Book of Isaiah.*

26 Klonowski, Teofil(1867) op. cit. p.146-147. The lyrics of the song were published for the first time in Mioduszewski, Michał Marcin (1838) (ed.) *Śpiewnik kościelny czyli pieśni nabożne z melodyjami w kościele katolickim używane dla wygody kościołów parafialnych przez X.M. Mioduszewskiego Zgrom. XX. Miss[jonarzy] zebrane.*Drukarnia Stanisława Cieszkowskiego, Kraków.

As the Christmas carol indicates, the "radiant brilliance" that enlightens the dark earthly night functions as one of the attributes of the epiphany in its traditional religious meaning (Theophany). Significantly, whereas the *Isaiah* text expresses a request to the heavenly powers to let down the Saviour, Miłosz's text seems to perceive the coming of the heavenly dew (under the form of "radiant brilliances") as an established fact. In other words, the Old Testament (Jewish) perspective has been enriched with a New Testament (Christian) perspective. The "brilliance" that emanates from the newborn child in the Christmas carol symbolizes the realization of the soteriological expectations expressed in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament: now that Christ is born, the "dew of light" has been dropped down on earth. Remarkably, through their close affinity with the aforementioned religious songs, the first two phrases from *Jasności promieniste* contain in a nutshell the entire message of the Holy Scripture, combining the Old Testament longing for the coming of the Messiah with the incarnation of the Son of God in the New Testament.

In the final stanza, Miłosz's poem elaborates further on this Christian perspective by foreshadowing one of the implications of the coming of the Messiah:

> To wiemy, że bieg się skończy
> I rozłączone się złączy,
> Tak jak być miało,
> Dusza i biedne ciało.
>
> Knowing the hunt would end,
> That then what had been rent
> Would be at last made whole:
> Poor body and the soul.

Not only does the birth of Jesus guarantee the long-awaited resurrection of the dead, the very fact that the Son of God has taken a human shape bears particular significance for the modalities of this resurrection. As Janet Soskice has remarked, "[t]he belief that God had assumed a human nature meant that the physicality of the body, including the senses, could not be despised. (...) Trinitarian orthodoxy was hammered out in the early centuries in the face of gnostic preferences for a fully 'spiritual' religion that did despise the concept of

embodiment. The gnostics known to Plotinus did 'hate the nature of the body' and 'censure the soul for its association with the body.'" This position, though tempting during the early days of monastic ascetism, was untenable within Christian orthodoxy precisely because of the doctrine of the Incarnation (if God took a human body, the body cannot be all bad) and Christian belief in the resurrection of the body (*not* the immortality of the soul, with which such resurrection is frequently confused)."[27]

With its subtle references to concepts such as the incarnation and the resurrection in the flesh, Miłosz's poem may be considered as an ingenious and dense evocation of Christian soteriology, while in the meantime covering the most important part of the Catholic liturgical year (from the Advent over Christmas to Easter).

However, the unraveling of these references does not fully explain the meaning and the function of the apostrophes in the beginning of the poem. Significantly, instead of adapting the form of a Christmas carol expressing joy at the birth of the Saviour, Miłosz's poem retains the supplication structure taken from the Advent song. How are we then to understand the help that is requested on the part of these "radiant brilliances" and "pure heavenly dew"? The answers to this question may vary. In his review of the volume *To*, the Cracow-based critic Marian Stala claims that the poem "sounds as if it were designed for the choir that welcomes – at the end of time – those who have been saved."[28] Another reviewer has called the beginning of the poem "a touching invocation of the heavenly powers."[29] Evidently, the first stanza may very well be understood as a poetic invocation directed by the speaking subject – on behalf of a certain community – to a choir of angels or other "radiant" powers that reside in heaven. Their "interventionist" help for "everyone who experiences the earth" would then be based on God's saving will, which would be in line with the soteriological ideas expressed by the earlier quoted fragments from the Book of Isaiah.

However, one could look at these matters from another perspective as well. As the aforementioned religious songs attest, the main function of the "radiant

27 Soskice, Janet Martin (1996) *Sight and Vision in Medieval Christian Thought* in Brennan, Teresa and Jay, Martin (eds) *Vision in Context: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Sight.* Routledge, London. pp. 32-33.

28 Stala, Marian (2001) op. cit. p. 248.

29 Dąbrowski, Jan Józef (2001) *Jasności promie-niste,* Przegląd polski, June 29.

brilliances" and the "heavenly dew" is their intermediating role between above and below, between heaven and earth. The "radiant brilliance" that appears in the Polish Christmas carol accentuates the divine presence in a dark world, its manifestation in a physical, bodily way. Characteristically, as the final part of the song indicates, the essence of the Epiphany is "to see God on this earth" ("Boga widzieć na tej ziemi"). Therefore, another way of reading the apostrophes in *Jasności promieniste* would be to interpret them as references to palpable phenomena in our day-to-day existence – concrete instances and elements of being that may reveal a divine presence in the world of the five senses. The help they are expected to offer should not be situated in the domain of Christian soteriology, but rather in the sphere of psychology and emotions: such instances and elements endowed with "epiphanic" potential may help "everyone who experiences the earth" in bearing all the hardship and sorrow that permeates our earthly existence (an idea which is suggestively supported by the phrase "biedne ciało" in the final stanza of the poem).[30]

A couple of lexical and syntactical elements appearing in the first stanza may be used in support of such a reading. First of all, just like its English equivalent "heavenly", the Polish adjective "niebiański" not only relates to "all things celestial", but also carries the meaning of "enchanting, delightful". What is more, in contrast to the singular forms that appear in the religious songs under discussion ("rosa", "jasność promienista"), Miłosz puts the apostrophes in the plural form ("Jasności promieniste, / Niebiańskie rosy czyste,"). Also, the perfective imperative verbs from the Advent song ("spuście", "wylejcie") have been replaced by an imperfective imperative form – "pomagajcie" – which underscores the iterative character of the verb in question. So, instead of referring to the once-only advent and incarnation of Christ, the plural forms and the use of the imperfective verb suggest that the requested epiphany is perceived as a cyclical, recurring event.[31]

30 The prominent function of epiphanic experiences in Miłosz's poetry has been discussed, among others, by Błoński, Jan (1998) *op. cit.* pp. 25-45, Fiut (1998) *op. cit.* pp. 35-47, and Nycz, Ryszard (2001) *Literatura jako trop rzeczywistości.* Universitas, Kraków. pp. 153-185.

31 As a much earlier poem by Miłosz – "O aniołach" ("On Angels") – indicates, such moments laden with epiphanic potential may be closely identified with the appearance of angels. Miłosz writes about these "messengers" in the following characteristic way: "Krótki wasz postój tutaj, / Chyba o czasie jutrzennym, jeżeli niebo jest czyste, / W melodii powtarzanej przez ptaka, / Albo w zapachu jabłek pod wieczór / Kiedy światło zaczaruje sady." ("Short is your stay here: / now and then at a matinal hour, if the sky is clear, / in a melody repeated by a bird, / or in the smell of apples at the close of day / when the light makes the orchards magic.")

The very idea that such delightful experiences may indeed be helpful in enduring life on earth runs like a motif through the entirety of Miłosz's poetry:

> Jest chyba tylko jedna moc i to jest moc zachwytu.
> *(W malignie 1939)*
>
> Perhaps there is only one power and that is the power of delight. (OT)
> *(In Delirium 1939)*
>
> Może tylko podziw uratuje mnie.
> *(Gdzie wschodzi słońce i kędy zapada)*
>
> Perhaps only my reverence will save me.
> (From the Rising of the Sun)

Characteristically, the list of elements that are capable of provoking such a feeling of delight includes, among other things, "dew":

> Tak pięknej wiosny jak ta już od dawna
> nie było; trawa, tuż przed sianokosem
> bujna i rosy pełna.
> *(Powolna rzeka)*
>
> There has not been for a long time a spring
> as beautiful as this one; the grass, just before mowing,
> is thick and wet with dew.
> (Slow River)
> (...) o którymś roku, kiedy sianokosy
> pachną, stajemy obok, czując ciepło dłoni
> milcząc oglądamy niebios jasne rosy
> *(Jak władcy)*
>
> (...) in a certain year, when the haymaking
> smells, we stop nearby, feeling the warmth of our hands,

we silently watch the heavens' bright dew (OT)
(Like Lords)

In the postwar poem T*rzy chóry z nie napisanego dramatu "Hiroshima" (Three Choirs from the Unwritten Drama "Hiroshima"),* visual and auditive impressions merge into a praise of existence:

Dzień. Dzień. Czerwonobrzuchy drozd
Wyprostowany na gałęzi klonu
Zanosi się od śpiewu. Przezroczysty śpiew,
Jasny jest jego śpiew. To krople rosy
Toczące się, goniące. O światło, o dzień,
O słońce, dzień. Dzień wiosny.

Day. Day. A red-bellied thrush
Erected on the branches of a maple
Keeps singing. Clear vocals,
Bright are its vocals. It is a drop of dew
Rolling, chasing. O light, o day,
O sun, o day. Day of spring. (OT)

In another postwar poem, *Mistrz (The Master)*, the lyrical subject cherishes the memory of "ranki dzieciństwa, kiedy kropla rosy i krzyk z góry były prawdą świata" ("the mornings of childhood when a drop of dew and a shout on the mountains were the truth of the world.") Similar recollections of child-hood ecstasy return in one of Miłosz's last poems – Oczy (Eyes) from Druga przestrzeń (The Second Space):

Chwytliwe moje oczy, dużoście widziały
Krajów i miast, wysp i oceanów.
Razem witaliśmy ogromne wschody słońca,
Kiedy szeroki oddech przyzywał do biegu
Po ścieżkach, na których podsychała rosa.
My wondrously quick eyes, you saw many things,
Lands and cities, islands and oceans.
Together we greeted immense sunrises

When the fresh air set us running on trails
Where the dew had just begun to dry.[32]

It should not come as a surprise, then, that a similar tone of delight and amazement pervades descriptions of the visual world in Miłosz's poetry:

Jak ciepłe światło! Z różowej zatoki
Choiny masztów, odpoczynek lin
We mgłach poranka.
(Szczęście)

How warm the light! From the glowing bay
The masts like spruce, repose of the ropes
In the morning mist.
(Happiness)

O, jaka zorza w oknach.
(Podziw)

O what daybreak in the windows!
(Amazement)

Jakie piękno. Jakie światło. Echo.
(Gdzie wschodzi słońce i kędy zapada)
What beauty. What light. An echo.
(From the Rising of the Sun)

O, jakże trwałe. O, jak potrzebujemy trwałości.
Światłem nasyca się niebo przed wschodem słońca.
Lekko różowieją gmachy, mosty i Sekwana.
(O świcie)

32 This translation is taken from Miłosz, Czesław (2004) *Second Space. New Poems.* HarperCollins, New York. Translated by Robert Hass and Czesław Miłosz.

How enduring, how we need durability.
The sky before sunrise is soaked with light.
Rosy color tints buildings, bridges, and the Seine.
(At Dawn)

Characteristically, even in the previously discussed poem that opens the volume To, Miłosz explicitly refers to the "help" that such elements of sensual beauty may offer to him. Before the poet proceeds with his ambiguous confession he exclaims:

I asked help of rivers in which I used to swim, lakes
With a footbridge over the rushes, a valley
Where an echo of singing had twilight for its companion.

"I to i to": Miłosz's Poetics of Conscious Self-Delusion

As a close analysis of *Jasności promieniste* indicates, the poem subversively resumes some of the thematic threads that have been brought up in *To*. First of all, if the opening poem of the volume concludes by claiming that the stone wall "will not yield to any imploration", then the closing text of the book paradoxically starts with an imploration. Moreover, while resembling traditional supplication songs such as the "Rorate coeli", *Jasności promieniste* counterbalances the idea of a "stone wall that will not yield" by using the softened image of a "niedosiężna zasłona" ("an unattainable curtain" behind which the essence of things remains hidden). Another remarkable paradox concerns the particular stylistic features of the closing poem. Whereas the volume opens with the poet seemingly degrading his ecstatic poems to mere "exercises in the high style", the very same volume concludes with a text that could perfectly pass for such an "exercise in the high style": with its explicit religious scope and its three four-line stanzas, composed of rhyming couplets and written in septenaries and octosyllables, *Jasności promieniste* could easily be read as a stylistic imitation of Polish religious songs. Significantly, however, while *To* cannot be called a confession proper, the status of *Jasności promieniste* as a pure pastiche remains doubtful as well.

As it appears, the effects that are generated by the particular compositional interventions on the part of the poet are double. On the one hand, the opening

poem *To* may be said to function as an alert, rendering the reader cautious and suspicious of the author's sincerity and reliability and suggesting that poems such as *Jasności promieniste* should be read as mere pastiches rather than as stylizations serving a particular communicative goal. On the other hand, however, the very fact that the author deliberately puts a poem like *Jasności promieniste* at the very end of the collection can be interpreted as an act against the grain: in spite of the poet's awareness of self-delusion, he proceeds with writing and publishing his "ecstatic praises of being." As such, both poems keep each other in balance and counteract one another. In fact, one particular textual element seems to be in support of such a reading. Significantly, the eponymous pronoun "to" refers not only to the opening poem, but also to the very same word that reappears in the final poem *Jasności promieniste:*

> To wiemy, że bieg się skończy
> I rozłączone się złączy,
> Tak jak być miało,
> Dusza i biedne ciało.
> Knowing the hunt would end,
> That then what had been rent
> Would be at last made whole:
> Poor body and the soul.

So, instead of embodying one of these two options (the author's desperation on the one hand, his belief in the resurrection on the other), the pronoun "to" covers both of them.

Finally, what arises from the poet's compositional interventions in his penultimate poetry collection To may be called a poetics of conscious self-delusion: the author willfully prefers to pretend – in a stylized poem reviving and transforming cultural and religious traditions – that the "unattainable curtain" (*Jasności promieniste*) will ultimately be lifted rather than to reconcile himself with the knowledge that "the wall will not yield to any imploration" (*To*).[33]

33 This strategy interestingly intertwines with what Ryszard Nycz has aptly called Miłosz's "poetics of indicating the extra-human" ("wskazywanie pozaludzkiego" – see Nycz, Ryszard (2001) *op. cit.*, p. 180). Instead of trying to humanize what remains beyond human cognition and experience, such an approach acknowledges the ultimate meaninglessness of the extra-human world. At the same time, however, the poet does not fully surrender to this situation and keeps expressing either his protest against it – such as in the late poem *Sens (Meaning)* – or his persistent longing for the epiphany – such as in *Jasności promieniste.*

As such, Miłosz's later poetry increasingly thematizes the tragic – or, if you like, the heroic – features of the poet's schizophrenic attitude: against his own better judgment and while hovering above an abyss of nothingness, the author will not stop composing "ecstatic praises of being" and implorations "in the high style". ▪

Miłosz: See under Love

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Abstract

Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition,[1] or, as is important to this article, *Familial Europe* in the original Polish, is the intellectual autobiography of a twentieth-century poet and intellectual from the "lesser" Europe. In the author's opinion, it is in this worse part of Europe, where a certain historical experience and knowledge have emerged, which remain beyond the limits of comprehension of the better part of Europe, not to speak of Arcadian America, which lives partially outside of history. This book's last chapter - as we are told - "is of a more practical nature; it was meant to crown all that I had tried to say about my part of Europe, the Eastern part".[2] It tells the story of a friend nicknamed "Tiger", a philosopher by name of Juliusz Tadeusz Kroński, recounting it with a moral: Tiger is a metaphor for the intellectual synergy that is hidden in this part of the world. These are, as Milosz says, one of the many „half-open lips that never manage to speak out what they wanted to"[3] - *nachtraeglichkeit is what's inherent in us:* luck, understanding, governance of heart, we wake up late to all of these and then not everyone wakes up. Tiger, however, is at once a mentor and a midwife of knowledge of one of those who descended into the depths of hell of our century in order to uncover a secret. The author shares this secret with us is in a coda that completes both the chapter and the book: "Through defeats and disasters, humanity searches for the elixir of youth; that is, of life made into thought, the ardor that upholds belief in the wider usefulness of our individual effort, even if it apparently changes nothing in the iron working of the world. It may be that we eastern Europeans had been given the lead in that search. By choosing, we had to give up some values for the sake of others, which is the essence of tragedy. Yet only such an experience can whet our understanding, so that we can see an old truth in a new light: when ambition counsels us to lift ourselves above simple moral rules guarded by the poor in spirit, rather than to choose them as our compass needle amid the uncertainties of change, we stifle the only thing that can redeem our follies and mistakes: love".[4]

In this scathing essay on the adventures of a mind captured by the danger of a symmetry hidden in the architectonic Hegelian vision of history, love had to seem like a scandal, something out of this world. But for Miłosz, who, a few chapters earlier, wrote about the baggage of his Catholic upbringing, love, as for St. Augustine, seems to be the very glue that binds together things that are divided in this world. It is the strength which invalidates mathematical necessity. It is what makes a ruined world a home: a friendly place which you can leave as you please and to which you can return whenever you want. It is possible to call both Miłosz and Kroński-the-Tiger *displaced persons:* they were both recent defectors and although somehow settled into post-war reality – Miłosz as a clerk in the Polish embassy in America and Tiger as a commissioner of the People's Republic of Poland in Paris – both resided, rather than lived, in their

1 Miłosz, Czesław. (1968) *Native realm. A Search for Self-Definition.* Doubleday & Co. , New York.
2 ibid. p. 298.
3 ibid. p. 299.
4 ibid. p. 300.

respective places and Milosz, shortly thereafter, became a political emigrant. A sense of homelessness and unreality was part of-their condition that was common to both of them – in the American (and also the Parisian) normalcy "it all seemed like the highest outrage"[5]. At the same time, when Miłosz was sending letters to Tiger in Paris, and when he was writing *Native Realm,* Hanna Arendt was penning a wholly similar reconnaissance, though already filtered through the sensitivity of someone who had survived the European domestic war in faraway America:

> "What makes mass society so difficult to bear is not the number of people involved, or at least not primarily, but the fact that the world between them has lost its power to gather them together, to relate and separate them. The weirdness of this situation resembles a spiritualistic séance where a number of people gathered around a table might suddenly, through some magic trick, see the table vanished from their midst, so that two persons sitting opposite each other were no longer separated but also would be entirely unrelated to each other by anything tangible. Historically, we know of only one principle that was ever devised to keep a community of people together who had lost their interest in the common world and felt themselves no longer related and separated by it. To find a bond between people strong enough to replace the world was the main political task of early Christian philosophy, and it was Augustine who proposed to found not only the Christian "brotherhood" but all human relationship on charity. But this charity, through its wordlessness, clearly corresponds to the general human experience of love."[6]

To tell the world one's own great 'Yes'... For an European coming out of a great war, this was no easy matter: "I seek a teacher and a master; may he restore my sight, hearing and speech; may he again name objects and ideas; may he separate darkness from light".[7] Tadeusz Rożewicz's complaint was inscribed in

5 ibid. p.265
6 H. Arendt (1958) *The Human Condition* The University of Chicago Press, Chicago p. 52-53.
7 T.Rożewicz (1991) *The survivor in Poezje Wybrane/Selected poems.* transl. by Adam Czerniawski. Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków. p. 7.

Miłosz's work of this time. He was obediently taking Tiger's advice as to what to change, what to cut in a particular poem, and he took his friend's acts of arrogance ("with Soviet rifles, we will teach them how to think without alienation") to be the accompaniment to a tiger-like growling of History. Tiger turned out to be the midwife of knowledge recovered through the process of anamnesis. To a nihilist struck by the poetry of poisonous historicity (all order is transitory and unreal, only movement, the process of becoming, is real), these conversations with his friend allowed him to give birth to the philosopher's stone: "In America, the contradiction inclined me toward *movement*, while in Paris, through my conversations with Tiger, it drove me back toward being, and I tried to diagnose my case. Whoever commits himself to movement alone will destroy himself. Whoever disregards movement will also destroy himself, but in a different way".[8] One must therefore not settle for one nor the other, but "seize the unity of opposites".[9]

In this exercise of being ready to say "Yes" to the world, with the intellectual help of his friend, who, as Miłosz says in his essay, "really cared about only one thing: salvation," even if we have to pay for it with "historical suffering," there was already this active ardour, one may even say, a messianic passion, which is present in Miłosz's voice in his later years as he insists that the conditions up in Heaven will be the same as down here on Earth. This ardour was the result of his belief that thinking and writing are apocalyptic, reformative and enterprising acts, always undertaken from the perspective of the end of times. Yes: for Miłosz, thinking and writing are actions which seek out links "strong enough to substitute for the world" (see Arendt 5), to make the world, which hurts us, into our home at last.

He discerned a flaw in his friend's thinking: Tiger was a product of 20th century Hegelianism as therapeutic culture, the latter helping to admire the force that reigns over us, to adore fate as necessity, so as to have, through this act of consent, the illusion of being co-rulers within the current of history pushing its way towards a New Jerusalem. For Miłosz, Tiger's messianism was streaked with *mauvaise conscience,* because it agreed to violence on the part of a mythological fate deified as historical necessity. But he shared his friend's messianism as a structure of thought focused on an imperative of serving a historical „objectively grounded value".[10] In his essay, Miłosz put a mark of equality

8 Miłosz, Czesław. (1968) op. cit. p. 275

9 ibid. p. 276

10 ibid. p. 272

between the actions of a revolutionary and a poet: neither the revolutionary nor the poet, in carrying out their act (revolutionary or creative) can have any doubts. "No one puts words on paper or paint on canvas doubting; if one doubts, one does so five minutes later".[11] Today's "weak" thinking, which relishes *Nachtraeglichkeit* inscribed in understanding, demands that every conscious act be treated as late, changes existence into a melancholic spectacle of self-presentation. Each thought turns into an epitaph for emotion: into an *esprit d'escalier.* For Miłosz, the gesture of an artist-revolutionary doesn't necessarily have to be condemned to a Gehenna of eternal delay in a series of never-ending returns to what was in the beginning. In apocalyptic thinking history fulfills itself in every moment and in every moment our salvation is determined. Miłosz's Tiger-like thinking assumes that every moment is pregnant with eternity, that the future is already playing out right now. Such a perspective combines worldliness with the "end of times" of the messianic promise, it equates the feeling of putting down roots with the feeling that nothing is forever. The poet who wants to seize the truth of his own time must, according to Plato's orders, create moveable pictures of eternity.

"Tiger", read "five minutes later" through Jacques Derrida's *The Politics of Friendship*",[12] seems to be an essay about friendship gripped by a theoretical notion suggested by Kroński: for the bitten-by-Hegel Kroński, "philosophicalism" was a higher form of the Christian idea of love. Kroński, portraying himself to Miłosz as a Greek in the Roman catacombs, performed the Paul-like gesture of his master, Hegel. St. Paul, the most Greek of the apostles, proclaims love as the foundation of faith rather than equating Law with faith, as in Judaism. Love is sanctified by God's presence, it is the *pleroma* of Law, where it fulfils itself in harmony with God's conception. Thus, love is what fills up the mystical body of the community - the church. It operates in harmony with an economy of excess: overstepping the boundary of the Law, which attempts to extend its care over it. According to Hegelian thought, love is subject to a dialectical interpretation and constitutes an example of how Law - affirming itself as God's plan and gift – can negate itself in its own imperfect secular manifestations and at the same time aspire to a higher, resounding strength within.[13] And this is exactly what love is. This higher economy of love is difficult to understand:

11 ibid. p. 273

12 Derrida, Jacques (1988) *The Politics of Friendship.* J. Philosophy 85:632-644.

13 Refer to interpretations by John D. Caputo (1997) *The Prayer and Tears of Jacgues Derrida. Religion* without Religion, Indiana University Press, Bloomington. p. 236

a part cannot assume the whole. The ego, however, confronts itself through love with that which is a separate and different form of being and this movement is the recognition of an unattainable, self-evolving whole. This exercise in the Christian idea of love in Christianity itself, leads to a logos of history and freedom, a *Weltgeist.* In Hegelian optics, love fulfils itself in the family. It thus constitutes the paradigm of this dialectic: it ensures a cyclic economy in which difference changes into sameness. The family circle for Hegel, this *Sittlichkeit,* is a morally saturated, warm space pulsating with daily life, as opposed to the cold, abstract, Kantian *Moralität,* a dead letter of Law – a world in which love withers, confined to an empty ritual. The family is a scene of love in the way it acts: a loving father raises his children only to let them out into the adult world. Kroński addresses Miłosz in his letters as "Kiddo," though letters are exchanged among the four of them – Tiger and Miłosz are in correspondence, but "Ram" (Irena Kroński) and Janka (Miłosz's wife) also join them. The letters are full of the most affectionate exclamations, especially from the Krońskis, like letters to very close family: "Beloved children", "May you receive divine help, good, wise children", "I love you terribly!", "We miss you terribly!", and so on and so forth. This paternal perspective extends jokingly into the private sphere and the domestic *privum:* "How is the poop, Czesław?"

The family is a place in which *Zeitgeist* affects mortals, peeps at them and pushes them in their daily affairs and watches over their doings with concern. The Krońskis are its embodiment, but also Czesław subscribes to this pedagogy: the poem *Family* comes out of a time of intense friendship and invites an evocative interpretation from this perspective. Family is the beginning of community and love is its soul. Philosophized Christianity, in Hegelian interpretation, is absolute knowledge, a religion of truth: *The Sermon on the Mount* is a historical spectacle of an event in which truth manifests itself and the church of the apostles appears as its first institutionalization. For Tiger, new forms taken on by historical self-knowledge, the philosophical communist state and society are its last expressions.

Miłosz resists his friend's thinking, but in his essay the final word could still be coloured by the dialectic suggested by Kroński. Love is at the same time a goal and a means, a tool and a value elevated above time by time. Today, after years of being read "five minutes later," it loses the miraculous spellbinding power, which opens the doors to Elysium. It is only a hope and not for so much… Agamben, under the heading "The Idea of Love," states:

> "To live in intimacy with a stranger, not in order to draw him closer, or to make him known, but rather to keep him strange, remote: unapparent – so unapparent that his name contains him entirely. And, even in discomfort, to be nothing else, day after day, ever open place, the unwaning light in which that one being, that thing, remains forever exposed and sealed off".[14]

Hermetic, pretentious, and overly cooled down? Maybe so. However, the Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* did not prevent misfortunes. How did they sing in the beer cellars in Jena and Heidelberg? "Und willst du nicht mein Bruder sein… – And if you don't want to be my brother I'll smash your head open"? Carl Schmitt defined his friends as those who have a shared enemy. A friend is somebody who needs the enemy of his friend, but his friend as his own enemy's enemy. This is Kroński's case to a certain degree. Miłosz rather toyed with this, although he found an ally in Kroński against common enemies. Today, community is a derivative of privacy, but even privacy is understood not as loneliness, but freedom to choose one's own companions, freedom to experience the joy of short-lived, light, ecstatic and non-committal relationships. Does this indicate a community without obligations or – the other way around – one heavy with responsibilities of its own choosing? The aim is not to find some "sufficiently strong" bond that can "substitute the world." To the contrary, what's important is rediscovering the world every day as a place to live, or in other words, taking care of this that allows for the bond to grow. Love, for creatures who are similar, compassionate and ill-suffering, is such a bond. And it is precisely so in Miłosz's poems. ▪

Translated from Polish by A.J. Beattie

14 G. Agamben (1995) *Idea of Prose.* New York, p. 61.

Czesław Miłosz and the So-called Lyrical "I" in Modern Poetry

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Abstract

Frequently used the concept of lyrical "I" remains still to be relativized since its ambiguity consists in the fact that whatever poetry is named lyrical is reminiscent of an old tradition of assuming the social and aesthetic role of poetic discourse belonging to the orphic legacy. My claim is that Miłosz's poetry is not lyrical. It is rather an intellectual and a poly-vocal discourse changing the registers and systematically overcoming the orphic legacy of poetic creation. The radical transformation of modern poetry begins with the emergence of Baudelaire's intellectual vision of the world and the dialectic relationships between classicism and modernity. The poet affirms what the empirical "I" dictates and reaches a state of creative and analytical detachment from lyrical poetry. The Baudelairian intellectual turn will produce and determine the emergence of the new poetic language. It is a modern and all-encompassing act of communication. It is also analytic, ironic, distant from the traditionally lyrical writing. The knowledge obtained by the post-lyrical poetry implies a dynamics in which the poem signifies a long-term result of dialectical movement. That dialectical movement defines also Miłosz's position in modern poetry.

Mottos

> "Poetry and materia poetica are interchangeable terms"
> Wallace Stevens, *Adagia*

> "I cannot forgive my unknown predecessors who did not order Polish language and left for me the phonetic chaos of all these prze, przy, sci"
> Czesław Miłosz, *O byciu poetą (On Being A Poet)*

> "The difference between the poetry in which the "I" speaks of himself or herself and the poetry which speaks of gods and heroes is small because in the two cases the matter of discourse are mythological beings. However…"
> Czesław Miłosz, *O byciu poetą, (On Being a Poet)*

1. Rethinking Miłosz's poetry implies an attempt to define his place in modern poetry. What I name the so-called lyrical "I" is one of the keys to understand Miłosz's originality and the inter-discursive position of his poetry. The lyrical

1 Weinsheimer, Joel (1993) *Lyric* in (Eds) Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan. *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics.* Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey. p.714.

"I" means a discursive space where one can place Miłosz's poetics. Frequently used, the concept of lyrical "I" remains still to be relativized since its ambiguity consists in the fact that whatever poetry is named lyrical is reminiscent of an old tradition of assuming the social and aesthetic role of poetic discourse belonging to the orphic legacy. As it was observed quite pertinently:

> "Most of the confusion in the modern critical usage of "I" (i.e. usage after 1550) is due to an overextension of the term to cover a body of poetic writing that has radically altered its nature over the centuries of its development .The first critical use of the word *mele* by the Greeks was for the purpose of broadly distinguishing between various non-narrative and non-dramatic types of poetry: the melic poem was intended to be sung to musical accompaniment, in contrast to the iambic and elegiac poems which were chanted".[2]

2. My choice of the lyrical "I" stems from the relationship between Miłosz's discourse and his positioning in modern poetry. My claim is that Miłosz's poetry is not "lyrical". It is rather an intellectual and a poly-vocal discourse changing the registers and systematically overcoming the orphic legacy of poetic creation. In that constellation of facts where poetry should be recognized as a dominant writing, Miłosz creates a sort of polyvalent zone where the utterances come and go. And to paraphrase T.S. Eliot "they come and go but they do not talk about Michelangelo". They are rather of an analytical and intellectual nature. It would be appropriate to rethink the meta-critical assumptions of Miłosz about poetry. I will try to return to such texts as *Ars Poetica?* and *On Being A Poet*.
3. In the Miłosz poetic cosmos Orpheus does not symbolize any more the repetitious gesture of unity in love and in faithfulness to the ever returning scheme of the lyrical rhetorics. Miłosz has always demonstrated that poetry emerging in the XXth century was discursively variable and ironically distant from the thematic options. Miłosz has also systematically affirmed and solidified his position as a self-defining poetic thinker. Hence, his readers' sensations that the poet's subjectivity is a self-understanding process of self-observation, self-definition, self-creation, and self-dominant inspiration throughout the

2 ibid. p.714.

poetic actions. Thus described the function of self in Miłosz's work should be considered as a multiple and basic principle of the poet's self-determination. It should be also understood as a borderline which both approaches the poet to and separates him from a quasi-philosophical writing.

4. We may now assume that Miłosz belongs to the paradigm of post-lyrical poetry. In that paradigm, the poet deconstructs both the lyrical exaltation and musically determined constructions. The lyrical "I" considerably loses its function of dominant basis of poetization. That process can be traced back to the works of such poets as R. M. Rilke, G. Benn, F. Pessoa, T .S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, and E. Montale. The lyrical "I" becomes a grammatical shifter. It has only grammatical and positional function. What takes its place is an analytical and intellectually relevant process of transformation of poetry.

   The radical transformation of modern poetry begins with the emergence of Baudelaire's intellectual vision of the world and of the dialectic relationships between classicism and modernity. The poet affirms what the empirical "I" dictates and reaches a state of creative and analytical detachment from lyrical poetry. The Baudelairian intellectual turn will produce and determine the emergence of the new poetic language. It is a modern and all-encompassing act of communication. It is also analytic, ironic, distant from the traditionally lyrical writing.

5. In modern poetry, apart from the claim that language is the only tool of poetry it has been recognized that poetic language bears witness to an opened-ended vision of the world where occasionally the poets place the signs of strong polysemantic meaning.

   Fernando Pessoa's heteronimic vision of his polymorphic identity is an adventure both spiritual and aesthetic. The "I" of the text functions as a constant self, understood in a multiple quest of a new poetic expression, which would give a solid status of identity under the constant pressure of dispersion. Such was the case of Pessoa. Invention and adventure of heteronyms enlarged the boundary of being paradoxically in the world without stable existential reference. A solid starting point in terms of identity was lost. However it led to a discovery of poetry which is above all a discipline of images, ideas and progression of metaphors. The discovery of Pessoa's paradoxical originality confirms the absolute power of imagination beyond the traditional code of poetry, that is to say beyond the lyrical "I". Here we touch again upon the problem of Miłosz as one of the modern.

6. I have chosen Fernando Pessoa as another modern poet to establish a sort of dialectical link between the greatest Portuguese poet of the XXth century and Czesław Miłosz whose greatness in Polish literature is uncontested. My intention is to account for the differences between them and to reconcile those differences in order to show the richness, diversity and specificity of modern poetry.

   In Miłosz the frequency of the personal pronoun "I" is great. The "I", his "I", is circumstantial, for example he writes :

> "I like beaches, swimming pools, and clinics
> for there they were the bone of my bone, the flesh of my flesh".[3]

   Now, his "I" is contextual:

> "The angel of Jehovah did not touch the eyelids
> of a man whose hand I hold,
> I, a passive witness of this suffering for no cause";[4]

   and in the same poem his "I" is enigmatic:

> "A weak human mercy walks in the corridors of hospitals
> and is like a half-thawed winter.
> While I, who am I, a believer, dancing before the All-Holy".[5]

   At any rate one can define Miłosz's "I" as that of a meticulous observer and very attentive self-observer. As a poet thus characterized, Miłosz has a strong centripetal identity. Its main function is multiplication of observed objects, recollections, situations, memories, feelings, self-analytic inventions.

7. In the case of Pessoa the problem of heteronyms which Pessoa confronts and complexity of his universe create an adventure of poetic work and of his cosmos. The Portuguese poet explains his multiplicity as being the presence of different "I's" which he must translate into poetic language and into aesthetic different projects. Thus Pessoa will create three poets and each of them should represent another vision and another practice. They do not converge towards

3 Miłosz, Czesław (1988) *They will place there telescreens* in Miłosz, C. *The Collected Poems.* The Ecco Press, New York. p.168

4 Miłosz, Czesław (1988) op.cit. p. 340.

5 ibid. p.340.

Pessoa's identity. They have their autonomous existence. If we treat them as the only result of Pessoa's theory we make a mistake. As a matter of fact they must affirm their difference. Their names are respectively Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis, Alvaro de Campos. Pessoa's explanation sounds like a confession. It is a brilliant text of self-understanding and self-explanation.

> "I do not know who I am, what soul I have. (…) I feel multiple. I am like a room with innumerable fantastic mirrors that distort by false reflections one single pre-existing reality which is not there in any of them and is there in them all.[6]

Pessoa invents the poets whose egos have a different style, different worldview, different imagination, different themes and different argumentations. Finally, he deals in his theory with the problem of transformation of lyric poetry. He puts forward the following:

> "Now take the final step and we shall have a poet who may be various poets-a dramatic poet writing in lyric poetry. Each group of states of soul relatively close to one another will become a personage, with his own style, with sentiment perhaps different from, even opposed to, those typical of the poet in his real-life person. And so lyric poetry – or some literary form analogous in its substance to lyric poetry-will have raised itself to dramatic poetry, yet without giving itself the form of drama, either explicitly or implicitly.[7]

8. Taking into account Pessoa's explanation, we may affirm that the transformation of lyric poetry is linked to the representation of alternative. Consequently the term or category of the so-called lyrical "I" cannot assume the role of quantifier expressing implicitly or explicitly the "feelings and thoughts of a single speaker (not necessarily the poet himself) in a personal and subjective fashion.[8]

6 Pessoa, Fernando (1979) *Toward Explaining Heteronymy* in (ed) Gibbons, Reginald T*he Poet's Work : 29 Masters of 20th Century Poetry on the Origins and Practice of Their Art,* Houghton Mifflin Company Boston. p.5.
7 ibid. p. 14.

8 Cuddon, J.A.(1977), revised by C.H. Preston (1999), *Lyric, in The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory.* Penguin Books, London. p. 481

The so-called lyrical "I" is no longer the powerful textual operator. Since Baudelaire the auto-reflexivity of poetry became one of its tools demonstrating a highly developed intention of self-knowledge.

9. The synthesis of Miłosz's writing underlines the fact that it is critical, wholly contemporary, and deeply influenced by his past and present linguistic, geographic, and political homes. Reading Miłosz is a constant discovery of joyful and brilliant language in combination. The measure of his discourse is systematically based on an advancing intelligence and imagination. The self-reflection of the poet confirms and demonstrates his attachment to objectively justified visions and arguments. Quoting Miłosz, means being enchanted in the complex cosmos of modern art and history. Miłosz is a visionary post-lyrical poet. His mysticism, faith and curiosity are determined by discoveries of new visions, sometimes infernal, borrowed from Swedenborg or Blake. Here is the quotation from Swedenborg:

> "On that canvas the poet creates his own vision:
> Falling I caught the curtain, its velvet was the last thing
> I could feel on earth
> as I slid to the floor, howling: aah aaah.
> To the very end I could not believe that I too must…
> Like everyone".[9]

10. Paul de Man in his analysis of the book on the *Structure of modern poetry* by Hugo Friedrich remarks that the "crisis of the self and of representation in lyric poetry of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries should be interpreted as a gradual process. Baudelaire continues trends implicitly present in Diderot; Mallarmé (as he himself stated) felt he had to begin where Baudelaire has ended; Rimbaud takes an even further step in opening up the experimentation of the surrealists – in short, the modernity of poetry occurs as a continuous historical movement. This reconciliation of modernity with history in a common genetic process is highly satisfying, because it allows one to be both origin and offspring at the same time".[10]

9 Miłosz, Czesław (1988) *On The Other Side* in op.cit. p. 169.
10 De Man, Paul (1983) *Blindness and Insight, Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism.* University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis. pp.182, 183.

Do these observations apply to Miłosz? Saying that he belongs to the post-lyrical paradigm, I wanted to underline the fact that his poetry is also a part of the historical process which has repudiated the traditional structure of lyrical poetry and put it into crisis. The author of *Unattainable Earth* has expressed his aspiration of developing his own original and ingenious form. It should be a form which the poet names

> "more spacious
> that would be free from the claims of poetry or prose
> and would let us understand each other without exposing
> the author or reader to sublime agonies".[11]

Since the poetry is dictated by a daimonic, Miłosz admits that the knowledge of thus created poetry is transmitting something enigmatic and spiritual.

We cannot forget the fact that poetic knowledge is a special version of the totality of the world. Miłosz's *Ars Poetica?* is followed by a question mark. The reader should explain what is the meaning of this question mark.

Since the individuality of the poets does not prevent them from living in the same spiritual community, I am going to quote a fragment of comment on the poetry of Swedish poet Lars Gustafsson and namely his poetry from the book entitled *The Stillness of the World Before Bach.* Christopher Middleton, the commentator, states:

> "And the philosophical air is the style itself of language inventing its objects as it advances toward them. The instigator of the poem, poet or reader, will not trap objects in concept or habit, but will always allow for unpredictable shifts of perspective upon the shifting relative positions of the phenomena in their fields. From this mobility derives the factor of surprise in the poem, not to mention the transparency, the lucidity. The momentum of "lyrical enthusiasm' is not thwarted, it is lightened by the philosophical air".[12]

11 Miłosz, Czesław(1979) *Ars Poetica?* in Gibbons, R. (ed) *The Poet's Work,* op.cit. p. 3.

12 Middleton, Christopher (1988), *Introduction* in Gustafsson , Lars *The Stillness of The World Before Bach.* A New Directions Book, New York. p. XI.

This explanation is quite close to Miłosz's creative process. It establishes interrelationships between such values as the "philosophical air", "language inventing its objects", the "surprise of the poem", the "unpredictable shifts of perspective", the "factor of surprise" in the poem, the "transparency", the "lucidity".

The knowledge obtained by the post-lyrical poetry implies a dynamics in which the poem signifies a long-term result of dialectical movement in which Miłosz and Gustafsson meet each other. ▪

Miłosz in Contexts

Reading Miłosz in Exile

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Abstract

This article presents an analysis of post-migrant social identities of postmodern societies multicultural, and especially the identity of a writer. Various recent concepts related to creation of post-migrant identities are illustrated by examples of Polish intellectuals living abroad, especially that of Czesław Miłosz. Descriptions of consecutive stages of exile also shed some new light on the situation of Miłosz as a poet who transformed his personal, Polish experiences, into poetry appealing to readers around the world.

The contemporary world can be characterized by the constant mobility of its inhabitants. Traveling, traditionally reserved for a small group of privileged members among the upper layers of society, is now an everyday activity for many people. Similarly, exile is no longer seen as an exceptional situation, a condition influencing the creativity of a writer banned from his home, language and audience, but as an experience of migrating social groups (usually against their will).[1]

> "The meaning of exile expands as the terms denoting it proliferate, each label suggesting a slightly different cause of displacement and response to its rigors. Countries in which a simple world view saw only natives and visitors now also contain illegal aliens, migrant workers, "population transfers" pilgrims, emissaries, the "disfranchised" loners (…)"[2]

and other kinds of displaced or stateless people labeled by a variety of overlapping terms. Thus, if poets-in-exile are still the subject of critical interest, it is primarily because they speak for (or represent) larger social groups. In fact, the most important changes in Western critical interest, regarding the question of exile at the turn of this century, lie in the shift from discussing exceptional, creative individuals to the interest in processes defining larger social groups. This is not only because of an unprecedented scale of migration in the second half of the last century but also because the written documentation of migrant experiences is no longer limited to artistic expressions. Never before were the

1 See: Said E.W. (2002), *Reflections on Exile in Reflections on Exile and Other Essays,* Cambridge UP, Cambridge. pp.173-186.

2 Robinson, Marc (1994) (ed.) *Altogether Elsewhere. Writers on Exile.* Boston and London, Faber and Faber, p.xiv

traumatic experiences of migration documented by so many people, offering various perspectives, and telling personal stories that, though unique in personal scope, give researchers a comprehensive view of issues and problems faced by migrants in general. Literary documentation of exile now also includes genres traditionally pushed to the margins. Marc Robinson enumerates some of them when he states that … "essays, letters, journal entries, excerpts from memoirs, and random jottings are mere traces, notes written on the side of literary careers usually devoted to fiction, poetry, criticism, or philosophy. But without them much of the larger, more public, more ambitious works would lack a context. For it is in this occasional prose that these exiles write their history, place themselves, and orient their other writing".[3]

Moreover, a feeling of alienation is no longer an exceptional condition defining artists and writers but is an everyday reality for many people.

Post-colonial approaches tend to see social identities as the primary identities of people in today's world, and treat them not as given and constant but rather as changing and fluctuating. Instead of individual personalities, often complicated and difficult to study, scholars focus on social identities such as national, gender, racial or professional, to mention a few. These identities are neither exclusive nor stable; to the contrary, they evolve constantly and relations between them fluctuate.[4] This view on (social) identities, their formation and interrelations, is especially important as regards the role immigrants play in contemporary societies. In fact, in recent years, many traditional cultures have opened up to influences and changes brought by immigrants. Traditional identities, based on uniform, national rules, are no longer seen as the compulsory model for all inhabitants, and the social policies of today in the Western world are now based on the principles of equality and multiculturalism.

Social transformations have resulted in terminology changes (or rather challenges) in the field of migration studies. The problems surfaced especially in the 1980s when critics began to struggle with defining the differences between a poet-in-exile and an émigré poet, between exiles, refugees, emigrants, immigrants, displaced persons… The differences between them are less and less clear, the boundaries increasingly blurred, and the identities they refer to change and

3 Robinson, Marc (1994) op.cit. p xiii
4 See Alcoff, L Martin and .Mendieta, E. (2003) (eds.) *Identities. Race, Class, Gender, and Nationality.* Blackwell Publishing, Oxford.

fluctuate. However, it is also clear that exiles are no longer primarily seen as creative and independent individuals banned from their homelands, as dissidents or prophets. Immigrants, earlier seen as peripheral or marginal, are now critically appreciated as social groups; with a rising interest in post-colonial studies, critical attention has shifted to the important roles these groups play in the countries of their arrival.

Because of the scope and complexity of the migration processes, at the beginning of the second millennium, scholars commonly use the term "migrants", which helps them avoid defining exiles, refugees, emigrants, immigrants etc. The differences between them are not really clear. Some of them are relatively easy, as - "The word *immigrant* speaks of entry, of going into and settling in another country. The related words *emigrant* and *exile* are both about departure".[5] The two, however, though frequently used as synonyms, suggest different reasons for leaving the homeland and, also, most likely a different relationship to the lost home country. The first implies a voluntary migration, while the second refers to expulsion, administrative removal from a place seen as home. One can easily see the differences when dealing with theoretical, extreme situations – emigrants choose their fate, while the fate of exiles is determined by the decisions of others.

In contemporary practice, however, the boundaries between exile and emigration are often blurred, as the very act of emigration may result in being banned from going back home. Also, the common belief that emigrants long for the homeland of their past, while exiles long for a country of their dreams, lacks precision.[6] The problems with the terminology discussed here are only an example of the degree of confusion that escalates when it comes to the differences between exiles, emigrants, refugees or displaced persons and the way in which these terms are used in scholarly works. Interestingly, in their new countries, all newcomers are seen simply as immigrants, as what may seem to be very important from the point of view of the culture of the country of departure, is not important for the culture of the country of arrival. In other words, differences that are important in relation to the old country become irrelevant in the new country, where all newcomers are simply immigrants.

5 Overland , Orm (2004) Visions of Home. Exiles and Immigrants in Rose Peter I. (ed.) *The Dispossessed. An Anatomy of Exile.,* University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst and Boston. p.7.
6 ibid.

There is, however, another important difference between emigration, exile and immigration. "These three words are about departure and entry not only as acts, but also as states of mind".[7] Orm Overland stresses the fact that all of them can be used in relation to the same person – depending on the point of view, point in time, and several other varying factors. They depend on the consciousness of the artist, on the artists' own view of their relationships to both cultures, the culture of the country of origin and that of the country of arrival. Quite frequently, this self-definition means a break from traditional categorizations, as they prove inadequate to the artist's own sense of social loyalty. Discussing the situation of Polish (émigré) intellectuals, Halina Stephan notes that "They rarely considered themselves émigrés; much less immigrants, but usually their experience of dislocation and transience positively influenced their careers".[8] Critics have also begun to favor terminology derived from migration itself, frequently referring to post-migrant identities, and, in this way, escaping (inaccurate) classification problems.

In referring to the social composition of the USA, Czesław Miłosz makes interesting wording choices in *Visions from San Francisco Bay.*

> "The idea of founding an ideal country, a New Jerusalem, brought the First Pilgrims to America, but its population is almost entirely composed of the descendants of fugitives who were driven out of their native countries by hard necessity".[9]

writes Milosz. The people who inhabited the land were thus either pilgrims or refugees, and the latter are the subject of his description.

> "People decided to leave their villages and little towns in the same spirit as man considers suicide; they weighted everything, then went off into the unknown, but once there they were seized by a despair unlike anything they had ever experienced in the old country".[10]

7 ibid.
8 Stephan, Halina, (2003) *Introduction: The Last Exile* in Stephan, Halina (ed.) *Living in Translation. Polish Writers in America.* Rodopi, Amsterdam-New York. pp. 7-28.
9 Miłosz,Czesław (1982) *Visions from San Francisco Bay,* trans. by Richard Lourie. Farrar Straus Giroux, New York, p. 42.
10 ibid.

They were accustomed to the fate that was common and grounded in a local culture, but not

> "inflicted on people as individuals – the yoke was borne by everybody together, family, relatives, friends. Now each of them was assessed as an individual, and, isolated among isolated, they earned their living for a few paper dollars a day".[11]

Yet, in their letters sent back home, the hard reality in the poor districts of American cities was turned into lives they could only dream of. New immigrants (whom Miłosz repeatedly refers to as "they") coped with the everyday hardships by hoping to go back home or moving to a better neighborhood. "The majority shifted their hopes onto their children, and it was only they who moved out of the slums and the factory housing" Miłosz notices.[12] The poet titles his essay *Migration*" and avoids terms like *immigrants or emigrants,* as for him the impact of displacement goes further than the lives of newcomers, however they are called. This is retained in memory as the next generation makes their way towards success "won and confirmed each day (…), undermined by an element ready to erupt and return them to the helplessness and misery their fathers had to stand up to".[13] Miłosz seems to understand them well, and though his readers may see this as the result of his own migrations, the poet explains his reasons behind this understanding differently; that is, through his realization of the fact, that "history's volcanic malice rages beneath the thin layer we thread so carefully"[14]

Underlying the many differences between migrants, Orm Overland argues, the emigrant identity may be only a passing stage in a chain of changes caused by migration. Exile, however, can become not only a fate but also an identity, as J. Skvorecki argues in the introduction to his book *Two Murders in my Double Life.* It can lead to a double mentality: the feeling of loneliness and alienation caused by the loss of one's homeland and the lack of acceptance by the new country can prevent the development of an immigrant identity. This results in what Oyvinda Gulliksena describes by way of the metaphorical expression a "double landscape"[15] – the result of the influence of two cultures and two

11 ibid.
12 Miłosz, Czesław, (1982), op. cit. p.43
13 Miłosz. Czesław, (1982), op.cit. p.44
14 ibid.
15 See Overland, Orm (2005) op.cit. p. 8

languages in one mind, where this double landscape unites them in harmony. In other words, while the post-migrant identity is complex and "multilayered", the identity of an exile is the identity of a misfit, "the other", the loneliest among the lonely.

All of this in real-life situations can be quite complicated. Referring to Czesław Miłosz, one can easily argue that both – exile and post-migrant – identities can coexist as two "faces" of the same artist. One, turned outside, showing the world the writer's multilayered, cultural heritage, the other more intimate and personal, grounded in Miłosz's constant feeling of his own "otherness". And though there are other Polish artists who expressed fluid, multicultural, post/migrant identities in their works,[16] Miłosz's worldwide impact is by far greater than any other Polish poet's in the entire history of Polish literature. What is especially important here is that Miłosz, as Louis Iribarne argues, was able to contribute to his native, Polish literature and, at the same time, become "the most cosmopolitan of writers".[17] Though his works were deeply rooted in his personal experiences, which were closely connected with the history of his homeland, they made their way to an international audience and gained the interest of readers on more than one continent.

Czesław Miłosz and the international influence of his writing can serve as an excellent example of interest in the question of post/migrant identity, even outside academic circles of the "Center" (or the so-called Western world). In lieu of obituary, *The Sunday Tribune,* published in India, portrays Miłosz as

> "a poet, a witness, ever in exile. And exile is a recurring theme in his vast repertoire of works - poetry, novels and essays - that abound in the autobiographical. (…) [He] was distrusted by communists as well as anti-communists, Catholics as well as atheists, for he had been all this, but much more too-a liberal in an illiberal world, an exile in an ethno-centric world, where memory, love, beauty and humaneness were a passionate preoccupation".[18]

16 See Gasyna, George. Z. (2003), *Inscribing Otherness: Polish-American Writers after the Great Divide* in *Living in Translation. Polish Writers in America.* Stephan, Halina (ed.) op. cit. pp. 331 - 379.

17 Iriborne, Louis (1994) Lost in the "Earth-Garden": The Exile of Czesław Miłosz. World Literature Today, (Autumn), pp.637-642.

18 www.tribuneindia.com/2004/20040905/spectrum/book2.htm

In Shastri Ramachandaran's opinion, Miłosz's most unforgettable work was *Native Realm* –

> "For nothing torments the exile as much as his quest for identity, and recognition and acceptance of the identity for cultural membership in society. To be in exile is to be homeless, stateless and bereft of a cultural refuge where emotion can find root".[19]

Defined as the "loss/search for identity", exile is seen as "the dominant metaphor of our times".[20] The contemporary, post-colonial world is a civilization that denies many people "their identity and dignity of self, with no hope of home or homeland". One may easily get the impression that the author of this tribute is trying to familiarize his readers with the basics of the postcolonial approach, which is especially important to him through its relevance to the contemporary social situation in India.

In the introduction to his influential anthology *Altogether Elsewhere,*[21] Marc Robinson, noticing the absence of a uniform cultural identity, discusses various forms of exile, the stages that displaced people go through, and their reactions to exile. The book comprises texts by both writers who voluntarily moved to a different country and those who were banned or expelled from their homeland. Though Robinson sees differences between voluntary and involuntary expatriates, he is primarily interested in more general observations; albeit, especially in the formation of a post-migrant, "multilayered" and multicultural identity. Robinson sees this identity formation as a process that can be divided into stages related to the length of displacement. His observations (and categories) offer a new and interesting perspective on the situation of Miłosz as an exile.

"(...) we have been catapulted out of history, which is always the history of a specific area on the map, and we have to cope with, to use the expression of an exile writer, "the unbearable lightness of being,"[22] wrote Miłosz. "Exile cuts one off from familiar history, that of a native country and culture; in its place surfaces a history of exile," states Robinson[23]. A writer has to thus first find his or her place in this "new" history. In order to do so, they need "to determine

19 ibid.
20 ibid.
21 Robinson, Marc (1994) op.cit
22 http://www.masters-phptography.com/K/koudelka/koudelka_articles.2.html
23 Robinson, Marc (1994) op.cit, p .xv.

just what kind of exile they have experienced".[24] The task of finding their own literary traditions and a connection with previously exiled writers cannot be completed without answering the basic question pertaining to the reasons of displacement and finding models from which they might learn. At this stage, a "native" becomes an "exile," and the change of geographical location means also a psychological travel through displacement to the identity of an émigré. Finding one's own place in the history or tradition of writers-in-exile or among a group of contemporary, fellow emigrants often completes the first task in facing the fact of displacement. Miłosz, who for rather obvious reasons, could not utilize the figure of a dissident, so popular in the West, found that his émigré identity, formed through his literary writings, was easier to present to his Western readers in in translated prose than in poetry. His first book written abroad, *The Captive Mind;* brought him fame, though it limited the scope of reception of his poetry in later years In the first years of the exile, it helped him to find his own way of reaching the Western literary audience and establish his identity as an exile rather than an émigré. His second book, *The Seizure of Power,* is a source of interesting observations about emigration and can be read, in large part, as an autobiographical recollection of Miłosz's thoughts before he decided to defect to the West.

The need for the self-definition experienced by refugees from the People's Republic of Poland presented them with a rather limited choice: : they could identify either withinternational tradition of exiled writers or the Polish Diasporas, consisting primarily of uneducated prewar immigrants from the poorest regions of Poland. Poles, at least in North America, were seen through derogatory clichés, popularized by so-called "Polish jokes", and Polish intellectuals therefore tried to present themselves outside of the categories associated with Polonia circles. In general, many differences (including educational and cultural background) set Polish writers and artists apart from Polish emigrant groups in America. Thus, emigrants from the People's Republic of Poland stressed their exilic status and political reasons for leaving their homeland, as this clearly differentiated them from prewar economic emigrants. In the case of Miłosz, though *Captive Mind* placed him initially outside of literary contexts and rather among political thinkers, in the end it helped him escape any associations with Polish Diasporas and the social clichés connected with them.

24 ibid. p.xiv

In her introduction to the collection of essays *Living in Translation,* Halina Stephan argues that "performance of the role of an exile was coached exclusively in political terms relevant to the mainstream culture, factors such as sexual or ethnic otherness officially played no role."[25] Stressing political persecutions allowed new emigrants to exchange their national identity for an exilic one and, in this, joining a social group that, though still seen as "other", had a considerably higher social status than the culturally homeward-oriented, ethnic community of Polonia. It is also important to remember that the concept of dissidence was closely connected to the Cold War, and from "the perspective of the receiving American culture, the public image of a writer- in-exile was anchored in the concept of dissidence. Exile was the price for dissidence and the exiled author was welcomed as an anti-Communist," writes Stephan.[26]

By the same token, the Polish national identity (with its image of exile rooted in Polish history and the partition era) was, in the American audience's view, transformed by its relation to the Soviet Union and close proximity to the leading communist state. The situation changed, for a very brief period, in the 1980s when the West became interested in the Polish democratic opposition and the *Solidarity*" movement; however, one should also not forget the impact the election of John Paul II had on the status of Poland in the world. Thus, at least until the rise in interest in marginal social groups that came about only at the end of the last century, Polish writers had to search for their exilic identity by staking out a place in the tradition of (dissident) writers-in-exile and then finding their own, unique place with regards to this tradition. Miłosz's *The Captive Mind* helped him to define his ethnicity by his "close proximity to Russian and the alleged familiarity with Soviet culture, thus appending" his story into the "prestigious narrative of the empire (…)" and also to legitimizing "his position in the American cultural life", as Halina Stephan[27] notices.

The second stage of exile, according to Robinson, can be described as facing everyday life in new surroundings, coming to terms with the new situation, forging new friendships and declaring new loyalties. For many post-war Polish exiles, this was the stage at which they transformed from displaced persons or exiles into emigrants: people who have to face their situation and realize that it might very well be their fate, rather than a temporary situation. Writers also

25 Stephan, Halina (2003) op.cit. p.17

26 ibid..p.16

27 Stephan, Halina (2003) op.cit.p.18

have to define the meaning of this change with respect to their artistic works, and to expand their understanding of their new identities in both their domestic and public spheres. They have to face questions about what inspires them, where they place their loyalties and in which cultures they want to participate. In practice, this means developing – in a new country and new culture – a professional identity, for writers are usually connected to some kind of influence upon their readers.

In the political reality after the war, writers-in-exile could reach readers through co-oeration with émigré publishers. The most important in this respect was the Paris-based *Kultura*" which, in addition to reaching Poles worldwide, aimed at Polish readers in their homeland. The political situation contributed to the existence of the so-called "third market", i.e. educated Polish emigrants who, in exile, resumed their intellectual status, usually as highly educated specialists or academics. Émigré writers formed relations with these three distinct groups of readers in a variety of ways. In the case of Miłosz, his messages to readers in Poland are quite well known and we are still discovering the nature of his contact with the international audience by studying how he tried to reach his English-speaking readers. However, his relations with various Polish émigré circles are yet awaiting description; one may only hope that the unpublished correspondence between Czesław Miłosz and Bogdan Czaykowski will shed more light on at least some of them[28]. The letters between the two poet-academics indicate that,[29] especially in the early stages of his emigration, Miłosz was looking into alliances with a group of young Polish-born poets from the London-based *Kontynenty* group. It is also possible that, when forming his exilic identity, Miłosz tried to establish connections with his prospective emigrant-readers, and influence literary and cultural processes abroad. However, with time, it became obvious that his professional identity, based on the model of the poet-prophet, was closer to the idea of a loner than a group member.

In migrating, writers have to face challenges in regards to two spaces – the space of their texts and the one inhabited by the author. Physical shelter – for many Polish emigrants- was provided by universities. This was also the case for Czesław Miłosz, who worked for years at Berkley as a professor of Polish

28 Deposited in Gabinet Rękopisów, Biblioteka Universytetu Warszawskiego (University of Warsaw Library, Special Collection)
29 See Karwowska, Bożena (2000) *Miłosz i Brodski. Recepcja krytyczna twórczości w krajach anglojęzycznych.* Wydawnictwo IBL PAN Warszawa.

literature. Several Polish writers "found shelter in the academia, most as specialists in Polish literature within Russian-oriented Slavic departments" writes Halina Stephan[30]. The academic world offered both economic survival and acceptance of otherness, but – as Stephan stresses – the writer "was also confined to specific academic discourse, which was difficult to master quickly". Professorial positions helped to preserve a professional identity and assured the continuation of professional status, and academics do enjoy a relatively high social status in western culture. As for Miłosz, his academic position helped him to familiarize English-speaking readers with his position in the Polish literary tradition (to mention only his *History of Polish Literature*[31]) and to introduce himself as a poet in the context of contemporary Polish poetry (through a selection of poems published in his anthology entitled *Post-war Polish Poetry*[32]). It also helped him reach Anglo-American readers, as many of his students (such as Louis Iribarne and Lillian Vallee, to name only two) became translators and scholars, disseminating their teacher's works throughout the English-speaking world. And though Miłosz-the-emigrant did not became a researcher or scholar, his position at the university helped him to achieve a social status comparable (in many respects) to the one he enjoyed in his pre-migrant life. The fates of other migrants are also similar in this respect, as they managed to carve out a place in academia. In general, they continued their literary interest and continued to write, but did not usually become researchers, unless – like Stanislaw Barańczak – they established themselves as academics before emigration.

The next phase of exile is usually marked by overwhelming feelings of sadness and solitude. "The desolation is too great (...) For some exiles, their natural sadness softens into self-pity,"[33] writes Mark Robinson. Reinventing one's social identity is often accompanied by the feeling of humiliation, inflated by loneliness. This is why, at the beginning of exile, writers often experience despair, which, according to Czesław Miłosz, "probably appears as resulting more from one's personal shortcomings than from external circumstances. There are three main causes of such despair: loss of name, fear of failure and moral torment."[34] All these feelings combined often result in rediscovering childhood, and writers

30 Stephan, Halina (2003) op.cit. p. 21
31 Miłosz, Czesław (1969) *History of Polish Literature.* MacMillan, New York.
32 Miłosz, Czesław (1965) (ed.) *Postwar Polish Poetry, An Anthology.* Doubleday, Garden City.
33 Robinson, Marc (1994) op.cit. p. xvi
34 Miłosz, Czesław (1976) *Notes on Exile,* Books Abroad, p. 282.

at this stage quite frequently use their childhood recollections as their literary theme, for "literature of nostalgia is (…) one among many modes of coping with estrangement".[35] In the case of Miłosz, his *Dolina Issy* serves as a good example of the literary reflection of his past. However, it also brings about occasion for reflection on another issue typical for the first stages of exile; namely, the question of the ethnic (or national) identity of the exile.

Commitment to one ethnicity is generally a rare strategy in contemporary émigré literature," argues Halina Stephan. "Much more widespread is the broadening of ethnicity, the ambiguity of its boundaries which appears in the memory of the exiled author."[36] For some artists, this meant a re-discovery of their Polish-Jewish identity, which may not always have been already developed during their pre-exilic life. This process did not always occur in the early stages of emigration, and, in some cases, for instance that of Roman Polański,[37] happened years into living life abroad. Another, though related strategy, was rooted in stressing a lack of a fixed, uni-national (or ethnic) identity, resulting from a marginal position in the home culture.

> Marginality allowed (...) Miłosz to inscribe himself within the background of Polish-Lithuanian-Jewish-French traditions of Eastern Europe and to cultivate multiple ways of viewing and interpreting the semi-mythical borderland of the past. One can only speculate to what extent Miłosz's preoccupation with the multinational Lithuanian Arcadia conjured in the midst of San Francisco Bay was stimulated by the Berkley campus setting charged with the ideas of multi-ethnicity and cultural diversity".[38]

Miłosz also used the idea of marginality to introduce himself to his Western readers in the tradition of the poet as "the eternal wonderer" (who always watches the world from a marginal position). One should add here that, unlike Gombrowicz, whose "between" meant lack of belonging and resulted in rejecting both, Miłosz used his marginal position with respect to the idea

35 ibid. p. 283.
36 Stephan, Halina (2003) op. cit. p. 20.
37 See: Eagle, Herbert J., *Exile and Emigration in the Films of Roman Polanski.* in *Living in Translation. Polish Writers* in America., Stephan, Halina (2003) (ed.) op. cit.
38 ibid., p. 20

of national identity to develop a multinational identity composed of both "the departure" and "the arrival". For him, the notion of belonging is one of the principles of existence, and, without it, people lose their sense of direction in the world.

> "A farewell to one's country, to its landscapes, customs and mores throws one into a no man's land comparable perhaps to the desert chosen as a place of contemplation by early Christian hermits. Then the only remedy against the loss of orientation is to create a new, one's own North, East, West, and South and posit in that new space a Witebsk or a Dublin elevated to the second power".[39]

In Miłosz's case "his own country" means, as depicted in *Native Realm and Issa Valley,* a coexistence of various cultures and the experience of growing up in a place on the border of several cultures, contributing to the formation of a multi-layered identity. This also means an identity based on differences between "self" and "the other" (or, rather, various "others") who are constantly present. Thus, a disappearance of "the other" would lead to the identity crisis of the self, which would be comparable to the process of identity transformations caused by exile. Consequently, in the contemporary world, characterized by constant migrations and dynamic social changes, identity crisis/search has become a natural condition for humans in general.

During the next, fourth stage "writers make their own houses out of writing", or find their homes in language – either their native tongue or the tongue of their new country. "Whatever language exiles favor, writing offers them territory that they alone can legislate. The page becomes one of the few spaces where others aren't telling them how to behave,"[40] writes Robinson. Exile (regardless of its reasons and category) increases the value of language as a sustaining link to old and new words. The exile's biggest fear is loneliness, but solitude is a condition immanent to the exilic fate, and it accompanies emigrants regardless of their frequent attempts to form groups or literary circles. And though in the post-war period Polish émigrés organized numerous publishing initiatives and

39 http://www.masters-phptography.com/K/koudelka/koudelka_articles.2.html
40 Robinson, Marc (1994) op.cit. p..xvii.

many literary journals that were to serve as an anchor for Polish artists, many writers – among them Czesław Miłosz – choose their own, solitary (but also independent) way.

Miłosz, who did not limit himself to "narrow horizons of the archipelago of exile", was difficult to be classified using traditional categories sufficient in the case of other Polish émigré writers, cosmopolitan poets-in-exile" or "nationless writers". The most interesting category, forged at the end of the last century by English-speaking critics in regards to exilic writers, was the notion of "fortunate travelers". The author of the editorial of the Poetry Review noticed that

> "(...) Brodsky, Hecht, and Walcott are not a school, but they share obvious similarities in style and subject –matter (...) All three writers often use subject-matter remote, both geographically and historically, from their roots (...) What all three poets show is that a world poetry is possible, through the medium of the English language".[41]

Miłosz, writing about Josif Brodsky and his poetry, also came up with his own definition of this phenomenon. He stressed that Brodski as a poet was not torn between two cultures and two empires, and "he accomplishes what previous generations of émigré writers were unable to do: to make the lands of exile, however reluctantly, their own, to take possession through the poetic word."[42] Brodsky's poetic language, in Miłosz's view, became a means through which his national identity was transmitted, and thus Miłosz's own choice of Polish as a language for his poetry is of primary importance when it comes to discussing his migrant identity.

The English language served Miłosz as a medium in his contacts with his Western audience; however, the issue of the poet's relations with his non-native readers was more complex than with Polish readers.[43] Working closely with translators, Miłosz retained near-total control over translations of his poems into English. In his correspondence with Bogdan Czaykowski, he stressed the importance of his own involvement in the process of translation, and saw it as

41 „*Fortunate Travelers.* (1986) Editorial", Poetry Review, June, p. 3

42 Miłosz, Czesław (1980) *A Struggle against Suffocatio", The New York Review of Books,* 14 Aug., s.23

43 See Karwowska, Bożena (2000) op. cit.pp. 25-26

necessary in order to preserve the rhythm and poetic diction of his poems in translation; that is, the "voice of the originals". Moreover, many of his essays were written in English, among them both his essays on exile. Regardless of his attempts to connect with his Western audience through their own language, from the American point-of-view, he was, for years, seen as "the other". Anglo-American critics did not see Miłosz as a cosmopolitan poet, not only because of the language of his verses, but also because his poems were deeply rooted in his native culture and traditions.

In the *Tribune* article mentioned earlier, Shastri Ramachandarana argues that the formation of a migrant identity acceptable to the receiving culture does not necessarily mean that exiles must model themselves after the inhabitants of their new country. It is not the recognition of their new cultures that is a sign of acceptance for artists-exiles in their receiving countries, but, rather, the society's openness toward "recognition and acceptance of the identity for cultural membership in society".[44] Looking at things from this perspective, one might see Miłosz's efforts in translating and promoting contemporary Polish poetry among English-speaking audiences as an attempt at familiarizing his Western readers with the tradition on which the poet based his identity as a writer. For Miłosz, the West becoming well-versed in Polish literature was less important than its acceptance by English-speaking readers and the interpretive community, even if this acceptance was based on a very limited number of translated texts or if Miłosz introduced it through such clichés as "from the perspective of cobblestones" or the "naked experience" that, in a stereotypical way, became very popular among British and American critics.[45] This approval also made possible the acceptance of Miłosz's identity and, despite his "otherness", recognition of his poetic membership in the culture of his new country. One should, however, remember that during the years Miłosz spent in the USA, the country that gave him shelter evolved, especially in terms of views on the roles immigrants might play in the formation and development of American culture. And while in 1982, Carol Stocker in *The Boston Globe* wrote, that Miłosz "as a fully formed artist, (…) has resisted Americanization",[46] in 1999 Robert Pinsky opined that Miłosz is "an essential American poet – perhaps even the most

44 www.tribuneindia.com/2004/20040905/spectrum/book2.htm
45 See Karwowska, Bożena (2000) op.cit., p. 25-26.
46 Stocker, C. (1982) *Seeking Truth: The Poet the Poles Couldn't Gag.* The Vancouver Sun, 7 June p.B7

important living American poet",[47] which did not come as a surprise. During those 20 years, the treatment of émigré writers has significantly changed, and their Americanization is no longer mandated by loyalty to one nation and one culture only. Thus, the Americanization of Miłosz can be understood as his ability to take part in the most important critical discourses of the Anglo-American world.

Marc Robinson believes that in the final stage of exile writers slowly come to terms with their reality (also their artistic one); that is, the fact that "what the exiles thought they were seeking in a new country wasn't available, and what they hoped to escape was inescapable, and that what they never dreamed of getting, they got",[48] to use the critic's words. Miłosz, on the other hand, thought that

> "The recovery is low and never complete. There is a period when we refuse to recognize that our displacement is irrevocable and no political or economic changes in the country of our origin can bring about our return. Then slowly we come to the realization that exile is not just a physical phenomenon of crossing state borders, for it grows on us, transforms us from within, and becomes our fate".[49]

The last stage then brings up the question of whether returning to one's homeland is possible at all. Exile becomes a second nature, an identity, and journeys back are quite often disappointing. In 1999, referring to Miłosz's then new book *Road-Side Dog,* Robert Fulford thus describes the author:

> "In old age, Miłosz has split his life between Kraków and Berkeley, where he taught at the University of California for two decades. Why go back to California? To feel, as he might put it, not-at-home. The nomadic life, forced on him by history, long ago became essential to his personality. He will not give up his outsider status: A Polish patriot, he nevertheless regrets (as he wrote in a journal entry, published three years

47 Pinsky,Robert (1999) *Czesław Miłosz.* Partisan Review, 1, p. 145.
48 Robinson, Marc (1994) op. cit. p. xix.
49 http://www.masters-phptography.com/K/koudelka/koudelka_articles.2.html

> ago) that some of his poems 'promote that moaning – noble – patriotic Polish blockheadedness', he regrets 'my bouts of national orthodoxy' even more than his flirtations with communism. Years ago, talking to a journalist, he speculated on why he had chosen California. Perhaps it was because 'it gave me a perfect feeling of estrangement and isolation', which 'is part of being alive in the 20th century'. That emotion has always been an essential force in his poetry; the ruptures he has experienced, and the tragedies he has witnessed, are lodged in every line, so firmly placed that they easily survive translation into English".[50]

Finally, let us add some remarks about the professional identity of writers, which seems to help at least some of them survive many of the challenges of living in exile. Paul Michael Lutzeler[51] argues that in contemporary, postmodern societies, one's main social identity is connected not so much with the family, nation, religion or political beliefs, as with professional life. In the contemporary world, therefore, where most migration occurs as the result of one searching for work, formation of a professional identity is especially timely and important. Processes leading to the formation of a post-migrant identity can be studied only thanks to a considerable body of works written by emigrants. Unlike other professionals, exiled writers, even with displacement (and lack of readers) do not lose their professional identity,[52] especially if it is rooted in the ethos of poet-the-prophet or seer. Regardless of each of their respective situations, writer-émigrés have reinforced their professional identities by taking up a pen and putting a piece of paper in front of them (or turning on a computer, as it were). In this way, the theme of exile quite frequently serves artists as a literary link with the cosmopolitan tradition of writers in exile. "A majority of exiled authors have used the medium of autobiographical writing to describe their journey through the hell of persecution and the purgatory of exile," stresses Klaus Weissenberger.[53] The critic also adds that some of them were also able

50 Fulford, R.(1999) *Czeslaw Milosz.*, Globe and Mail. May 15, (http://www.robertfulford.com/Milosz.html)

51 Lutzeler, Paul Michael (2001) *Moving in Circles. Identity Formation in the Postmodern Condition* in Docker, J. and Fischer,G.(eds) *Adventures of Identity. European Multicultural Experiences and Perspectives.*, Stauffenburg, Tubingen. p.4.

52 See Miłosz, Czesław (1976) op.cit.

53 Weissenberger,Klaus (2001) T*ranscending the Limitations of Exile* in Docker,J. and Fischer, G.(eds) op.cit. p.179.

to achieve very convincing positions of autonomy, which he sees as the position of a chosen one, somebody who sees and understands more than others. Interestingly, Marc Robinson, in a similar way, sees the position of exiles as oriented toward the culture they come from.

> "Unfettered by old obligations, unswayed by cultural assumptions, blissfully unheedful (at least for a moment) of the customs of the country, the most energetic exiles have the opportunity to see things from an unvisited perspective – to enjoy a degree of sensitivity and acuity unavailable to most non-exiles".[54]

Weissenberg's observations provide an interesting conclusion to the study presented here, Miłosz being one of the literary figures discussed in his work. It is not only the poet who had to reach different readers in both his homeland and abroad: the critics and scholars studying his writings also have to look at it in different contexts and from different perspectives. Miłosz explained his role as a prophet or seer to his readers (especially to his international audience), through analogies with Polish romanticism and Adam Mickiewicz, stressing also the untranslatability of Polish literature and its rituals.[55] American critics, however, describe this assumption of the position of the prophet/seer as a typical gesture of "self-proclamation," allowing exiles to transgress the limits of "geographical" identities, replacing them with "spiritual," abstract models.

> "Czesław Miłosz's depiction of man between nature and culture, history and transcendence, religion and science or Christianity and negation appears paradigmatic of modern man. It also serves as an example of the possible interrelation between the realistic and messianic self-proclamation of the exile author. (…) Miłosz does not deny reality, but he recognizes its eschatological dimensions" states Weissenberg.[56]

54 Robinson, Marc. (1994), op.cit. p. xvi-xvii
55 Good example here is Miłosz's Nobel Prize speech (1980).
56 Weissenberger, Klaus (2001) op.cit. p. 186.

By the same token, the uni-national (or, specifically, Polish) tradition of the poet as prophet is inscribed in the international tradition (history) of émigré writers. The position of a loner, a prophet (assumed by Miłosz, but also by many other writers) can be seen, on the one hand, as a gesture helping to preserve the social, professional identity of a writer and, on the other hand, allows artists to cross a geographic, national "belonging" to a specific culture and language, whereby both simultaneous phenomena synthesize to turn them into "general", cosmopolitan literary figures. Herein, we find Miłosz, once again, turns out to be a writer whose international connections and influence we are still only just discovering. ■

1951, or the consequences of the “Miłosz affair”

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On February 1st 1951, Czesław Miłosz finally made his request for political asylum in France. This step was initially kept secret for over three months. It was only on May 15th that Miłosz announced his decision to break ties with communist Poland, during a press conference organized in Paris by the Congress for the Freedom of Culture, on the premises of the *Preuves* review, rare bastion of the non-communist intelligentsia in Paris at the time.

The reasons for the three month wait were, on the one hand, to give Miłosz time to write his grand article entitled *“No”*, published in the May edition of *Kultura*,[1] in which he explains the deep motives for his decision. On the other hand, Miłosz neeed time to lay the groundwork for his work of indictment *The Captive Mind,* which would not appear until 1953, but whose fundamental structure was already contained within *The Great Temptation,*[2] an essay directed at Western intellectuals, which appeared in mid-1951, when this period of limbo came to an end.

These three months were to have great importance not only for the future of Miłosz’s writing, for the role he would take on at the heart of Polish culture, and the personal and institutional alliances he would choose, but also for the positioning of the emigrant community and the polarization of political, cultural and editorial strategies between émigré’s centers of London and Paris.

Two decades later, in a tribute dedicated to Zbigniew Hertz published in the March 1980 issue of *Kultura,* looking back on this period, Miłosz would write: “Identity crises are, in the course of everyone’s life, thresholds which can trip us up. Knowing who you are, what role you play and before which human community, however limited it may be…”[3] is crucial.

1 Miłosz, Czesław (1951a) Nie in Kultura, May, 1951, nr 5.
2 Miłosz, Czesław (1951b) *La grande tentation: le drame des intellectuels dans les démocraties populaires* in Essais et Témoignages: Collection de la Revue *Preuves,* Société des éditions des Amis de la liberté, Paris, 1951.
3 Miłosz, Czesław (1980)“Progami, na których można rozbić się, są w życiu każdego kryzysy tożsamości. Wiedzieć kim się jest, jaką przyjmuje się rolę i wobec jakiej, choćby niedużej grupy ludzi, jak jest się widzianym przez innych…” *A tribute dedicated to Zbigniew Hertz* in *Kultura* 1980 (3) p.390. Reproduced in *Zygmunt Hertz, Listy do Czesława Miłosza* 1952-79. Instytut literacki, Paryż, 1992, p. 497.

Indeed, the degree and the violence of the crisis that Miłosz was going through (attested to in the correspondence between Giedroyć and those closely linked to *Kultura,* notably with Bobkowski, Vincenz, Stempowski etc.) was on a par with the identity crisis experienced by Polish culture in the immediate aftermath of the war, and the scope of reforms of the foundations of this culture which Giedroyć resolved to undertake, and in which Miłosz, alongside Gombrowicz, were to be key players. This is something the editor – first and foremost a political animal who drew them into political territory – did not fully realize at the beginning.

It is fascinating to look at Miłosz's decision, his personal tragedy, banishment and the internal journey he was to undertake after the painful year of 1951 in order to understand the fate of this gathering of Polish left-leaning intellectuals, to which Miłosz belonged and who, for the most part, stayed in or returned to Poland and were in different ways reduced to silence. We are only beginning to see, in the dispassionate debate which is slowly emerging in Poland (amongst the circles close to *Krytyka Polityczna* in particular) the importance that the encounter with Marxism, and the resounding and articulated refutation of it in a free dialogue, open to the challenges of modernity, would have for Polish culture.

What happened in 1951 with the "Miłosz affair", what it revealed, and above all the influence it had on the position of *Kultura* and the circle that Jerzy Giedroyć managed to form around himself, is crucial for Poland in the second half of the 20th century.

It was only after the "Miłosz affair" that a split emerged in emigrant circles and that Giedroyć and his line of attack of Polish culture became more and more defined by a marked opposition to Grydzewski's position and to the cultural policies of *Wiadomości.* At the same time, Miłosz's isolation in exile, the lack of understanding that surrounded him, his battles with those who attacked him from within the emigrant community and in predictable ways inside his country, illustrate the urgency and the crucial nature of his reflection on cultural reform in Poland. His other target, the Western readership, were no nearer to understanding him, yet he desired and expected them to read, driving him to articulate his confrontation with Marxism with the greatest possible clarity, thus allowing him to make the subject universal and avoid Polish parochialism.

Moreover, Gombrowicz, the other great reformer of the Giedroyć stable, isolated like Miłosz within the Polish emigrant community, was fascinated by

the solitary battle Miłosz waged with Western intellectuals for his own spiritual survival. Here is what he writes in his *Diary,* commenting on his reading of *The Captive Mind:*

> "Miłosz is fighting on two fronts. The point is not only to condemn the East in the name of Western culture, but also to impose one's own distinct experience and one's own new knowledge of the world – derived from over there - on the West. This almost personal duel between a modern Polish writer and the West, where the stakes are an exhibition of one's own value, power, distinctness, is far more interesting to me then Miłosz's analysis of Communist issues (…)".[4]

And further on, we read:

> "Miłosz is a first-rate force. This is a writer with a clearly defined purpose, called to quicken our pulse so that we can keep up with the epoch. He has a magnificent talent, finely tuned to bring his tasks to fruition".[5]

What Gombrowicz noticed immediately is the modernity of Miłosz's thought, the quickening in pace that this demanded, to allow Polish culture to keep up with the epoch. He sees a modern Polish writer face-to-face with Western culture.

The Captive Mind is therefore the culmination of the long slog that was 1951. Miłosz, after its publication, found himself alone, but he had gained some significant allies, including the faithful companionship of Gombrowicz. The roles Giedroyć would assign them in his vast project for Polish cultural reform were determined at that moment. Thus, the two showpieces of Giedroyc's campaign,

4 Gombrowicz, Witold (1988) *Diary I,* translated by Lillian Vallee. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL p. 13. Original text:" Miłosz walczy na dwa fronty : tu idzie nie tylko o to aby w imię kultury zachodniej potępić Wschód, lecz także, aby Zachodowi narzucić własne, odrębne przeżycie stamtąd wyniesione i swoją nową wiedzę o świecie. I ten pojedynek, już nieomal osobisty, polskiego nowoczesnego pisarza z Zachodem, gdzie gra toczy się o wykazanie własnej wartości, siły, odrębności, jest dla mnie ciekawszy niż analiza spraw komunizmu (…)". Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków, 1997, p. 23.

5 ibid. p.17. Original text: "Miłosz jest pierwszorzędną siłą. To pisarz o jasno określonym zadaniu, powołany do przyspieszenia naszego tempa, abyśmy nadążyli epoce – i o wspaniałym talencie, znakomicie przystosowany do wypełnienia tych przeznaczeń swoich." ibid. p. 29.

The Captive Mind[6] and *Trans-Atalantyk,*[7] appeared almost simultaneously, in 1953, marking the arrival on the scene of the Giedroyć's Literary Institute, as a publishing house, set to be the only strong and active voice of the Polish emigrant community.

The two texts respond to each other and resonate deeply. What's more, the discussion the two writers carry on, magnified in the columns of Kultura through Gombrowicz's Diary, allowed both to define their positions and establish themselves with regard to their readers.

In some ways, *The Captive Mind,* then *The Seizure of Power,*[8] published in the same year, are the only texts by Miłosz which Gombrowicz read closely. It was Miłosz as the great witness and interpreter of what Poland had just experienced which interested him and aided his understanding of the time. These two texts by Miłosz represent the missing link to the experience Gombowicz lacked, that is to say, the experience of living through war in his country. This is an experience which, as he states in reference to *The Seizure of Power* in his Diary, profoundly "drenched" Miłosz.

> "Miłosz is an experience for me. He is the only émigré writer who was really drenched by that tempest. Others, no. They were out in the rain but they all carried umbrellas. Miłosz was soaked to the skin and at the end the hurricane even tore the clothes off his back. He returned naked. Be happy that decency has been preserved! At least one of you is naked. You, the remainder, are indecent: dressed in your pantaloons, various style jackets, your ties and handkerchiefs. What shame! (…) Miłosz knows. Miłosz looked and experienced: in the flashing tempest something appeared to him… the Medusa of our times. Miłosz fell, ravaged by her gaze".[9]

6 Miłosz, Czesław (1953) *The captive mind,* translated by Jane Zielonko. A.A. Knopf, New York.
7 Gombrowicz, Witold (1985) *Trans-Atlantyk,* translated by Carolyn French and Nina Karsov. Yale University Press, New Haven.
8 Miłosz, Czesław (1982) *The seizure of power,* translated by Celina Wieniewska. Farrar, Straus, Giroux, New York.
9 Gombrowicz (1988) op. cit. p. 95. Original text: "Miłosz to dla mnie przeżycie. Jedyny z pisarzy na emigracji, którego naprawdę zmoczyła ta burza. Innych – nie. Byli wprawdzie na deszczu, ale z parasolami. Miłosz został zmoczony do nitki, a w końcu huragan zdarł z niego ubranie – wrócił nagi. Cieszcie się, że przyzwoitości stało się zadość! Przynajmniej jeden z was jest nagi. Wy, reszta, jesteście nieprzyzwoici – w waszych pantalonach i kurteczkach rozmaitego fasonu, z waszymi krawatami i husteczkami od nosa. Cóż za wstyd. " *op. cit.* pp.149-150.

So, what was the nature of the modernity experienced by Miłosz, and the voice he was to take on, which resounded so strongly in the post-war landscape? What was it, that so fascinated Gombrowicz?

It is the lesson Miłosz drew from the war years he spent in Warsaw that plays such a major role in his development and which made him so interesting to Gombrowicz.

From that point onwards, Miłosz's view of all he saw and described underwent a form of radicalization. It was precisely the saga of the war he experienced daily in Poland, unlike the majority of emigrant writers who for the most part left in 1939, which was to sharpen his view of reality. In fact, in 1939 he went in quite the opposite direction from the poets of *Skamander* for example. Miłosz, who ended up in Bucharest, managed to go from there to Vilnius, where he stayed until July 1940 and witnessed, on June 15th, the occupation of the town by the Soviets and the travesty of elections that took place a month later. He then managed to escape once more to join his wife in Warsaw, where he was to spend the rest of the war, up to the crushing defeat of the Warsaw Uprising.

Much later, he was to write in *Abecadło:* "I built my cocoon in that period and, at the same time, I felt that this Warsaw of horror was necessary to me, that I needed it to mature".[10]

The fact of having lived through this hell on a daily basis, alongside others, and separated from them by his rejection of the heroic attitude, is of crucial importance. (It is at this very moment that Miłosz realizes the devastating influence of romanticism in its messianic form, which was a result of encounter with Tadeusz Kroński, (1907-1958; the Hegelian philosopher and patron of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas; the well-known teacher of Kołakowski, Baczko, Beylin, and Pomian). Miłosz's diatribe against heroism, sparked directly by the horrors of war, in the heat of the moment, faced with death of friends, represents a much more tragic form of radicalism than that of Gombrowicz, who stood above the general fray. This position nonetheless had the advantage of a kind of meta-historicity which allowed Gombrowicz to compose an absolute indictment of Polish patriotism, launched from Argentina (and played out in two acts from *Trans-Atlantyk* to *Pornography*).

10 Miłosz, Czesław (2002) Abecadło. Wydawnictwo literackie, Kraków. p. 308. Original version: "Budowałem wtedy swój kokon i zarazem jakoś czułem, że tamta straszna Warszawa była dla mego dojrzewania potrzebna".

But for Miłosz, this indictment had an abstract flavour. In the letter to Gombrowicz which the latter quotes in his *Diary,* Miłosz writes:

> "From the Polish perspective (that is, from the perspective of the terrible thrashing which they got), the Poles, whom you try to free from their Polishness, are poor shadows with an unusually low degree of being..."[11]

For Miłosz, this collective experience was crucial. The breath of the recently dead and their haunting faces had a real, concrete intensity, exemplified in the poems of the superb *Voices of Poor People* cycle. In contrast, the publication in 1945 of the *Ocalenie (Salvation)* collection was a real blow. This is clear if we look at the example of *Café (Kawiarnia)* which portrays the hemorrhaging of disappearing friends:

> Of those at the table in the café
> where on winter noons a garden of frost glittered on windowpane
> I alone survived.
> I could go in there if I wanted to
> and drumming my fingers in a chilly void
> convoke shadows.[12]

Or at the haunting refrain of *A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto*

> Bees build around red liver,
> Ants build around black bone.[13]

which adopts the point of view of the dead.

11 Gombrowicz (1988) op. cit. p. 15. Original text: "Z perspektywy krajowej (czy w ogóle tęgiego bicia jakie się dostało), Polacy, których pan próbuje wyzwolić z polskości, są biednymi cieniami o niezwykle słabym stopniu istnienia…" op. cit. p. 26.
12 Miłosz, Czesław (1996) Poezje wybrane. Selected poems, translated by Czesław Miłosz. Wydawnictwo literackie, Kraków. p. 81. Original text:
Z tego stolika w kawiarni,
Gdzie w zimowe południa błyszczał ogród szronu,
Zostałem ja sam
Mógłbym tam wejść, gdybym chciał,
I bębniąc palcami w zimnej pustce
Przywoływać cienie.
13 ibid. p. 82. Original text:
Pszczoły obudowują czerwoną wątrobę,
Mrówki obudowują czarną kość,

It is here, faced with the haunting presence of the dead, with the power of the concrete viewpoint established in *Ocalenie,* and this act of looking "with", that his violent opposition to the sublimation of the nation really came to the fore. The solitary courage, which was represented in 1943 and 1944 by his rational split from the omnipresent pressure to heroism gives it its full tragic intensity.

> (…) others find peace in the idolatry of country,
> Which can last for a long time,
> Although little longer than the nineteenth century lasts.

we read in *The Poor Poet.* To which Miłosz replies a few lines later:

> To me is given the hope of revenge on others and on myself,
> For I was he - who knew.

And the revenge he takes is the following:

> I poise the pen and it puts forth twigs and leaves, it is covered with blossoms
> And the scent of that tree is impudent, for there, on the real earth,
> Such trees do not grow, and like an insult
> To suffering humanity is the scent of that tree.[14]

with all its cynicism, as he says at the beginning of the poem, and all the strength of the LIVING.

14 ibid. p. 79 . Original text :
Jedni chronią się w rozpacz, która jest słodka
Jak mocny tytoń, jak szklanka wódki wypita
w godzinie zatraty.
Inni mają nadzieję głupich, rózową jak
erotyczny sen.
Jeszcze inni znajdują spokój w bałwochwalstwie
ojczyzny,
Które może trwać długo,
Chociaż niewiele dłużej, niż trwa jeszcze
dziewiętnasty wiek.
Stawiam pióro, i puszcza pędy i liście,
okrywa się kwiatem,
A zapach tego drzewa jest bezwstydny,
bo tam, na realnej ziemi
Takie drzewa nie rosną i jest jak zniewaga
Wyrządzona cierpiącym ludziom zapach
tego drzewa
Ale mnie dana jest nadzieja cyniczna,
Bo odkąd otworzyłem oczy, nie widziałem
nic prócz łun i rzezi,
Prócz krzywdy, poniżenia i śmiesznej hańby
pyszałków.
Dana mi jest nadzieja zemsty na innych
i na sobie samym,
Gdyż byłem tym, który wiedzial…

The influence of this "devilish alliance" with Kroński is therefore crucial. It is the most significant turning point in his career as a writer, a real aesthetic transvaluation. Indeed, the nature of their discussions and their subsequent correspondence between 1945 and 1951, which Miłosz only decided to publish in 1998, in the fascinating book *Straight After the War (Zaraz po Wojnie)*[15] constitute critical stages in Miłosz's development. It has significant documentary value. The importance of this book and the fundamental debates it contains is crucial for the history of Polish culture in the latter half of the 20th century and I think we still have much to learn from it. Only Miłosz, with the moral authority he had, could establish a dispassionate discussion about the historical material the book contains.

It is this fundamentally dialectic nature of Miłosz's development that Gombrowicz picked up on, and which fascinated him, this ability to readjust and force himself to adapt to the Spirit of the Time, ("He possesses something that is worth its weight in gold, something that I would call a 'will to reality' and, at the same time, a sensitivity to the crucial points of our crisis" – writes Gombrowicz in his *Diary,*[16] but what he also possesses is a constant desire to flee, to turn his back on this very historicity.

What is more, Miłosz was painfully conscious of this, as he writes in a piece dedicated to Gombrowicz himself, "I am perfectly aware of how soul-destroying, hopeless and humiliating a life spent in the service of historicity is, in the long term. But I am just as aware of the void, impotence and paralysis caused when you abandon this path".[17]

But it is precisely this in-between position *(pomiędzy)* so dear to Gombrowicz that, in his eyes, gave Miłosz the extraordinary advantage of being a barometer of his time. His contradictions, analyzed lucidly and accepted in a continuous process of renegotiation with himself and his time, were systematically surpassed… until the following crisis.

In the famous debate on poetry, which set Gombrowicz against Miłosz in the columns of *Kultura,* Gombrowicz very neatly captured the fundamentally dialectic aspect of Miłosz's creative progression:

15 Miłosz, Czesław (1998) *Zaraz po wojnie. Korespondencja z pisarzami 1945-1950.* Znak, Kraków.
16 Gombrowicz (1988) op. cit. p.29. Original text: "Posiada coś na wagę złota, co nazwałbym 'wolą rzeczywistości', a zarazem wyczucie punktów drastycznych naszego kryzysu".
17 Miłosz, Czesław (1958) *Gombrowiczowi in Kontynenty,* Paryż, p. 222. Original text: "Jak wysuszająca, jak zgubna, jak upadlająca na dalszą metę jest służba historyczności (historicité), wiem dobrze. Ale jaką pustkę, jaką niemoc, jaką niemotę powoduje wyrzeczenie się tej służby, wiem też".

I am Miłosz. Miłosz I must be
By being Miłosz, Miłosz wants not to be….
I kill the Miłosz in me so
More Miłosz I can be…[18]

"This comes down to saying – continues Gombrowicz - that the essence of man lies in his development and this development occurs through a perpetually renewed act of suicide. We must kill what already exists in ourselves to reach what will be (…) The poet seeks to free himself of the poet for the advancement of poetry itself".[19]

And Giedroyć's genius lay in his ability to understand this and open up the columns of *Kultura* to these two voices which, by confronting one another, reverberated discordantly in the immediate post-war period. Indeed it was precisely in 1951, when Miłosz, supported and encouraged by those close to *Kultura,* raised his voice to say NO, that Giedroyć realized the importance of the voices coming from the other side of the Iron Curtain. It was at precisely this point that the editorial line of *Kultura* was established: to maintain a dialogue, at whatever cost.

The open-mindedness and curiosity he showed by keeping up ties with those thinking and writing on the other side, mark the defining qualities of Giedroyć as an editor. *Kultura*'s fierce opposition to the impermeability of the iron curtain would end in a head-on confrontation with Grydzewski, when he forced the writers in the emigrant circles to maintain their 'splendid isolation' and refuse editorial offers coming from Poland following the "thaw" of 1956. This was a great error on the part of *Wiadomosci* and demonstrates *Kultura*'s foresight.

Miłosz's and Gombrowicz's obstinacy, demonstrated in their correspondence with Giedroyć and in how frequently they locked horns, no doubt contributed to the preservation of this celebrated "historicity", whose dangers they understood so well, but whose stimulating influence they also felt.

18 Original text:
Jestem Miłoszem, Miłoszem być muszę
Będąc Miłoszem, Miłoszem być nie chcę,
Miłosza w sobie zabijam ażeby
Bardziej Miłoszem być tego co będzie (…)

19 Original text: "Ten poeta usiłuje wydobyć sie z poety po to, aby ruszyć z miejsca poezję" Co sie wykłada, że istotą człowieka jest rozwój, a rozwój dokonuje się na drodze nieustannego samobójstwa. Musimy uśmiercić w sobie to co jest, ażeby dojść do tego co będzie (…)Ten poeta usiłuje wydobyć się z poety po to aby ruszyć z miejsca poezję".

Jerzy Jarzębski wrote in an excellent critical essay on these two writers, published in *Teksty* just after the Nobel Prize was awarded to Miłosz:

> "Gombrowicz and Miłosz are undeniably fundamentally different, everything sets them apart : their childhood, family relationships, their characters, and the lives they led. Yet because they are both deeply rooted in their time, a space for dialogue between them can be created. However the strongest link between them runs indirectly from the fact that they became the key thinkers for a generation of young intellectuals in Poland. And so the logical bond between them and the positions they occupy is formed in the discussions of their reader-disciples, for whom the ideas put forward by Gombrowicz and Miłosz function as alternative responses to the challenges of the historical situation".[20]

This critical judgment, written in the middle of the turmoil of the early 1980s, now has the value of historical testimony. It did justify, thirty years later, the effort of self-elucidation carried out by Milosz in 1951. How far from this statement is today's young generation of Polish intellectuals?

"Both deeply rooted in their time, creating a space for dialogue" yes, but Miłosz remains Giacometti's *Walking Man,* going forward with his gaze fixed on what is, hand in hand with History, while Gombrowicz prefers to adopt the pose of Rodin's *Thinker,* taking a meta-historical stance. And yet they feed on one another, hence the importance of their dialogue for Polish culture.

What is the importance of this dialogue in our days and for generations to come, when they will seek guidance in their grappling with History? ▪

Translated from French by Francesca Barrie

20 Jarzębski, Jerzy (1981) in Teksty nr 4-5. Original text : "Gombrowicz i Miłosz są niewątpliwie różni do szpiku kości: dzieli ich urodzenie, stosunki rodzinne, charakter, życiowe przejścia. Obaj są jednak synami swojej epoki, istnieje więc pewna sfera możliwych między nimi porozumień. Jedno z istotniejszych wynika niejako pośrednio z faktu, że obaj stali się nauczycielami młodego pokolenia intelektualistów w Polsce. Zatem logiczny pomost między stanowiskami wytwarza się w środowisku odbiorców-wyznawców, dla których propozycje Gombrowicza i Miłosza funkcjonują jako alternatywne odpowiedzi na wyzwanie historycznej sytuacji."

And Greece / Who Remembers It Here. America in the Poetry of Czesław Miłosz (1945 – 1950)

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Abstract

This paper discusses poetry written by Czesław Miłosz during his first American period, between 1945 and 1950. The focus is on poems born from the confrontation of a European with American culture, a European who lived through the Second World War and the Nazi occupation of Warsaw.

The Departure from Poland to America

Like many Polish artists and intellectuals, in the spring of 1945, following the destruction of Warsaw, Miłosz sought refuge in Kraków. The literary circle gathered at Kanonicza Street, in a tense atmosphere of concern over the future, the upcoming reforms and new directions. According to some testimonials, Miłosz wanted to leave Poland, to get away from its suffocating atmosphere of the end of an era. Moreover, leaving for America could finally open up new frontiers, expand his horizons and provide a feeling of security. And so, in 1945, Miłosz became a diplomat at the Consulate General of the People's Republic of Poland in New York. He was relieved to leave for many reasons, but his aching memories of Europe and a particular sensitivity remained very much alive.

There was nothing about the end of WWII that called to mind the end of WWI, which was marked by outbursts of energy and followed by the "Roaring Twenties". WWII was a deadly war, especially in Europe, marked by the Holocaust and unprecedented human, material and spiritual destruction. Poland came out of it under a new – Soviet – occupation, a radicaly different ideological system and with new borders. The war left behind an aura of horror, guilt and a feeling of disaster. The poet captures this sentiment in these bitter words of the poem:

> We, from the fiery furnaces, from behind barbed wires
> On which the winds of endless autumns howled,
> We, who remember battles where the wounded air roared in paroxysms of pain,
> We, saved by our cunning and knowledge.

/…/
We sealed gas chamber doors, stole bread,
Knowing the next day would be harder to bear than the day before.
(Child of Europe)[1]

Touching upon guilt, Miłosz echoes the writing of Tadeusz Borowski, who in his *World of Stone*[2] describes the world of concentration camps from the point of view of survival and "resourcefulness" and thus in first person singular. Miłosz, who lived through and survived many events, such as the occupation of Warsaw, the Warsaw Uprising and, prior to that, the Ghetto Uprising, recalls excruciating and overpowering images:

Wiatr biegający szosą zatrzepocze
Suknią na trupie kobiety i schodzi
Miasto płonące długie dni i noce
W legendę, która klęsk nie wynagrodzi
(Central Park)[3]

When he came to New York, Miłosz arrived in a country that had not experienced war. He fell in love with American nature, certain aspects of which reminded him of Lithuanian landscapes. He sought to leave behind the traumatic experiences he had endured. He wanted to seize the opportunity for regeneration and a new beginning, as illustrated by this quotation:

Ja byłem świadkiem nieszczęść, wiem co znaczy
Życie oszukać kolorem pamiątek.
Radośnie słucham twoich ślicznych nut
Na wielkiej, wiosną odnowionej ziemi.
Mój dom sekunda: w niej świata początek.
Śpiewaj! Na perłę popielatych wód

1 Miłosz, Czesław (2003) *New and Collected Poems (1931-2001)*. Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., New York.
2 Borowski, Tadeusz (1948) *World of Stone* (*Kamienny Świat*; opowiadanie w dwudziestu obrazach. Czytelnik, Kraków.)
3 Quotations of poems not available in English translation are given in original Polish.

Syp rosę pieśni z brzegów Potomaku!
(Na śpiew ptaka nad brzegami Potomaku)[4]

But the American reality was sometimes so powerfully different from what he had just experienced that it merely generated a feeling of unreality and guilt. Miłosz made quite an effort to overcome the memories of the past and certain American traits ”angered” him. In this country that had not experienced war since the War of Secession, Miłosz discovered people who lived as if all the events of recent years were already far in the past and barely concerned them. For the poet as well, crossing the ocean, the passage from wounded Europe to prosperous America, was like a dream, an unbelievable, somewhat indecent dream.

In the poem The Spirit of the Laws Miłosz wrote:

From the cry of children on the floors of stations beyond time,
From the sadness of the engineer of prison trains,
From the red scars of two wars on the forehead,
I awoke under the bronze of winged monuments,
Under the griffins of a Masonic temple
With the dying ash of a cigar.[5]

What surprised the Polish poet the most about American reality was the relationship Americans had with civilizational advancement, taken as continued progress, shielded from sudden destruction and outbursts of violence brought about by humans.

Minęliśmy wyspy
Zmieniały się wiosny,
Dziewczęta w policzkach
Puch brzoskwin przyniosły,
Neony w zieleni
Iskrami przebiegły,
Strumienie gitary
Z gór leśnych oddźwiękły,

4 ibid. p.254.
5 Miłosz, Czesław (2003) op.cit. p. 97.

I usta złączone
Nad światłem liczników
Jechały asfaltem
Pod skrzydłem pomników
(Przypomnienie (Remembering))[6]

The subject of the above statement is a consensual "we," wholly in harmony with its thoughts and actions. Nature returns to prosperity and to sexuality. For example, "i usta złączone nad światłem liczników", reflecting on a couple embracing in a car, is also a hint of a union between the biological and the mechanical worlds. Those who inhabit this reality are convinced that they are building a world free of the trials and tribulations of the past. They seem to think that their civilization is creating the equivalent of a new Nature, the old one being nothing more than a decoration. The mention of "islands" at the beginning of the poem seems to take us into a quasi-utopian space akin to Thomas More's island in *Utopia,* where time has no grasp on the reality of the new world, where it flows differently and affects humans in a completely different way.

Time and History

Time is a central fact: the poet came from a world where historical time appears to be not only accelerated, but also condensed by all of the events that occurred and the cruelty they brought about. Historical events in Europe revealed the human – and therefore transitory – nature of what we call culture or civilization. While in America, the time of nature and the time of history (human time), appear to come together, become intertwined and unfold alongside each other in harmony.

However, human time and human history do not belong to the order of the time of nature, the latter appearing more as a regular and predictable cycle. Human time – on the other hand – is open to "events", to the unknown, to contingency:

Kto raz przekroczyl próg mikrokosmosu,
W którym się ludzkie odprawiają dziwa,

6 Miłosz, Czesław (2011) op.cit. p. 276.

Niech wie, że zemsty złośliwego losu
Co dzień spokojem obojętnym wzywa.
(Central Park)[7]

Humanity is a "wonder," somewhere between amazement and terror. The chorus in Sophocles' Antigone said as much: "Many are the wonders of the world, but none more wondrous than man".The ultimate tragic question is "what is man?" That is the question the Sphinx, in the myth, asked Oedipus walking on the road to Thebes towards his unknown fate. Trying to escape from what is assigned to every human being, what the Greeks called "fate," meant exposing oneself to the wrath of the gods. Entering into humanity means entering into these "wonders," that incessantly amaze and terrorize. The poet uses the old warning in Greek myths and tragedies: pride and hubris always attract vengeance or punishment of gods and fate, of cosmic necessity, the ancient *Ananke.*

Other verses of the poem titled *Central Park* are true warnings, made just after evoking the burning of Warsaw:

Jest w tym spomnieniu przestroga zawarta
Dla tych, co w miękkich lożach będą spali:
Że poplamione różem prześcieradła
Nierzadko ogień wędrowny przepali
(Central Park)[8]

The inhabitants of the "New World" appear to the poet filled with a steadfast sense of security, even manifesting a sort of superiority over Europeans, through their enjoyment of their "innocence." They behave as if the world had just begun and seem not to want to know anything about, or feel concerned by, what was happening elsewhere. As if their conscience prevented any type of empathy or historical imagination:

Oni nie słysza. Jakby ziemia świeża
Pierwsza z potopu wyłoniła palmę,

7 ibid. p 267.
8 ibid. p.267.

Jedno drugiemu z drzeniem się powierza
I wchodzą w ciche gaje seksualne.
(Central Park)[9]

As if the oceans, that border this continent on all sides like an island, protected it, like the sea protects the inhabitants of *Utopia,* from all misfortunes of history.

The Wars After the "Great War"

While in New York, Miłosz realized that historical adversity, like a monster unleashed, did not die in Europe in 1945. War never stopped in certain countries of the Old Continent. As part of agreements between former allies, some of them were "handed over" – as was the case of Miłosz's birth country, Lithuania, and other Baltic countries, where massive deportations of local population took place as the West stood silent. In Poland, borders were changed and communists took over the government. The situation was tragic: people who fought for years against the Nazis saw themselves being relegated to the "wrong side" and accused of treason. In Greece, a civil war began. During the meeting held between Stalin and Churchill in September 1944, 90% of influence over Greece was granted to the British. It was, nevertheless, the Greek communist maquis that had waged a successful war against the occupying forces. The Greek civil war was tremendously cruel and produced thousands of victims. The poem *Remembering was written* as a powerful response to these dramatic events.

Inspired by the Greek civil war fought between 1946 and 1949, the poem can also be read against the background of its complex network of references to Ancient Greece, which was mostly irrelevant in the America of the forties. Far from being grandiose in style, the poem is written in a rhythm that is short and "naive":

Świat nasz niewątpliwie
Na lepsze się zmienia.
Błyszczącej machinie
Poddana jest ziemia.
Nieszczęście nawiedza

9 ibid,p.267

Nieszczęsne krainy,
Z nas każdy szczęśliwy,
Bo wolny od winy.
Los węsząc zagubi
Wiodące tu tropy,
Ocean nas dzieli
Od złej Europy
I Wolność podróżnym
Da znak na okrętach.
O Grecji, o Grecji
Któż tutaj pamięta
(Remembering)[10]

The Voices in *Remembering*

The subject in the above stanza, in the first person plural, looks at progress as continuous and tangible, and considers happiness as assured for all – all those who are far "from bad Europe," newcomers and immigrants, which is, after all, the status of many inhabitants of the New World – who arrived from Europe or elsewhere at one time or another. This "we" seeks, above all, to believe in progress, in the existence of at least one country spared from history's atrocities, where technical progress will create a new nature, favourable to man; where "fault" and guilt can be forgotten. Leaving Europe, crossing the ocean, is the means of escaping the tragic "fate" of history. This fate takes on the form of a ferocious animal in the poem – as if emerging from the myth of the goddess Artemis, whose dogs ripped apart poor Actaeon, or the tragedy of the Bacchae who tore apart the body of King Pentheus of Thebes piece by piece, believing him to be a lion. Or, in a more realistic way, it refers to security forces dogs sniffing for traces of fugitives. In the same manner that water presents an impenetrable barrier and separates the hunters from the hunted, so the ocean dilutes the tracks and paths taken by adversity. Yet the potential victims of fate, once beyond its reach, are comforted by the idea of their innocence, and through a sort of reversal, transfer the guilt onto those who stayed behind on the other side of the ocean.

10 Miłosz, Czesław (2011) op.cit. p. 276

The poet implies that the "sign of freedom," which one assumes is the Statue of Liberty, seen by the newcomers from the ships approaching New York, instead of being a symbol of the primordial concept of human liberty could merely be a "sign" of language, of speech, or even of ideological discourse. This discourse calls to adhere to the dominant convictions of progress, of prosperity, of the flaws left behind and the guilt of those who fight for wild, impossible dreams. Using poetic irony, disenchanted Miłosz introduces the vox populi which expresses an unprecedented condemnation of the Greek fighters, who are merely humble shepherds, who know only weapons and combat, powerless and unable to participate in any civic, political, democratic discussions and negotiations.

Że gdzieś tam daleko
Wciąż wojna się pali?
To zdarza się tylko
Wśród ciemnych górali.
Za skarb cały mają
Opończę baranią
I życie tak nędzne
Szacują zbyt tanio.
To los barbarzyńców
Rozprawiać się krwawo.
Nie im demokracja.
Bo obce im prawo.
Więc ginąć gotowi
Na rozkaz agenta.
O Grecji, o Grecji
Któż tutaj pamięta.
(Remembering)[11]

Contrary to the *vox populi,* the poet's voice appears weak, indistinct – swallowed up by the "our" of "our world." It expresses its discordant view only in the rhyming couplet that ends each stanza, which is in no way melodious, but is an anxious question, a search for, a call out to even one person who can

11 Miłosz, Czesław (2011) op.cit. p. 276

remember… what Greece was for Western culture, since, by a cruel revival of historical vision, those who were at the origin of Western civilization, are now seen as barbarians.

In the last stanza of *Remembering,* a singular subject, an "I" to which we can attribute the final couplet of each stanza, detaches itself from the "we" that came before and questions the conclusions put forward in the preceding stanzas.

> O, powiedz mi, czym się
> Sens ludzkich spraw mierzy:
> Czy portów bogactwem
> I ceną przymierzy
> Czy co dzień gaszoną
> Pochodnią nadziei
> Ludów na lepsze
> I gorsze nie dzieli?
> Milcz i nie mów,
> Że walczą mocarstwa,
> Prochu z urn greckich
> Odpowie ci garstka.
> I właśnie dlatego
> Ten kraj się pamięta
> Że wspólna rzecz nasza
> Tam była zaczęta.
> *(Remembering)*[12]

This "I" to which we can attribute the rhyming couplet at the end of each stanza, rebels and revolts. It asks about the meaning of the rules that govern human communities, of their ethical dimension. It protests against the segregation of humans into more "good" and less "good" people, more worthy or less worthy of rights and democracy. It recalls that "power" is comprised of men, who are individually responsible. If we look at others with disdain, then we have lost the continuity of generations and a rupture occurs in the transmission of culture and historical memory. Because these "barbarian mountain dwellers" are the heirs of another handful of resistance fighters, of those who stood up to

12 Miłosz, Czesław (2011) op.cit. p. 276.

an immense eastern empire: Persia. The echo of their presence can already be found in *Child of Europe,* a poem in which Miłosz pointed out the European legacy to the mid-20th century man, whom he calls the "posthumous child of Leonidas." The companions of Leonidas also gave up their lives with no ulterior motive.

The Light of Ancient Greece

In order to grasp the reality of his country of arrival, in order to write about it, comprehend it, analyze and discuss it, Miłosz used a network, a web of notions, concepts, sometimes taken from the long term of human experience – here the Greek tragedy and certain episodes of Greek history. He used parallels and analogies to historical eras during which similar events occurred, certain aspects of which may illustrate what is new and what is old about the present era and situations that the poet must confront and represent.

Miłosz found interesting and enlightening analogies in history: the history of this brilliant center at the height of Greek culture, Athens, economic power, birthplace of the arts, drama, philosophy, political thought, that slumped during a long, cruel war, victim of its own riches and excessive dreams. Victorious in the Greco-Persian wars, with remarkable civic heroism, Athens became the first maritime and colonial power that included, by free will or force, other Greek cities in its political coalition. Athenian historian Thucydides, who was personally involved in this war before being chased out of his city, saw the first causes of this inter-Greek conflict to be "the immense accumulated riches" by both Athens and Sparta. After more than 30 years of conflict, called the Peloponnesian War, the two city states were exhausted. Defeated, Athens was demoted to the ranks of provincial city, albeit still culturally brilliant, within another empire, that of Philippe, then Alexander of Macedonia.

Thucydides' low-key style, his disenchanted view of men and their passions, as well as of the historical forces, which, once mobilized, go to the edge of their logic or development, came at the price of tremendous destruction. Miłosz was not the only one to notice a paradigm in the self-destruction of ancient Greek cities, analogous to what some people called the "suicide" of Europe, namely the two world wars of the 20th century.

The "birthplace of culture" lost its economic and political power, and slowly began to lose its cultural brilliance as well. As we all know, "centers" and "peripheries" are mobile. The Greeks, who saw themselves as the center, came

up with the word "barbarian" to describe those who lived in the peripheries and did not speak the language of men, but chirped like birds: "bar, bar." The "center" itself moved however: Rome, France, Great Britain, Germany, the Soviet Union and America have held, or hold, symbols of power. But real power means shaping the language and deciding on value systems, deciding where is the center and where is the periphery. The position of those deemed weak, powerless, "barbarians" is also ever changing.

The speaking subject of the poem *Remembering* protests, recalls the roots and the memory, questions and asks "who is civilized and who is a barbarian?" in the contemporary world.