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Ewa Kołodziejczyk

# CZESŁAW MIŁOSZ IN POSTWAR AMERICA

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Translated by Michał Janowski

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To Frank Surma



## Abbreviations

Extracts with titles in Polish within the main text have been translated by Michał Janowski.

<i>Zaraz po wojnie</i>	<i>Zaraz po wojnie. Korespondencja z pisarzami 1945-1950</i> , Kraków: SIW „Znak”, 2007.
<i>Kontynenty</i>	<i>Kontynenty</i> . Kraków: SIW „Znak”, 2007.
<i>Autoportret przekorny</i>	<i>Czesława Miłosza autoportret przekorny</i> . Rozmowy przeprowadził Aleksander Fiut, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1994.
<i>Podróżny świata</i>	Renata Gorczyńska [Ewa Czarnecka], <i>Podróżny świata. Rozmowy z Czesławem Miłoszem. Komentarze</i> , Kraków 1992.
<i>Abecadło</i>	<i>Abecadło</i> . Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1997.
<i>Inne abecadło</i>	<i>Inne abecadło</i> . Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1998.
<i>Rozmowy polskie 1978–1998</i>	<i>Rozmowy polskie 1979–1998</i> . Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2006.
<i>Rozmowy polskie 1999–2004</i>	<i>Rozmowy polskie 1999–2004</i> . Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2010.
<i>Wiersze 1</i>	<i>Wiersze tom 1</i> . Kraków: SIW „Znak”, 2001.
<i>Wiersze 2</i>	<i>Wiersze tom 2</i> . Kraków: SIW „Znak”, 2002.
<i>Wiersze 3</i>	<i>Wiersze tom 3</i> . Kraków: SIW „Znak”, 2003.
<i>Przekłady poetyckie</i>	<i>Przekłady poetyckie</i> . Kraków: SIW „Znak”, 2005.

Extracts with undermentioned abbreviations have been taken from the translations and editions:

<i>Miłosz's ABC's</i>	<i>Miłosz's ABC's</i> . Trans. Madeline G. Levine. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002.
<i>Invisible Rope</i>	<i>An Invisible Rope</i> . Portraits of Czesław Miłosz. Ed. By C. L. Haven, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010.
<i>The Issa Valley</i>	<i>The Issa Valley</i> . Trans. from the Polish Louis Iribarne. First publ. London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1981.
<i>Native Realm</i>	<i>Native Realm</i> . Trans. Catherine S. Leach. London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1981.
<i>A Year of the Hunter</i>	<i>A Year of the Hunter</i> . Transl. Madeline G. Levine, New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1994.

## Foreword: From the Adventures of a Twentieth-Century Gulliver

For the English-language reader of Czesław Miłosz's work who knows it only from translations of his poems and essays, Ewa Kołodziejczyk's book will be a real surprise, and undoubtedly a fascinating read. The author describes a little-known fragment of the Nobel laureate's biography – his stay in the United States from 1945 to 1950. The special value of this book, difficult to overestimate, is that it is based on rich, meticulously collected source material. It consists of texts by Miłosz from Polish and American magazines, but also, which is particularly valuable, his unpublished texts, preserved in various archives. Particularly interesting is the comparison of texts published in print, i.e. various articles, columns or essays, with secret reports sent by the poet to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw.

What portrait of Czesław Miłosz emerges from Ewa Kołodziejczyk's book? The simplest thing to say is that this is a visual description of the adventures of a twentieth-century Gulliver. This character was close to the poet, as the poem "Do Jonathana Swifta" [To Jonathan Swift] makes clear. Like his literary protagonist, Miłosz is forced to constantly face unexpected, risky experiences, different ways of thinking, and different systems of values, to constantly play the game imposed by changing social situations, adopt multiple masks and use mimicry in the process of adapting to surprising conditions, different cultural norms, and customs.

After all, this outstanding poet, the future author of the *The Captive Mind*, decides to play in the United States the role of a diplomat of the People's Republic of Poland. This Polish citizen, after the experiences of war, occupation and the imposition of a totalitarian system in his homeland, finds himself at the other end of the world, where the historical experience shapes individual and collective attitudes only to a small extent. This witness of brutal degradation of humanity, cruel Nazi terror, round-ups on the streets, executions, the Holocaust, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943, the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, the total extermination of a city of more than one million residents and the invasion of the Red Army – is confronted with a society for which the war happened somewhere far away, while respect for individual rights and for fundamental moral principles remains obvious and indisputable. The European, coming from the Old World that was ruined and impoverished by war, finds himself in the New World, which boasts of its prosperity, a far higher level of development and forms of social and political organization little known to him.

As part of the background of these multifaceted experiences of the twentieth-century Gulliver, the author includes Harry Truman's presidency and the beginnings of the Cold War in the United States, while in Poland and Central Europe, the growing dependence on the Soviet Union. It will be particularly interesting to an American reader to follow the process of getting to know his homeland in a certain historical period through the eyes of a clever observer who is, after all, not free from Eurocentrism. As Ewa Kołodziejczyk convincingly shows, despite the pressure of the outside world,

still hurting, full of moral scruples and aware of the price he has to pay for political conformism, Czesław Miłosz wants to remain faithful to his principles at all costs. Thus, he continues his efforts to bring English-language literature and American culture closer to the Polish reader through his translations and commentaries, and at the same time becomes an active promoter of Polish culture in the United States – as much in American intellectual circles as in the Polish community.

As in the case of Swift's hero, Miłosz's American adventures described by Ewa Kołodziejczyk form a parable about uprooting and putting down roots again. Gulliver, after all those adventures returned to his homeland; the Polish poet born in Lithuania was not given a chance to do so. After the collapse of the Soviet system and Poland regaining independence, he did not return to live in Wilno, the city of his youth, but in Krakow. But his first encounter with America remained an incredibly important period in his creative biography and in many ways it sculpted his poetic imagination.

*Aleksander Fiut*

## Acknowledgements

The book had been taking shape for a long time – since the year 2000. I made the decision to write it at the beginning of 2009, despite a multitude of doubts. It was connected with the reconstruction of Czesław Miłosz’s collection of postwar works which remain scattered across Poland and all over the world, which made the endeavor difficult at the outset. I owe a debt of gratitude to many people and institutions in Poland and the United States for allowing me access to Miłosz’s texts that were either unknown or difficult to access.

My research work in the United States was made possible in 2011, thanks to being awarded the Alexander and Christina Schenker Fellowship. I was able to conduct research in the Czesław Miłosz archive of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University. I am deeply grateful to the Schenkers for funding the fellowship to help scholars in the humanities interested in studying the archives of this extraordinary library. It is difficult to overestimate its importance for scholars of Polish literature, who have made efforts to integrate the knowledge of the scattered literature of the twentieth century. It is all the more difficult to estimate the value of the meetings and discussions with the founders of the fellowship. These meetings took place in such a charming atmosphere that it is not possible to remember them with anything but affection and longing. Working in the Beinecke Library is one of the greatest pleasures a researcher dedicated to archival work may experience. Schenker Fellows are cared for from the moment the Fellowship is awarded and indefinitely afterward. I would like to thank Ms. Doreen Powell and Ms. Stacy Smith for their care regarding the successful organization of the fellowship and my stay in New Haven, and Ms. Natalia Sciarini for carefully monitoring my orders, thanks to which I received all the excellent quality scans of manuscripts on time. I would like to thank all the librarians and staff of the Beinecke Library, in particular Ms. Moira Fitzgerald, who oversaw the progress of our work on a daily basis, for her professionalism, commitment, and kindness. I would like to thank Doctors Elspeth and Wojciech Jajdelski for their help in preparing my application for the scholarship at the Beinecke Library.

My stay of one month on the U.S. East Coast in 2011 was replete with adventures of non-scholarly nature. When Hurricane Irene made landfall, I was in a hurry to leave New York, where I had been staying for several days prior to the start of the fellowship at the Beinecke Library, when my reservation for a room in New Haven was cancelled, forcing me to find new accommodation for the entire period in just one day. In these difficult circumstances, invaluable help came from Mr. Frank Surma, to whom this book is dedicated, who kindly lent me his helping hand, as did Ms. Linda Hallenbeck, who gave us shelter from the hurricane in Albany. My first photographs of the hotel in western Manhattan, where Janina and Czesław Miłosz lived in 1946, were taken in August 2011, on the memorable night of the hurricane, around one A.M., thanks to

the determination of Frank Surma, who, despite a knee injury, arrived there with me several hours before the closing of the New York Subway.

My research in New Haven made me realize that on the East Coast of the United States there were many more archives necessary for my work. A return to New York was possible thanks to an invitation to the East Central European Center at Columbia University, which I owe to the commitment of Dr. Anna Frajlich-Zajęc and Professor John Micgiel. This invitation was a condition for applying for a scholarship from the Kosciuszko Foundation, which I would like to thank for supporting me with a grant for research. I would also like to thank Professors Alexander Schenker, Marian Stala and Ryszard Nycz for recommending my candidacy for the scholarship, and Dr. Jeffrey Mancini for his meticulous reading of my application. I thank Director Iwona Dręc-Korga and President Magdalena Kapuścińska for their hospitality at the Józef Piłsudski Institute during the scholarship. Three months of research work at the Butler Library in Columbia, the New York Public Library, and at the Library of the Józef Piłsudski Institute in spring 2013 enabled me to build a vision of the book as a whole and to find a great deal of information about the realities of postwar New York and Washington. The staff of the Kosciuszko Foundation, Columbia University, the Butler Library and the Józef Piłsudski Institute shared my enthusiasm and were personally involved in helping with the project that they themselves considered important. I would particularly like to thank Professor Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier for making the Manfred Kridl archive in the Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library available. It is a priceless source of knowledge about Polish studies at Columbia, the relations between Polish emigrants and government diplomacy, and a testimony to the meetings, cooperation and conversations with young Miłosz, who found constant support in his former teacher from Wilno. Similar thanks are owed to Mr. Henryk Grynberg, who made available to me the archive of his own writings in the Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library, including his correspondence with Czesław Miłosz, which had not been catalogued. Daily professional help in archiving the sources was provided by the manager of the Digital Humanities Center in the Butler Library, Mr. Bob Scott, as well as an employee of the center, Dr. Zane Mackin. I am grateful to Dr. David Goldfarb from the Polish Cultural Institute in New York for his suggestions, bibliographical guidelines and contacts with Miłosz's collaborators and American translators. I would like to thank the staff of the Library of Congress, the Kosciuszko Foundation, the United Nations Archive in New York, the Rockefeller Foundation Archive, the Guggenheim Museum Archive, Hunter College, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Holyoke College, Smith College and Amherst College for conducting searches related to Miłosz's stay on the East Coast for me. Both American scholarships were of great personal value to me, going far beyond the academic sphere. The efforts of Ms. Katarzyna Tychańska, Mrs. Anna Frajlich-Zajęc, Mr. Władysław Zajęc, and Mr. John Micgiel resulted in me leaving New York enriched by the experience of our encounters.



Historical literary books are always written in a certain academic environment and they owe much of their value to it. I had the pleasure and privilege of talking about my book with many people who were interested in it. For all the inspiration and kindness coming from these conversations I would like to express my gratitude. In particular, the reviewers, Prof. Zdzisław Łapiński and Józef Olejniczak, who contributed to a similar degree to the improvement of this dissertation; thanks to their opinions it was published in the Publishing House of the Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

This monograph brought me two important awards: The Radom Literary Award in 2015 and the Tadeusz Kotarbiński Prize founded by the University of Łódź in 2016, which, because of its patron, is particularly pleasing to me. They contributed to obtaining a grant from the National Program for the Development of the Humanities for its translation. I would like to thank Mr. Antoni Miłosz for his permission to reuse extensive fragments of his father's work in the English version of the book. I would like to thank its translator, Dr. Michał Janowski, for his enormous work, thanks to which the book can reach lovers of Czesław Miłosz's work all over the world.

*Ewa Kołodziejczyk*

# Introduction

Czesław Miłosz is, at times, called an American poet. This means one thing in Poland, and something else in the United States. To Polish readers, this description is mainly related to the moment of his departure from Europe to take up employment at the University of California in Berkeley, and his settlement for many years in California, where his new poems and essays were written. Miłosz is to them an American poet, in a biographical sense, from the time he started living at Grizzly Peak until his return to Krakow, and in a symbolic sense, for as long as he cooperated with the publishing market, participated in literary life, and was an ambassador of Polish literature across the ocean. He is an American poet to the extent that his work was influenced by the thought and work of those cultural circles, in which many other émigré writers were immersed in the twentieth century. Miłosz's acceptance of American citizenship is of only secondary importance here and cannot be treated as declaratory by readers of *Szukanie ojczyzny* [In Search of a Homeland]. The question of the American profile of the Nobel laureate, which is more and more frequent in Poland lately, is related to the degree to which he grew into California, about the nature of his disputes with America, and about the unique features of his American outlook on the Old Continent, the New Continent, and the world. There has been growing interest in his conversations with American writers, also in translation, his academic activity, his influence on university students, some of whom are today well-known translators and poets in their own right, and the influence of cosmopolitan campus and metropolises on his style, his work, and his thinking.<sup>1</sup>

From the American perspective, it took the author of *Osobny zeszyt* [*The Separate Notebooks*] much longer to become an American poet and he was not entirely independent in this process. To put it differently, this ennobling term came from the local literary milieu,<sup>2</sup> and more broadly, it went hand in hand with the transformations

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1 The search for answers to these and other questions was the subject of the International Scientific Conference "Ameryka Miłosza" [Miłosz's America] organized by the Department of Contemporary Literature and Literary Criticism of the Institute of Polish Studies of the Pedagogical University of Krakow on November 16–18, 2011. The fruit of the conference is the volume *Między Miłoszem a Miłoszem* [Between Miłosz and Miłosz], a monothematic issue of the journal *Przekładaniec* 2011 no. 5. Prior to this, Miłosz in the circle of California writers was presented by the monothematic issue of *NaGłos* 1997, no. 26–28.

2 Miłosz said, "I find it a rare triumph and privilege that I am considered by my colleagues, American poets and critics, an American poet. Solely on the basis of translations. It is a rare phenomenon for a poet writing in another language to be adopted by the American poetic community. I appreciate this. (...) No, the fact that others consider me to be (almost) an American poet is very pleasant for me, but it does not change my attitude toward my own workshop. I have been writing and continue to write poems in Polish. I don't have any tendency to claim to be an English-language poet." *Ameryka Poetów* [America of Poets]. Interview with Elżbieta Sawicka (*Rozmowy polskie 1979–1998* [Polish Discussions 1979–1998] 716).

that the definition of Americanness underwent in the second half of the twentieth century. As a result of these, the term has a wider range of meanings, and touches more radically on the issue of literary and personal identity.<sup>3</sup> It goes without saying how much Polish critics, artists and researchers have done to popularize Miłosz's work in the United States: Aleksander Schenker, Bogdana Carpenter, Anna Frajlich-Zajac, Stanisław Barańczak, Adam Zagajewski, Bożena Karwowska, Bożena Shallcross, Irena Grudzińska-Gross, and how the group of English-language poets, translators and critics influenced his image, including Leonard Nathan, Kenneth Rexroth, Helen Vendler, Donald Davie, Lillian Valee, Louis Iribarne, Robert Hass, Robert Pinsky, Madeline Levine, Robert Faggen and Clare Cavanagh. A symbolic milestone on this road was the celebration of Miłosz's centenary,<sup>4</sup> which was marked by sessions and exhibitions presenting him as an American artist, and earlier the edition of memories of the international circle of his friends and collaborators,<sup>5</sup> preceded by a volume of interviews from 2006.<sup>6</sup>

It would be difficult to overestimate the amount of critical and translational output, thanks to which the contours of Miłosz's American portrait are becoming ever clearer. However, it is also necessary to return to the landmark year of 1960, when he had only set off for Berkeley, and ask about the awareness with which he discovered America, where fifteen years before he spent those consequential five years, and where he apparently took refuge from the consequences of the Sovietization of his native part of Europe. After all, he did not go to California for the first time in the 1960s, with a literary and historical awareness acquired in a European library. On the contrary: he returned to America as someone familiar with its realities and its lifestyle, with the reasoning and actions of its people, aware of many local customs

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<sup>3</sup> These transformations were discussed perceptively by Bożena Karwowska, who wrote "Let us also recall that the Miłosz's 'American' period was the time of transformations and of opening English-speaking societies to otherness – to national, sexual, and religious minorities, to the rise of multicultural societies, to emancipation of those who were traditionally pushed to the margins of non/existence. (...) Multicultural societies, characterized by their cultural mix and hybrid character, at the end of the previous century started to change their approach to national literatures, and to accept within them also the writing of multicultural immigrants. In Miłosz's case, we may say that a bilateral process was underway – both the writer tried to reach his English-language readers, and the social transformations created in the English-speaking world readers who were more 'tuned into' his work." In *idem*: "Czesław Miłosz i jego anglojęzyczni czytelnicy" [Czesław Miłosz and his English-language Readers], *Ruch Literacki* 2011, no. 3, pp. 260–261.

<sup>4</sup> On October 27, 2011 at Columbia University a public reading of Miłosz's poems in English was held with the participation of Helen Vendler and Alana Timberlake, organized by Anna Frajlich-Zajac. The conference at Yale University was held on November 4–5, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> *An Invisible Rope*. Portraits of Czesław Miłosz. Edited by Cynthia L. Haven, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: *Conversations*. Edited by Cynthia L. Haven, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006.

and problems, well versed in various circulations of culture and information, fluent in English, with a rich and current knowledge of the literature of the linguistic circles that permeated it.

Little is known about the postwar period, when Miłosz built this extensive awareness. For various reasons, it has not been the subject of investigations and research. Not only because the question of the poet's American traits, posed ever more eagerly today, hides the assumption that it refers to his California period treated as a phase of life and creativity which is closed both temporally and intellectually. Such a formulation of this question also results partly from the Polish understanding of the label of an American poet. However, this question gains its full meaning only when its scope includes, firstly, the realization that 1960 was not the initial year that Miłosz learned about America – it only marked a renewal of this process in a more complex way. Secondly, the question should include our awareness of the baggage of Miłosz's experiences accumulated in the 1940s, with which he reentered the New World. In other words, understanding the process of taking root in California after 1960 is possible when we, as Miłosz himself did, take into account his American postwar period, thought-out, problematized and reassessed in Europe after 1950.

This book aims to show how Miłosz assimilated America from 1945 to 1950, how he expanded his cultural horizon there, incorporating various components within it. It was the time of the poet's intense self-education, during which he sought – as he confessed in the correspondence of those years – to internationalize his mind. The subject of my interest has been, on the one hand, the sphere of his activities in many areas at the time, and on the other, the ways of making use of the intellectual opportunities that his stay in America created for him. These questions are only partially answered by his writings from the period, but they resound in his later works, especially in the California years, where the American postwar period becomes a natural point of reference in his renewed confrontation with the culture of the United States. In understanding Miłosz's entire oeuvre, it seems essential to trace the forms of self-education he undertook on the East Coast.

A reconstruction of this process and of the writer's new awareness is an exceedingly difficult task. These complications result mainly from the historical and political circumstances of Miłosz's discovery of America. Many of his writings from this period remain in manuscript form in the poet's archives in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale (this is where we find letters to the poet, transcripts of his lectures, manuscripts of articles and intimate prose, translations of poetry from the 1940s, manuscripts of poems included later in *Daylight*, and personal documents related to his journey across the ocean), and to a lesser extent in the Polish National Library and Adam Mickiewicz Literature Museum in Warsaw, as well as national libraries and archives. As a result, these writings and documents are not widely known by researchers or readers. Other writings, published in Poland, were censored, and their original versions have often not survived – the archives of *Odrodzenie*, *Nowiny Literackie*, *Twórczość*, *Kuźnica*, and *Nowa Kultura*, where Miłosz

published his sketches, are scattered in various places, depleted, and not integrated. A discussion of the interference of censors in Miłosz's articles and columns from the years 1946–1950 would require a separate study – even if we may assume that in the game with the censors he chose strategies of avoiding confrontation, he also at times withdrew certain sketches from publication, and in his letters he criticized the changes to which they were subjected.

Documents of the Polish postwar diplomatic mission in the United States are also preserved in several different collections,<sup>7</sup> and some of them have disappeared, or remain in unknown places, so it is not possible to recreate all the details of the activities of the attaché and the second secretary of the Embassy. Similarly, the poet's correspondence from those years remains widely dispersed – only a small part of it has been published or is available in archives. Most are in the possession of the addressees and their heirs in different parts of the world, so even locating them in a possible attempt to gather the letters would be a very laborious task. While it can be assumed that Miłosz reiterated or presented differently the same thoughts and impressions from America in his correspondence with many people, and it is possible on the basis of the published letters to build a certain shared image of these impressions, until all of his correspondence is published, our knowledge of it is insufficient and uncertain.

Although Miłosz, a tireless commentator of his own life and work, spoke at some length about his years in diplomatic service, his comments have the character of assessments and reckonings, and provide such details as biographical or interpretive clues to a lesser extent. In his conversations and extended interviews, he was not asked about many issues that could become a subject for investigations, because they did not fit within the scope of awareness of members of other generations, nor of people who did not share similar experiences and were not interested in those issues. Miłosz's American postwar period also comprises events and situations, as well as readings and intellectual experiences that were not commented upon. A significant part of this work is therefore the first presentation of source materials in the light of which it is possible to start a discussion about this phase of the life and work of the Nobel laureate.

The book consists of four parts, each dedicated to a different aspect of Miłosz's five years in America. The first part is a reconstruction of his diplomatic and literary activities, the second discusses his articles and journalism, the third recreates the process of his study of English-language literature, and the fourth examines the ways in which he assessed the postwar experience in his poetry, essays, and correspondence. While the last part concerns the period when Miłosz, residing in France and associated with the Polish emigration monthly *Kultura*, looks back on the American years, which to a large extent influenced their interpretation, the three

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<sup>7</sup> Mainly in the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw, and the Polish Embassy in Washington.

previous ones concern a common five-year period and constitute a mutual reference system. It is often difficult to separate the work of Miłosz the diplomat, lecturer, and columnist from his experiences as a reader, traveler, viewer, and visitor of museums and galleries, even though, as Miłosz himself admitted, he did make attempts to do so. The division into parts is therefore as arbitrary, as it is necessary, so that we may trace the emergence of the new identity of the future author of *Native Realm* in the chronology of events and experiences.

The first part contains a biographical chapter, and a sketch devoted to Miłosz's lectures and articles published in the United States. I present here the circumstances of his accepting a post in the diplomatic service, his journey abroad, and his adjustment to life in the United States. Further, I present the forms of his activity in the Polish Consulate in New York, the working conditions in the Polish Embassy in Washington, Miłosz's relations with the scientific and literary community in Poland and on the East Coast, his involvement in the creation of the Adam Mickiewicz Chair of Polish Literature at Columbia University, promotional activities related to an exhibition of Wanda Telakowska's work, preparations for the Wrocław Congress, opportunities for engaging in creative work, and various dilemmas related to Miłosz's professional future, and the future of his family, particularly in the context of his trip to Poland in 1949, the events accompanying his return to Europe, and the recovery of his passport in 1950.

Miłosz's lectures and articles discussed in Chapter Two indicate how he treated Polish culture in relation to the legacy of the West, how he tried to articulate the differences connected with the experience of war, including the Holocaust, which were a major source of misunderstanding in the dialogue between America and Europe, and explained how much they affected the shape of literature on the Old Continent and the criteria for its evaluation. Their chronological order, made possible by Manfred Kridl's meticulous notes, allows us to broaden our knowledge of the work of the attaché and his contacts in the academic environment. The lectures reveal close thematic connections with his official reports and literary journalism from those years. The same problems and strands are often outlined there in embryonic form. They are a peculiar foreshadowing of Miłosz's pedagogical work, in particular explaining his intention to create a modern textbook on the history of Polish literature. On the other hand, his articles in English published in *Poland of Today* raise questions about the diplomat's dependence on his superiors and his independence in expressing opinions in print and in lectures. The procedure of controlling texts published and delivered by diplomatic personnel was one of the topics Miłosz himself never addressed, and the paucity of knowledge about it makes it difficult to formulate interpretative conclusions today.

The second part includes a chapter devoted to the article *Życie w USA* [Life in the USA] and a sketch collecting Miłosz's articles from the years 1946–1950. To a large extent these articles show the process of self-education the poet undertook overseas. They reveal his interest in American democracy, the mechanisms of political and social

life, the cultural market, the education system, the development of cinematography and new media, and their impact on audiences. They illustrate the directions of his cultural research, which soon went beyond the works of white Anglo-Saxons and included black authors from the Black Atlantic and artists from South America.

The analysis of the series *Życie w USA* in Chapter Three shows how the poet's early interests were shaped. In its initial installments, Miłosz focused on the internal and foreign policy of the Truman administration during the first years of the Cold War. He commented on American-European relations, observed the development of the left in the United States, the world of the twilight of colonialism. Miłosz's thought then went on to social and cultural life – he discussed racial and ethnic relations, transformations of the media, their impact on intellectual life, and interdependencies between culture and economics. He did, however, abandon reporting on current life in metropolitan and provincial areas in favor of indicating the dominant features and patterns of behavior of groups and individuals, asking about the American understanding of the relationship between politics and metaphysics, diagnosing the mental and spiritual condition of a society in motion, and finally shifted his reflections to the area of historiosophy and eschatology. Discussing these issues, so close, perhaps even closest to Miłosz, illustrates the changes that took place in his understanding of the role of a press correspondent, and changes in his relationship to America, and in his own complicated situation.

In Chapter Four, the analysis of Miłosz's scattered articles makes it possible to capture the spectrum of his interests in exploring culture. Particularly interesting here is the dynamic attitude of the former resident of Wilno toward the metropolis – the gradual shift in his perception of cities and provinces partly corresponds to the transformation of his own outlook on American culture. From the perspective of creative writing, this evolution is expressed in the transition from impressions shared in letters to various conceptualizations in prose. The presentation of the flow of information, visual art, and cinema reveal how the poet's perspective changed – from observations made from the position of a foreigner, emphasizing his distance and differences in experience, through problematizing phenomena whose complexity revealed itself more and more clearly, to engaging in a dialogue with the new culture, using terms and categories that were representative of it. On this road Miłosz did not stop at the stage of mediation – he strove to merge both horizons in such a way that would allow him to meditate on the properties of the culture of his age, viewed holistically from different positions. This is where the dream of the “telescopic eye,” articulated in *Native Realm*, was born, permitting a multifaceted view of the world in changing time and space. It is in America of the 1940s that the poet learned how useful such a view could be. The utopian nature of this desire and the conviction that in perceiving the New World he did not go far beyond the stage of learning made him abandon the project of a book about America, which he had intended to write before returning to Europe.

In Chapter Five, I discuss Miłosz’s process of learning about literature in America. I start from reconstructing the literary awareness with which he came to the United States, formed largely by the translation work he engaged in during the occupation, and by his work on his anthology of English-language poetry. The chapter shows the successive stages of his assimilation of new works: through participation in literary life and building relations with poets from the East Coast, his reception of war literature, reading contemporary prose, resulting in portraits of its writers, in which Miłosz confronted European and American literary philosophies. The chapter shows the relationship between Miłosz’s articles on Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner and Henry Miller with local criticism, and shows how the poet developed his own criticism by adopting methods of the Anglo-American school, and then how he became independent in his own evaluation of new works. The chapter also touches on the issue of Miłosz’s secret readings, which he did not comment on in his articles or in the correspondence of that period. As a regular reader of *politics*, *Partisan Review*, *The Saturday Review of Literature* and *The Atlantic Monthly*, he encountered many names and titles, but they never appeared in his works, be it in the form of allusions, references, or discussions. This reveals most clearly his strategy of accumulating knowledge and preserving it as an intimate horizon of thought – gathering intellectual experiences, which may only become a component of reflection in their objectivized and purified form. For example, the writings of Simone Weil, Hannah Arendt, Karl Jaspers, Nicola Chiaromonte, Ignazio Silone, Albert Camus, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty were subjected to this process. Another phenomenon was concealing the influence of authors whose work was an important source of inspiration to Miłosz – this apparently applied to W. H. Auden. It is interesting that Miłosz emphasized his fascination with Eliot, but distanced himself from Auden, whose influence on the shape of *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals] leaves no doubt, while ignoring Wallace Stevens, maintaining a permanent aversion to him. Attempts at finding the circle of English-language poets that Miłosz most favored are foiled by his strategy of not revealing knowledge prematurely – it is clear that he operated on a different horizon in his “Wprowadzenie w Amerykanów” [Introduction to the Americans. An Essay on American Poetry], and a different one in his review of Alain Bosquet’s anthology. These differences cannot be explained solely by the passage of time, although this certainly played a role in his understanding of the poetries that, to paraphrase Oscar Wilde, nothing separated more than a common language. Explication of Miłosz’s subsequent sketches allows us to capture how the author of “List półprywatny o poezji” [A Semi-Private Letter about Poetry], inspired by Eliot, defined the literary character, and which ideas of New Criticism he considered worth transplanting to the Polish soil. This chapter also presents Miłosz’s development as a translator, determined by his new experience, and his new understanding of this role under its influence. It analyzes the relations between his translations and his own work, reconstructing his translational awareness at the time and shows his desire to transcend the English-language canon in his exploration of poetry in Spanish and



Chinese. The point of access here is a reflection on yet another attempt by Miłosz to compile a book on America – this time a plan for an anthology of translations of its poetry.

Chapter Six continues the reflection related to the poet's entry into the world of literature, through analyzing his reception of Native American and African-American culture. First of all, I look for evidence of his interest in the history of the Indigenous Peoples of America, the history of colonization and its influence on their identity – these and other issues are the subject of his reflection in the sketch “W dolinie Taos” [In the Taos Valley], fragments of which were published in “Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook]. Secondly, I present Miłosz's attitude to racial segregation and analyze his translations of *Negro spirituals* as a game played with censorship. Thirdly, I investigate the process of recontextualization of translations that he carried out years later, removing from his old translations historical notes which explained his earlier intentions and motivations as a translator. I am also interested here in the selection of texts for translation, including works from *The Black Atlantic* circle. This selection places Miłosz among precursors who thought about black literature in categories broader than the concept of African-American literature would allow.

Chapter Seven is a reflection on *Daylight*, a volume written and published in France after Miłosz had severed ties with the government in Warsaw, and on the possible ways of reading and contextualizing it. The collection – not unlike *Kontynenty* [Continents] – is a re-construction of sorts, as evidenced by the reorganization of the original sequence of the poems in subsequent editions, by removing the original division into parts, and by removing the poem “Do Alberta Einsteina” [To Albert Einstein]. This re-assembled poetic whole offers a suggestion of how to look at the recent situation, as well as a key relationship between literature and power, in a parabolic way, and in a way that intertwines history and meta-history, politics and metaphysics, shaping them into a common horizon.

Miłosz's opinion journalism from the 1940s, as a kind of work in progress, was subjected to a strict selection in *Kontynenty* – the choices made and their ordering illustrate Miłosz's process of cleansing his memory and reveal the reconstruction and reassessment to which he subjected his American postwar period. These reflections are the subject of Chapter Eight, devoted entirely to the interpretation of “Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook]. As a new whole rearranged from fragments created at different times, “Notatnik” [The Notebook] is a construction reflecting as much the poet's experiences as his decision on how to restructure and prioritize his recently formulated views, how to place the empirical past in the then desired biographical model of a poet and an intellectual. The composition of “Notatnik” [The Notebook] corresponds in many aspects to the construction of the American part in *Kontynenty* and is for Miłosz as much a way of constructing the desired image as modelling the reception of his work.

This part ends with the question how the poet's attitude to the American postwar period evolved. This issue became, as we know, the subject of fierce disputes in

émigré circles and in Poland, where the defector's work was officially banned. I was interested in how – regardless of the course of “the Miłosz case” – he himself assessed his decisions after 1945, and how these views evolved both in connection with the development of the Nobel laureate's career and the transformations in the consciousness of a man absorbed more and more by the thought of the *second space*. Contemplation on this self-reflection was the subject of Chapter Nine.

I wrote this book with the purpose of it being useful. For the reasons outlined above, it does not exhaust the issues related to the five-year postwar period in Miłosz's creative biography. I do not discuss many problems which, if taken up, would result in exceeding the length that is reasonable for a single study. These include, for example, the attitude of the poet to the Polish cause and the Polish community, revealed in his correspondence and journalism, his reception of existentialism and psychoanalysis inspired by American criticism, the influence of English-language discussions on Joseph Conrad's prose on Miłosz's reflection, the birth and formation of his post-colonial awareness, the oceanic genesis of the *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals] and *The Captive Mind* and others. These do require separate reflections, while the entirety of Miłosz's American postwar period requires more than a single book.

# Chapter 1: Activités de Surface

## The Circumstances of the Departure for the USA

After the end of World War II, Czesław Miłosz made efforts to obtain a post in the diplomatic service abroad. At the time, diplomatic assignments were not uncommon among Polish writers. Those who accepted one included Julian Przyboś, Tadeusz Breza, Stanisław Jerzy Lec, Ksawery Pruszyński, Jerzy Zagórski, Antoni Słonimski, and Andrzej Kuśniewicz. Miłosz wanted to remain in Europe – he asked for this in a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of August 20, 1945: “I kindly request that I be enrolled as an employee of the Ministry, and that I be assigned to the Polish unit in Switzerland.”<sup>8</sup> The poet signed a contract as a Ministry of Foreign Affairs employee on November 22, 1945. He was initially assigned to work in Canada – on September 26, the Ministry received a letter recommending him as the press attaché.<sup>9</sup> Soon, however, he was reassigned to Chicago.<sup>10</sup>

## In London

Miłosz and his wife Janina left Poland in December 1945.<sup>11</sup> The journey went by plane from Warsaw to London, and then by sea to New York. In London, the

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**8** *Czesław Miłosz's Personnel File*. Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, B 50 37/07 bundle 4. Miłosz, Czesław 8026, p. 1 (further quoted as *Czesław Miłosz's Personnel File*, page number). Indeed, efforts were made to have the poet to posted in Switzerland. In this matter, Jerzy Putrament sent a letter dated August 22, 1945 in which he wrote, among other things: “Honorable Citizen Minister! I would like to ask your permission to allocate Czesław Miłosz to the Swiss facility, as I know him well and could use him best there. I think that he could hold the post of second secretary to one of the attachés. He is undoubtedly a very capable man – probably also in diplomacy – the point is to put for him to appropriate use.” *Czesław Miłosz's Personnel File*, p. 6. Emil Pasiński points out the instrumental role of Jerzy Borejsza in all this in his book *Miłosz and Putrament. Lives in Parallel*, Warsaw, 2011, p. 181. After the Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to Miłosz, Putrament reminisces: “At that time, in 1945, Miłosz wanted to travel abroad. And he was smooth as silk to me. He insisted on a meeting with me. (...) Miłosz fawned over me because he wanted to obtain to the posting. And I arranged it for him – the trip to the States.” “The first reaction to Miłosz was to abandon the poems...,” *Poezja* 1981, no. 5/6, p. 79. In their turn, Miłosz's accounts from those years diverge rather significantly from those put forward by Putrament.

**9** See *Czesław Miłosz's Personnel File*, p. 7.

**10** As early as October 1946, when Miłosz was appointed cultural attaché and assigned to work at the Polish Embassy in Washington, he was formally referred to as a “contractual employee in Chicago, temporarily in New York” (*Czesław Miłosz's Personnel File*, p. 12).

**11** Andrzej Franaszek gives December 4, 1945 as the date of the Miłoszes' departure from Warsaw. See also Franaszek's *Miłosz. Biography*. Edited and translated by Aleksandra and Michael Parker,

Miłoszes stayed at the Esplanade Hotel, 2 Warrington Crescent. They spent about 5 weeks there. They renewed their contacts with Karol Estreicher, Tymon Terlecki, Kazimierz Lister, Feliks Topolski, the Themersons and Stanisława Dęborylska. Antoni Słonimski suggested possible cooperation with the monthly *Nowa Polska*, which he co-founded with Estreicher in 1942.<sup>12</sup> Miłosz was looked after by the writer and activist of the international PEN-Club, Margaret Storm Jameson, who helped organize his meeting with T. S. Eliot.<sup>13</sup> Correspondence from the years when Miłosz was trying to obtain an American visa confirms that the Nobel Prize winner did not forget him. We do not know the details of this, perhaps most important, meeting in London. That it was carefully planned, we know from the letter from Eliot's secretary of December 18. It came with an enclosed letter from Eliot, dated October 5, 1945, containing an authorization to publish the translation of *The Waste Land* free of charge.

The author of *Rescue* kept the image of England's capital in his mind. He wrote to Jerzy Andrzejewski: "The stay in London was the most pleasant part of our travels – it's a very calm and soothing city, and we had plenty of friends, English and Polish" (*Zaraz po wojnie* [Right after the War], 31). He confided in the Zofia and Tadeusz Brezas: "Besides, the whole of London was something like a sanatorium – a very rural and quiet city, no round-ups;" "London seems to me almost like home, something like

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Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017, p. 245 – also Emil Pasierski (*Ibidem*, pp. 194–195) uses this date, and February 7, 1946, is the date when, in his opinion, Miłosz took the post at the New York Consulate. As the correspondence with Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz shows, the Miłoszes may have left the country even later. See *Czesław Miłosz, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz. Portret podwójny* [Czesław Miłosz, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz. A Twofold Portrait]. Composed of letters, poems, intimate notes, interviews and publications. Selected, edited and arranged by Barbara Toruńczyk. Preparation and footnotes by Robert Papiński, Warsaw, 2011, p. 130. They were surely in London on December 10, as this is when the poet participated in the meeting of the British PEN Club in London – See Miłosz, Czesław: "Anglicy o Polsce i Polak o Anglii" [The English on Poland, and a Pole on England], *Przekrój* 1946, issue 44, p. 11. Miłosz's National Registration Temporary Identity Card, kept at the Beinecke Library, Box 181, Folder 2810, was issued with the date of December 11, 1945, whereas an immigration officer Clyde Ports confirmed his arrival in the USA on January 14, 1946.

**12** In 1945 Miłosz published "Pożegnanie" [Farewell], *Nowa Polska* 1945, f. [fascicle] 3, pp. 132–133, and in 1946, "Przeżycie wojenne" [The War Experience], *Nowa Polska* 1946, f. 1, pp. 39–45, "Biedny chrześcijanin patrzy na rzeź w ghetcie" [A Poor Christian Looks at Slaughter in the Ghetto], "Portret z połowy XX wieku" [Mid-Twentieth-Century Portrait], *Nowa Polska* 1946, f. 3, pp. 145–146, "Granice sztuki (St. Ign. Witkiewicz z perspektywy wojennych przemian)" [Boundaries of Art (Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz from Perspective of Wartime Transformations)], *Nowa Polska* 1946, f. 4, pp. 209–224; "Granice sztuki (III)" [Boundaries of Art (III)], *Nowa Polska* 1946, f. 5, pp. 274–282.

**13** Miłosz devotes a good deal of space to this in his article "Anglicy o Polsce i Polak o Anglii" [The English on Poland, and a Pole on England], *op. cit.*, in which he gives an account of a meeting of the British PEN-Club.

Zakopane or Podkowa Leśna – so quiet, pleasant, and peaceful” (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 525).<sup>14</sup>

Upon reaching Glasgow, the Miłoszes were supposed to sail to America on January 14.<sup>15</sup> Eventually, they set off on January 16, onboard S.S. Elysia, to be welcomed twelve days later in New York by Alexander Hertz, a former colleague at Polish Radio. Once they were there, it turned out that the poet had been assigned to work at the General Consulate in New York.

## In New York

The newcomers stopped at the Madison Square Hotel and then took a two-room apartment at 342 West 71<sup>st</sup> Street in western Manhattan. The Consulate was located at 149–151 East 67th Street, in the east of the island. The fledgling cultural and press officer did not have time to familiarize himself with the new place. He jotted down his first impressions while still fresh. He wrote to the Brezas:

Building such cities as New York is nonsense. The buildings are much too high; the stupid flashing of thousands of neon signs so dazzling, as I could discern, for visitors from Europe, is a cheap gimmick. If the slums of London are ugly, then here one sees kilometers upon kilometers of streets, compared with which Łódź is a miracle of beauty. Poverty and ugliness, garbage burning in the streets, cockroaches running around on top of drugstore counters, their little eyes casting inquisitive glances at the customer drinking milk. Few things compare with the sadness of these boroughs – the horror of a civilization leading nowhere (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 525).

One may wonder to what extent these sentences were a manifestation of culture shock, and to what a result of internalizing the European model of the city.<sup>16</sup> The former resident of Wilno repeatedly complained about his difficulties in adapting to

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**14** In his first letters from England, Miłosz wrote “Someone may ask me, well, all right, but what about London itself? After all, it’s such an enormous city, the whirl of cars, and buses, advertisements, the insane commotion of a large metropolis? Dear children, what of it? After experiencing the traffic on the bridge between Praga and left-bank Warsaw, London is like a large sanatorium in which the patient falls into the soft seats of the underground railway carriage, to emerge five minutes later at the other end of the city, in the fog of a dark street, where cats breed and some fellow walking his dog appears from time to time. The number of cars on the streets barely reaches 50 percent of the pre-war number. One does not see large luminous ads.” In Miłosz, Czesław: “Anglicy o Polsce i Polak o Anglii” [The English on Poland, and a Pole on England], *op. cit.*

**15** See Miłosz, Czesław: Letter to Aleksander Miłosz of January 10, 1946, *Kwartalnik Artystyczny* 2008, issue 3, p. 15.

**16** Of note is the convergence in the images of Paris and New York in the works of Miłosz and Henry Miller, whose work the poet read in the USA.

the climate, so he would leave New York whenever he could – in a letter to his father he described one such trip, to Rehoboth Beach, in the summer of 1946.<sup>17</sup>

He enjoyed resting by the ocean, in a cottage, in forest wilderness, without his New York obsession with confined spaces. He returned to his passion for ornithology there, and to his habit of swimming every day. He could not get enough of the abundance and exoticism of the local nature.

Miłosz started his work at the Consulate on February 7, 1946. His duties included

- I. Informing the local community – both American and Polish – about the restoration of cultural and artistic life in the country.
- II. Campaigning for material aid for Poland in the area of culture.
- III. Informing the country about literary, artistic, and scientific life in the United States.<sup>18</sup>

Although – as he claimed later – efforts were made later to downplay his role, in accordance with the guidelines that Józef Winiewicz, the ambassador in Washington, was supposed to have received.<sup>19</sup> When Miłosz began to serve, he undertook his work with energy, rapidly expanding his activities. He started by approaching the Polish diaspora. In the realities of post-war emigration, this was an exceedingly difficult task, as he confirms in the following report:

The new emigration is *ex officio* hostile to the Polish government; however, as a result of the inflow of information and the arrival of a number of people from the country, some opposition can be observed in this camp: voices saying it is impossible to feed the reader with fairy tales of Poland alone are beginning to emerge, and Lechoń, who knows no limit in his attacks, is being publicly criticized. (...) A number of people in the diaspora readily meet with me in private, but when asked to take part in some event, they openly say that they are afraid of local public opinion. I will note here that the fact that I came here as an official, not as a writer, complicates matters – for example, I encountered difficulties in organizing a contemporary Polish poetry evening. Several “neutral” people refused to participate, justifying themselves a thousand times that they simply cannot be seen together with consular officials. The most intellectually valuable

<sup>17</sup> See Miłosz, Czesław: “Undated letter,” *Kwartalnik Artystyczny* 2008, issue 3, pp. 18–19.

<sup>18</sup> *Sprawozdanie z czynności za okres kwiecień 1946. Czesław Miłosz, radca kulturalny Konsulatu Generalnego w Nowym Jorku* [Activity Report for April 1946. Czesław Miłosz, Cultural Officer of the General Consulate in New York]. Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (henceforth: AMSZ), Department of the Press and Information (henceforth: DPI), collection (henceforth: c.) 21, bundle (henceforth: b.) 87, file 1186 (henceforth: f.)

<sup>19</sup> See Winiewicz, Józef: *Co pamiętam z długiej drogi życia* [What I Remember from my Long Path of Life], Poznań, 1985, p. 428.

group of the new emigration is the Jewish intelligentsia, although even they are afraid to go too far in official cooperation.<sup>20</sup>

The poet established and renewed contacts with Antoni Gronowicz, Antoni Marczyński, Marian Kistler, Mira Złotowska, Jakub Appenzlak, Władysław Malinowski, Ryszard Ordyński, Józef Wittlin, Aleksander Janta-Pończyński, Manfred Kridl, Ksawery Pruszyński, Ignacy Świącicki, Waclaw Lednicki, among others, and met the local Polish community, including the Poles who served in the US Army. He started to cooperate with the Polish Club at Columbia University. He made efforts to get closer to the old emigration and the clergy – he met with Polish parish priests and monks on the East Coast. As he reported in April 1946, “It seems to me that the initial ice, as far as the Polish diaspora is concerned, has already been broken, and I am making a slow start in local circles, that is apart from the diehard Sanation circles of course. Undoubtedly, there is very strong interest in the cultural life of Poland, which is supported by magazines, public readings, and personal conversations.”<sup>21</sup> He claimed that some of the priests in Massachusetts did not support the policy of the Polish American Congress; however – for fear of denunciation and accusation of favoring the communists – they would not reveal their views publicly.<sup>22</sup>

Miłosz’s main task was the popularization of Polish culture in the USA. In March 1946, the bulletin of the Embassy *Poland of Today* featured his article about contemporary Polish literature,<sup>23</sup> in April, one on the theater, and in October, one about the reception of American literature and art in Poland.<sup>24</sup> In spite of the unfavorable reactions of the Polish community, as he wrote in his report on April 27, 1946, he organized the first literary evening at the New York Public Library, under the patronage of the politically neutral *Nasza Trybuna*. It featured Manfred Kridl, Jakub Appenzlak, who spoke about Jewish-Polish literature, and himself, with a paper on the Polish literature of the wartime period and more recent works. To broaden the scope of possible activities, he approached the academic community: in the spring

**20** *Sprawozdanie z czynności za czas od 7 II 1946 r. – 30 III 1946 r. z działu kultury i sztuki – radca Czesław Miłosz*, [Activity Report for the period between Feb. 7, 1946 and Mar. 30, 1946 from the Department of Culture and Art – Officer Czesław Miłosz] AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 87, f. 1186.

**21** *Sprawozdanie z czynności za okres kwiecień 1946. Czesław Miłosz, radca kulturalny Konsulatu Generalnego w Nowym Yorku*, [Activity Report in April 1946. Czesław Miłosz, Cultural Attaché of the General Consulate in New York]. AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 87, f. 1186.

**22** See *Sprawozdanie z działalności za okres 15 VI – 15 VII 1946 r. Czesław Miłosz, attaché kulturalny Konsulatu Generalnego w New Yorku*, [Activity report for the period from June 15 to July 15, 1946. Czesław Miłosz, cultural attaché of the General Consulate in New York]. AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 87, f. 1186.

**23** Miłosz, Czesław: “Literature in Poland Today”, *Poland of Today* 1946, March, pp. 8–9.

**24** Miłosz, Czesław: “American Authors and Their Polish Public,” *Poland of Today* 1946, October, pp. 3–4.

of 1946 he met with Christian Gauss, an expert on the poetry of Oscar Miłosz; he contacted Rutgers University Press, which was supposed to publish an anthology of international children’s literature, as he wanted a Polish contribution to be included. He started work on an English-Polish and Polish-English dictionary, in consultation with Ernest Lilien. Further, he conducted campaigns to collect books and school supplies for Poland, and in cooperation with the École Libre des Hautes Études, he gathered a collection of documents on Polish-American relations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

As he emphasized later, he tried to avoid playing the double game (see *Podróżny świata* [A World Traveler], 70, *Autoportret przekorny* [A Contradictory Self-Portrait] 113). He did not play it in the political sense, although he was not indifferent to calls for help. In August 1946, Metody Suszkiewicz from Szczecinek asked for financial aid for a brother imprisoned in a Soviet labor camp in Siberia.<sup>25</sup> Before the end of September, Suszkiewicz was thanking Miłosz for his letter of August 28 and for help<sup>26</sup> – this shows that the poet was well aware of the realities of post-war Soviet labor camps.<sup>27</sup>

## “The Special Service of Keeping the Country Informed”

Even though, as he claimed in his first letters, Miłosz did not miss Poland in a manner characteristic of the local emigration, he did go through crises of various origins. He was very slow to adapt to the climate and landscape of the East Coast – in his letter to Andrzejewski he called it a ‘wasteland’ and this term coincided with sending his translation of Eliot’s poem for publication in Poland. In time, he moved away from these initial impressions in favor of diagnoses, from observing the material in culture to learning and understanding the symbolic. His gradual shedding of preconceptions about the New World is evident in his letters touching

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<sup>25</sup> See the letter of Metody Suszkiewicz to Czesław Miłosz of August 17, 1946, Beinecke Library, Box 2, Folder 69, pp. 1–3. The poet commented on this later: “The absurd paperwork that piled up on my desk and the letter lying on top of it, from a camp near Archangelsk, was an outrage. The letter had been received in Poland by relatives of the prisoner and sent to me with the request for a package for him. I had to live with the image of camps and trainloads of prisoners heading toward them.” (*Native Realm*, 297).

<sup>26</sup> See the letter of Metody Suszkiewicz to Czesław Miłosz of September 28, 1946, Beinecke Library, Box 2, Folder 69, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 3. Miłosz wrote in 1952: “Do you think that I don’t know what happened in 1945? That I don’t know what they did with members of the Home Army? Or what has been going on to this day in our native Lithuania? Do you think that I did not want to break off all ties in 1946, instantly after my arrival?” Letter of Czesław Miłosz to Melchior Wańkiewicz, not dated. In Miłosz, Czesław, Wańkiewicz, Melchior: *Korespondencja 1951–1956* [Correspondence 1951–1956], Warsaw, 1986, p. 13.



on metropolises, which Miłosz perceived ahistorically and described mainly by means of enumerations. In the initial period, he compared America and Europe; he verified the European myth of America acquired through cinema and reading. At the same time, he made extensive and concentrated efforts aimed at self-education, in keeping with his self-imposed rule of utility, and he began to see in work a form of self-treatment. Sensing the rising popularity of Poland, he asked for books he might recommend to local publishers, and for poems which might form an anthology of Polish poetry. He looked for works related to Poland, and works of authors unknown in Poland, such as Franciszek Andruszkiewicz, whose works he rewrote in the letters. He began cooperation with the PEN-Club and the United States International Book Association – in the first case regarding making a list of authors who needed support, in the second, about providing Polish libraries with materials via USIBA. At that time, Miłosz also gave a talk about Poland during the evening of the Kosciuszko Foundation, and he met Peggy Guggenheim, Thornton Wilder, and Dwight Ripley, a translator who had the intention of compiling an anthology of Polish poetry.

Miłosz kept the national community informed of artistic news from the West. His poetry from the time of the occupation gained fame in émigré circles – it was known in its Flemish translation – and its popularization in Brussels was the task of Józef Chudek and Marian Pankowski. Friends urged Miłosz to write a book about America, but he was still only gathering knowledge about the New World at the time. Realizing that the sum of his activities did not determine the value of his stay in America – he called them ‘activités de surface.’ In April 1946 he wrote to Andrzejewski: “I am striving to set up a special service to inform the country of the literary, artistic, and scientific life of America – I may succeed in this” (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 32). He sent his sketches about America, its culture and literature first to *Kuźnica*,<sup>28</sup> *Odrodzenie*,<sup>29</sup> and *Przekrój*,<sup>30</sup> and then also to *Nowiny Literackie* and *Twórczość*. These texts also included translations of works in English. In 1946, under the pen-name Jan M. Nowak, he began the publication of a vast cycle *Życie w USA* [Life in the USA].<sup>31</sup> He also published in Poland under his own name,<sup>32</sup> and later as Żagarysta.<sup>33</sup> His plan of publishing an anthology of English poetry, which was

28 See Miłosz, Czesław: “O Hemingwayu” [On Hemingway], *Kuźnica* 1946, issue 38, pp. 5–7.

29 Miłosz, Czesław: “Massachusetts”, *Odrodzenie* 1946, issue 31, p. 6.

30 See Miłosz, Czesław: “Polska z Nowego Jorku” [Poland from New York City], *Przekrój* 1946, issue 66, pp. 7–8; Miłosz, Czesław: “Notatnik nowojorski” [The New York Notebook], *Przekrój* 1946, issue 79, p. 11.

31 See Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA*, *Odrodzenie* 1946, issues 51–52; *Odrodzenie* 1947, issues 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 19, 21, 22, 25, 27, 30, 46, 47, 48.

32 See Miłosz, Czesław: “Na Independence Day” [For Independence Day], *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 29, p. 5.

33 See Żagarysta [Miłosz, Czesław]: “Zabawy i spory” [Games and Arguments], *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 44, p. 4.

prepared during the occupation, never came to fruition. For some unclear reasons, the entire venture stalled, and it proved impossible to resume it in later years.<sup>34</sup>

As he wrote in his report for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 1946 he submitted at the Embassy a project of a newsletter which would provide the press and cultural and educational institutions in the country with artistic news – this initiative also passed unnoticed. In “Uwagi o pracy radców kulturalnych przy naszych placówkach w Stanach Zjednoczonych” [Notes on the Work of Cultural Officers at our Facilities in the United States], he recommended the expansion of libraries, asked for cultural magazines that he might pass on to the New York Public Library, and for photographs showing the reconstruction of Poland. He strongly advised the publication of an album featuring Poland – it was supposed to include photographs of children and young people, illustrating the country’s development.

At the same time, the diplomat complained about censorship of letters and blocking of books sent from the USA. He warned, however, about allowing national magazines from Hearst Corporation to circulate: “The long-term gap in scholarly contacts, and ignorance of cultural processes abroad, lower the level of Polish works related to culture and, as in any other provincialism, lead either to exaggerated worship and mythologizing of American and English achievements or to their underestimation.”<sup>35</sup>

Along with Teresa Żarnower, he sought reproductions of paintings from American museums and galleries for the public in Poland. His activities became ever wider, and they met with a vibrant response. Thanks to his contacts in cultural and scientific circles, he managed to expand cooperation with Smith College, Amherst College and Mount Holyoke College. This enabled the organization of English teachers’ trips to Poland and contact with students involved in the theater movement – through them Miłosz intended to popularize the latest Polish drama. As part of university exchange, he wanted to bring his brother Andrzej to America – he persuaded him to learn English and participate in the scholarship competition.<sup>36</sup>

Regarding popularization of the theater, Miłosz communicated with Philip Drury from the United Nations Theater. Thanks to his Parisian contacts, he entered UN circles in New York in the hope of winning support for Polish-American cooperation. At the same time, he did not refuse to help those injured by the war. Requests for medicines, clothing, and food were sent to him from Poland, Great Britain, and Australia. What became of his shipments is evident from the correspondence.

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<sup>34</sup> See the letter of Tadeusz Breza to Czesław Miłosz of Sept. 18, 1946. Beinecke Library, Box 1, Folder 9.

<sup>35</sup> *Raport sytuacyjny o nastrojach na terenie działalności Konsulatu w New Yorku za okres 1 VI – 5 VIII* [Situational Report on the Moods in the Area of Operations of the New York Consulate for the Period from June 1 to Aug. 5] AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 81, f. 1182, p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> See Miłosz, Czesław: Letter of April 6, 1946, *Kwartalnik Artystyczny* 2008, issue 3, pp. 16–17.

## Representing the Consulate in the Region

One of the first tokens of recognition for Miłosz's diplomatic abilities was his appointment as the secretary of the first session of the International Committee at the World Education Service. It was held on June 25, 1946. However, his activities also took on a more mundane form, for instance when, in cooperation with CARE, he demanded that the amount of fats in parcels sent to Poland be increased. In mid-1946 he asserted: "We have already grown accustomed to America, which consists in realizing that for a European of a certain age, it is a country to which one simply cannot grow accustomed" (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 531).

The attaché continued to visit US and Polish-American institutions, giving lectures on history, culture, and literature. One of his most important speeches, "The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising" delivered in Boston, at the American Jewish Congress, also marked an anniversary. As the speaker himself recounted, he was greeted there reluctantly, as the Bund did not want to host a communist, but after a speech lasting about 40 minutes the reluctance toward him and toward the Poles subsided. The event was discussed at length in the local press: *The Boston Globe*, *Boston Post*, *Boston Herald*, *The Jewish Advocate*, *Dorchester Record* and *The Congress News*.

Miłosz took part in a number of similar events: on May 19 in New York he attended the meeting of the Jewish brotherhood of Zduńska Wola Society; on June 6 in Brooklyn, he gave a talk to the American Jewish Congress as a witness to the Ghetto Uprising; on June 12 he spoke again in Hartford, Connecticut. Responding to great interest in Polish-Jewish relations, as he wrote in his report, in 1947 he prepared an article on Auschwitz for *Encyclopedia Americana*.<sup>37</sup> For the Embassy Bulletin *Poland of Today*, he submitted an article about the postwar situation of Polish writers,<sup>38</sup> plus an introduction to a translation of an excerpt of *Dymy nad Birkenau* [Smoke over Birkenau].<sup>39</sup> He tried to familiarize Americans with the Polish experience of the war – in letters he asked for books by Pola Gojawiczyńska, Seweryna Szmaglewska, Stanisław Dygat, and Tadeusz Breza, which he wanted to recommend to publishers. In 1946, he complained to the Brezas: "You have no idea what we must suffer here due to the idiotic anti-Jewish disturbances in Poland. The word Pole is slowly becoming synonymous with the word 'Nazi' and the commotion due to antisemitism in Poland is greater than due to Oranienburg and Auschwitz" (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 528).<sup>40</sup> At the same time, however, he did not conceal from the Ministry

<sup>37</sup> In the thirty-volume edition of *Encyclopedia Americana* of 1947 there is no entry by Miłosz.

<sup>38</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: "Intellectual Revival in Post-War Poland", *Poland of Today* 1947, April, pp. 7–8.

<sup>39</sup> This text was not published in *Poland of Today*.

<sup>40</sup> This problem was touched on by the Polish press. See Andrzejewski, Jerzy: "Zagadnienie polskiego antysemityzmu" [The issue of Polish Antisemitism], *Odrodzenie* 1946, issue 27, p. 4 and

that after the pogrom in Kielce, it was no longer possible to give lectures about the Holocaust in Nazi-occupied Poland or the attitude of the Polish government towards Jews.<sup>41</sup> This issue was touched on in the *Resolution of the Chicago Branch of the American Federation of Polish Jews*, published on June 16 in the *New Herald Tribune*:

We, the delegates, gathered on June 16 at the Morrison Hotel at the 13th Annual Conference of the American Federation of Polish Jews, protest vehemently against the internal and external enemies of Poland who kill Jews on different pathways of time.

We ask the present Government of Poland to increase efforts to crush fascist elements that are not only enemies of Jews but also enemies of the present democratic Government. We ask the Government to arm Jews, so that they may defend themselves against the murderers.<sup>42</sup>

On 7 July, the American Polish League issued its own resolution on the matter – it was published by the *New Herald Tribune* on Sunday, July 14. In its wake appeared two articles by press correspondents – William Lawrence of *The New York Times*, and Homer Bigart of *The New York Herald Tribune*. In response, the Polish American Congress wrote: “The Communists want you to hate Poland. Only they are capable of such abhorrent means. Look at the bloody paws of the red bear and you will also see Jewish blood on them. We accuse the Bolshevik henchmen in Warsaw of having perpetrated this murder in Kielce!”<sup>43</sup>

Miłosz was unable to show any approval of the situation in his capacity of a regime official. Thus, in his private remarks, we find indirect complaints about the need to maintain mimicry. He took comfort in the thought that his stay in the US was only temporary. Despite the great distance, he considered himself very much a participant of the events taking place in Poland and in Europe. On the other hand, the American absence of an obligation to think always in historical terms was at least partly a relief. The poet more frequently availed himself of opportunities for recreation in the countryside, and often took sightseeing tours. Balancing the benefits and losses, over time he emphasized the significance of the benefits. In his letter to Breza, he expressed his hope of standing at some distance to Europe, Poland, and literature: “I think it was worth it anyway, because I am learning about the world better than I

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issue 28, p. 3; Sartre, Jean-Paul: “Portret antysemita” [Portrait of the Antisemite], *Nowiny Literackie* 1947, issue 6, p. 1.

**41** See *Raport sytuacyjny o nastrojach na terenie działalności Konsulatu w Nowym Jorku za okres 1 VI – 5 VIII* [Situational Report on the Moods in the Area of Operations of the New York Consulate for the Period from June 1 to Aug. 5] AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 81, f. 1182, p. 3.

**42** *Organizacje [Rezolucje: 1) Oddziału Chicagowskiego Amerykańskiej Federacji Żydów Polskich, 2) American Polish League. Oświadczenie Polish American Congress w New Herald Tribune: w sprawie pogromu Żydów w Kielcach]* [Organizations [Resolutions: 1) Chicago Branch of the American Federation of Polish Jews, 2) American Polish League. Statement of the Polish-American Congress in New Herald Tribune: regarding the pogrom of Jews in Kielce] 1946, AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 92, f. 1252.

**43** *Ibidem*.

would sitting in Krakow and, above all, I am learning to reject many interests in – or even respect for various human and literary phenomena – as sheer nonsense” (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 532).

## At the Polish Embassy in Washington

On November 1, 1946, Miłosz was transferred to the Embassy, where he took the post of cultural attaché.<sup>44</sup> His duties also included activities in the scholarly and cultural environment, and with dissemination of knowledge about post-war Poland. The diplomat continued his reports for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and his cooperation with literary magazines as a translator and columnist.<sup>45</sup> He also maintained cooperation with New York institutions and journalists: Gertrude Samuels of *The New York Times Magazine*, Isidor F. Stone of *P.M.*, and Glenn Adams of *The New York Times*. At the invitation of Professor Arthur Coleman, he gave a lecture on contemporary Polish poetry at Columbia University and another, on the economic and political situation in the country, for the American-Polish intelligentsia at the Polish University Club in Newark. On November 22–23, in coordination with the Kosciuszko Foundation, he took part in the National Conference on International Education, working on the committee for books and for Central and Eastern Europe. A response from the Polish diaspora to the Foundation’s contacts with Miłosz was swift to come. An account of the meeting to which he was officially invited, informed of:

The arrival of an UNINVITED representative of the Warsaw “consulate” at the lecture of professor Mierzwa, director of the Kosciuszko Foundation. (...) We do assure our readers, however, that in the future, should there ever be a shadow of cooperation between any Polish-American

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**44** Miłosz was a contractual employee of the Consulate until October 1946. By a decree of Aug. 22, 1946 he was appointed a full-time employee and cultural attaché. *Czesław Miłosz’s Personnel File*, p. 5.

**45** His tasks included:

- “1. the general policy regarding cultural propaganda, in view of the special circumstances, one of the main means of expansion of our units in America
2. keeping the country informed
3. organization of large-scale events
4. contacts with the world of science and art
5. issues academic and student mobility
6. representing the Embassy in cultural matters (conferences, talks, etc.).”

After: *Raporty propagandowe [Sprawozdanie Ambasady R.P. w Waszyngtonie z działalności informacyjno-kulturalnej polskich urzędów na terenie Stanów Zjednoczonych za rok 1948]* [Propaganda Reports [A Report of the Polish Embassy on the Informational and Cultural Activities of Polish Institutions in the United States for the year 1948]], 1949 AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 86, f. 1173. Cf. Leich, John Foster: “Only a Pole Could Have Been So Careless.” In *Invisible Rope*, p. 16.

institution and Soviet-Warsaw agents in our area, we would warn both the Polish community and the American parties against this sort of trap, set by the regime in Warsaw.<sup>46</sup>

## Diplomatic Activity after the Election in Poland

The relations between the embassy and the Polish community in America worsened after the falsified election to the Sejm. On January 19, 1947, groups of protesters demonstrated in front of the New York consulate, holding banners saying “We want American democracy in Poland. Democracy murdered today in Poland. Elections in Poland are not free. Poland today tomorrow America! Elections in Poland today are false [sic].”<sup>47</sup> This undermined trust in the Embassy as a representative of the Polish state. Thus, propaganda activities were increased, authenticating the policy of the Warsaw government – in February Jerzy Borejsza announced his arrival in New York; in March he discussed with Miłosz the current opinions on Poland in the USA.<sup>48</sup> These talks may have also referred to the plans for Miłosz’s trip to Europe. In January, Breza urged him to return and edit a literary magazine with him – as he announced in the letter, he was going to talk to Borejsza about this matter. Miłosz, as it seems, preferred to maintain the *status quo*. In May 1947, evidently confused, Breza wrote the following:

I also wrote to you that I had urged Borejsza to bring you back to Poland and make you a member of some editorial office, at one of Czytelnik’s<sup>49</sup> magazines, living in a straddle between Poland and Paris. And Xawery told me that I was a fool to do so, because you are very pleased with America. I don’t know anymore! I was sure that your eyes were firmly set on France. Especially since you’ve probably had enough of America by now (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 552–553).

The issue of staying in the West was becoming more and more problematic. Miłosz understood that a longer stay abroad excluded him from literary life in the country –

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**46** No author: “Na właściwej drodze” [On the Right Track], *Nowy Świat* December 5, 1946. After: *Raporty prasowe [Przeglądy prasy polskiej w USA sporządzone przez Ambasadę R.P. w Waszyngtonie za okres od 22 stycznia 1946 do 17 listopada 1947 roku.] (1946–1947)* [Press Reports [Reviews of the Polish Press in the USA Prepared by the Polish Embassy in Washington for the period from Jan. 22, 1946 to Nov. 17, 1947]] AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 84, f. 1148.

**47** *Raporty Prasowe [Sprawozdania prasowe Konsulatu Generalnego R.P. w Nowym Yorku dotyczące spraw Polonii w Stanach Zjednoczonych, maj 1946 – luty 1948]* [[Press Reports [Press Reports of the General Consulate of Poland in New York concerning Issues of the Polish Americans in the United States, May 1946 – Feb. 1948]], AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 87, f. 1184.

**48** In April of that year, Miłosz published the article “Intellectual Revival in Post-War Poland”, *Poland of Today* 1947, April, pp. 7–8.

**49** Czytelnik – a Polish publishing house established in 1944 by Jerzy Borejsza, moved to Warsaw in 1945. It organized bookstores and libraries and issued daily newspapers and magazines. It was a center of Polish culture, and was considered to be Jerzy Borejsza’s “empire.”

he kept receiving unsettling assessments of his poetry, which he tried to tackle in his correspondence. A friend of his reported a macabre April fool's joke to him:

You probably get a lot of clippings from the press concerning your spiritual side – a 'poet's profile.' A mention such as the one I attach here (*Express Łódzki* dated 29 March 47), treating only your mortal shell, you probably have not seen yet. It is also an omen, a portent of longevity.

### A Corpse in the Canal

A corpse of a middle-aged man was found in the canal, which was flowing past property no. 249 in Wólczańska Street.

The Citizen's Militia was immediately alerted. Following the investigation, the deceased was identified to be Czesław Miłosz (34), residing at no. 3 Rzgowska Street.

The cause of Mr. Miłosz's death has not yet been determined. The authorities are investigating the matter further, to determine if this was an accident, a suicide, or a crime.<sup>50</sup>

In Washington, Miłosz tried to establish new professional contacts: he solicited book donations for the National Library, coordinated academic exchange, organized film screenings, and collaborated with local radio stations that broadcast programs about Poland. At the beginning of 1947, he edited an article about Polish theater for the Hollywood newsletter *Actors Laboratory*, whose content largely coincided with the article on this subject for *Poland of Today*. He imported books for publishers interested in their translation for local distribution. He sought support for the teaching of Polish campaign at the Congress of Teachers of Slavonic and East Slavonic languages in Washington. He believed that the best way to provide knowledge about Poland was through presenting visual materials. He wrote to Wiktor Grosz:

(...) let me draw your attention to the value of artistic photography, which speaks in an international language and is easy to exploit in publishing houses. Among the materials we have received, some photographs of the ruins of Warsaw were marked by high artistic value, although they lost a good deal of their expression due to the quality of the prints. Most interesting here are the human figures, the "human document," the photographs we received could be graded C+ at the most. The term "artistic photography" can be applied to works that arouse the viewer's interest with their perfect form, regardless of the subject, thanks to which the viewer becomes interested in the topic.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Letter of Bolesław Bochwic to Czesław Miłosz of April 1, 1947. Beinecke Library, Box 1, Folder 6.

<sup>51</sup> List Czesława Miłosza na ręce generała Wiktora Grosza w sprawie prac fotograficznych Ministerstwa Kultury. Propaganda [Notatka Cz. Miłosza – Attaché Kulturalnego Ambasady R.P. w Waszyngtonie dotycząca materiałów propagandowych otrzymanych z Ministerstwa Kultury przez Ambasadę (fotografie, rysunki dzieci), (14 XI 1946 r.)] [Letter of Czesław Miłosz to General Wiktor Grosz regarding photographs of the Ministry of Culture. Propaganda [Memo of Czesław Miłosz – Cultural Attaché of

In his letters, he suggested issuing a philatelic series about Poland. He continued his work of translation and popularization, and closely followed the course of literary life in the country.<sup>52</sup> After moving to the capital, the scope of his duties increased, but so did the possibilities. In private, the Miłosz family treated the move as a necessary evil. The poet confessed to his brother:

I was appointed cultural attaché at the embassy in Washington, which entails a new move, and this is very cumbersome in a country where there are no apartments. Here in New York they charged us an arm and a leg, but otherwise an apartment could not be found; these bandits rent only to those who tacitly agree to cheat the rent control office. What I will find in Washington, I don't know. Washington is something like an enlarged version of Mokotów; the climate is as bad as in New York, but hotter, as it lies 400 kilometers to the south. However, we've grown accustomed to New York; we've got a lot of friends here and we're not very happy about this trip. All of our life on the move. In addition, Janka worked temporarily in New York, she will now have to quit. For now, I'm setting off for Washington to look for some home base. Here I had good working conditions, and I don't think I will have that there. I don't care about a diplomatic career and I console myself with the thought that the day will come when I can drop all of this to hell.<sup>53</sup>

At that time, Miłosz lived on the first floor of an air-conditioned house at 914 Sheridan Street, where a small garden was available – visible in the well-known photographs of the poet resting in a hammock, and with a book over coffee. The Embassy was located at 2640 16<sup>th</sup> Street N.W. After the dark years of the occupation and “sincere rage” (to borrow Miłosz’s own expression from the poem “Do Jonathana Swifta” [To Jonathan Swift]), which accompanied him as he tried to settle in America, his comments from the beginning of 1947 seem to foretell a positive change. He confessed to Paweł Hertz: “America has brought back to me the taste of observing the phenomena of this world. My ambition has long been a certain internationality of mind, which, furthermore, protected me during the war” (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 497).

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the Polish Embassy in Washington concerning propaganda materials received by the Embassy from the Ministry of Culture (photographs, children’s drawings), (Sept. 14 1946), AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 91, f. 1230, p 1.

52 In that year his translations of poems by Jorge Carrera Andrade were published, *Nowiny Literackie* 1947, issue 23, p. 3. The poet took part in the discussion “Jak oceniam literaturę dwudziestolecia?” [How Do I Assess the Literature in the Years 1918–1939], *Twórczość* 1947, issue 7–8, pp. 106–112 and “Czy wskrzesić Polską Akademię Literatury? Ankieta *Odrodzenia*” [Should the Polish Academy of Literature Be Restored? The Survey of *Odrodzenie*], *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 13, p. 5. He wrote a review of films on war – “O kilku filmach” [On Several Films], *Kuźnica* 1947, issue 20, pp. 8–9.

53 Miłosz, Czesław: Letter to Andrzej Miłosz, not dated, *Kwartalnik Artystyczny* 2008, issue 3, p. 21. See also Miłosz, Czesław: Letter to Aleksander Miłosz, not dated, *Kwartalnik Artystyczny* 2008, issue 3, pp. 27–28.



## Public Speaking Activities

The diplomat still traveled around the East Coast giving talks and lectures to various audiences. On February 16, 1947, at the invitation of the Polonia Workers' Association in Detroit, he participated in the rally on the bicentenary of the birth of Tadeusz Kosciuszko and in honor of Abraham Lincoln. The journey was the probable inspiration for the poem "Detroit," which, on the advice of Tadeusz Juliusz Kroński, Miłosz did not publish at the time. On February 23 he visited Chicago, where he talked about the post-war transformation in Poland. On March 7, in the talk "Inner Experience of the European Writers" at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, he discussed the significance of existentialism, Marxism and Catholicism in Poland and in Europe.<sup>54</sup> At the end of March, at the Methodist Church in Washington, he spoke about Polish-American relations. On May 6, at the invitation of the Foreign Affairs Club, he gave a talk on the economic and cultural development of Poland at Massachusetts State College in Fort Devons near Boston. In it, he compared Poland to Greece, speaking of a "gentle revolution" over the Vistula. He met war veterans there, studying at the expense of the government, including 200 Poles, which the diplomat noted with great satisfaction. This trip was also an opportunity to visit Cambridge. Miłosz gave a similar speech on May 21, as he visited Fort Belvoir, a military center for convalescent veterans near Washington. During this time, the diplomat applied to UNRRA for help for Polish dentists, he organized student exchange,<sup>55</sup> and made efforts to support Polish painters at the Museum of Modern Art. His activities did not subside when his son Antoni was born on March 29, 1947 in Washington. He organized short film screenings, concerts of music by Frédéric Chopin and Karol Szymanowski; he imported exhibitions of paintings, graphics and folk art, and took part in radio programs.

In the early spring of 1947, Miłosz held the additional function of press attaché. In the second half of March, he reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the significance of Harry Truman's speech, in which the President defined the priorities of the US foreign policy. He commented on activities directed against communists in state administration circles and Arthur Bliss Lane's resignation as ambassador.<sup>56</sup> In April, his reports concerned the policy towards Germany and the possibility of establishing a union of European states in accordance with the idea of Winston Churchill, as well as American assessments of the internal situation in Poland. From

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<sup>54</sup> The text was translated into Portuguese and published in the literary periodical *A Leitura* in Rio de Janeiro.

<sup>55</sup> In the Beinecke Library there is a letter of Alicja Iwańska, at the time a Ph.D. student at Columbia University, who made a request to Miłosz for help for herself and Henryk Hiż, studying at Harvard, (Box 1, Folder 27).

<sup>56</sup> Miłosz never mentioned Lane's famous book *I saw Poland Betrayed*, New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1948, published upon his resignation from the post of ambassador.

this period came the most critical press articles about the government – many articles against the recognition of Poland’s western borders were published, and Poland itself was called a satellite of the Soviet Union, while negative evaluations of its policies significantly limited the Embassy’s possible activities.

## An Exhibition of Polish Books in New York

On May 3, an Exhibition “Postwar Poland 1945–47 – An Exhibition of Polish Books and Photographs.” was opened at the New York Public Library. Efforts to prepare it had been made as early as December 1946. Regarding this, Ignacy Złotowski informed Alfred Berlstein in a letter that the Embassy received a collection of photographs featuring Poland’s cities, towns and villages and their residents, the extent of post-war reconstruction, to illustrate the socioeconomic and cultural development of the country. In the name of the Embassy, he requested the use of a room or hall suitable for exhibiting about one hundred such photographs to show the American general public life and living conditions in contemporary Poland. In his response, Charles F. McCombs, at the time the librarian in charge of exhibitions, wrote that the library would consider a small exhibition of photographs from Poland, showing the country’s progress in post-war reconstruction. He made the decision to go ahead contingent on seeing the photographs beforehand, and said that, while as many as one hundred photographs might not be shown, a significant selection could be displayed, along with Polish books and other materials on the rehabilitation effort. The tentative date of the exhibition was to be sometime in the early part of 1947, and the venue, the middle part of the second-floor hallway along Fifth Avenue – near the Slavonic Division.<sup>57</sup> The exhibition showcased books issued by such publishers as Czytelnik, Książka i Wiedza, Trzaska, Ewert i Michalski, Gebethner i Wolff, Księgarnia św. Wojciecha, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Panteon, M. Arct, Kuthan and Swift. It included issues of magazines devoted to science, literature, and culture, as well as photographs, mostly from the Recovered Territories. The Library informed journalists of the official visit of Ambassador Winiewicz during the exhibition on Monday, June 16 at 2 p.m. at the New York Public Library. The Ambassador would be arriving in the company of Consul General Jan Galewicz, and Consul Tadeusz Kassern. He was to be greeted by Director of the Library Ralph A. Beals, accompanied by Dr. Avrahm Yarmolinsky, Head of the Slavonic Division, and Dr. Alfred Berlstein of the same Division. During the visit, Director Beals would officially thank Ambassador Winiewicz for a donation of 175 books, periodicals and photographs to the Library. The exhibition would

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<sup>57</sup> See Letter of Charles F. McCombs to Ignacy Złotowski of December 21, 1946. New York Public Library, Manuscripts and Archives Division, Lydenberg, Hopper and Beals Collection, Box 35, Folder: NYPL RD: Exhibitions Misc. 1946–1947.

feature a survey of publishing in Poland after the war, and it would include fiction, poetry, children's literature, and works of non-fiction, all of which came from public and private donations to the Embassy. Journalists were notified of the exact location of the exhibition (the main corridor of the Central Building).<sup>58</sup> The exhibition and the visit were covered by the *New York Herald Tribune*: "It is a showing of books published in Poland since the German surrender (...)." <sup>59</sup> The exhibition was significant for the library itself, and for its Slavonic department, which was supplied with books and periodicals by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy. Avrahm Yarmolinsky assured the Embassy of his readiness to cooperate, develop, and popularize the Polish collection;<sup>60</sup> he also urged the Ministry to donate new releases to the library.<sup>61</sup> In July 1947, Winiewicz thanked Yarmolinsky for organizing the event and assured him the Embassy would continue in its efforts to provide the Public library with even more books and periodicals than before, and that indeed some materials for the library, addressed to Dr. Alexander Hertz, had already arrived at the Polish Consulate in New York.<sup>62</sup> In *Odrodzenie*, Miłosz adds that the library received many inquiries about the Polish publishing movement. He estimated that the exhibition had been visited by seventeen to twenty thousand people – he himself encouraged journalists from *P.M.* to visit it, even though he did not blow his own horn about this in his correspondence. In the series *Życie w USA*, he discussed its content and local reaction, but only from the perspective of the viewer, someone not involved in its preparation. Moreover, in the bulletin *Poland of Today*, there is a photo-reportage of Winiewicz's visit at the exhibition. In June 1947, the poet managed to invite the Quakers of Pendle Hill near Philadelphia to cooperate. The Quakers offered their help in transferring books to Poland.

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**58** See Note to City Editors. The New York Public Library, Manuscripts and Archives Division, Lydenberg, Hopper and Beals Collection, Box 36, Folder: NYPL RD: Exhibitions O–P.

**59** *The New York Herald Tribune*, June 6, 1947.

**60** See the letter of Avrahm Yarmolinsky do Józef Winiewicz of June 24, 1947. New York Public Library, Manuscripts and Archives Division, Lydenberg, Hopper and Beals Collection, Box 51, Folder: Poland 1934–1948.

**61** See Letter of Avrahm Yarmolinsky to Wiktor Grosz of July 9, 1947. New York Public Library, Manuscripts and Archives Division, Lydenberg, Hopper and Beals Collection, Box 51, Folder: Poland 1934–1948.

**62** See Letter of Józef Winiewicz to Avrahm Yarmolinsky of July 8, 1947. New York Public Library, Manuscripts and Archives Division, Lydenberg, Hopper and Beals Collection, Box 36, Folder: NYPL RD: Exhibitions O–P.

## The American Garden of Science

Shortly after settling in, Miłosz renewed his interest in nature; he was now able to spend more time outside the city, thanks to his newly obtained driver's license. He observed the changing seasons, discovered the hues, tones, and shades of the American countryside – he slowly built from these images a panorama of the East Coast, whose outline frames his American poems. He dreamed of writing an essay about the local trees and birds, which is why he studied textbooks on natural history as a source of knowledge and terminology. Although the idea never came to fruition, his letters mention sightseeing adventures very often. However, only from July 1 to July 31, 1947, did the poet enjoy an extended vacation at Hiram Camps on Cape Rosier in Maine. Nonetheless, even that trip did not bring him the peace he so desired.

Despite his duties in Washington, Miłosz read more and more. In his correspondence from 1947, he shared impressions from the novel *Darkness at Noon*. He was also interested in the American reception of Marxism. He soon went beyond the circles of American art, translating Chinese poets, black poets, and African American *spirituals*. He learned Spanish in order to translate the poems of Pablo Neruda.<sup>63</sup> Proficiency in reading and translation pleased him all the more as it served his mission of being *useful* – this word appears in many of his letters. Complaining about boredom and excessive clerical work, Miłosz hoped to abandon the work of a diplomat and support himself solely by writing. He did not delude himself that such a thing would be realistic in the near future. He understood that if he had a chance to lead a life abroad, and he mentioned this possibility as early as 1947, he would be a translator rather than a poet. In America, as he quickly understood, it was the publicist, not the poet, that spoke to a wider audience. Moreover, he had to understand the different structure and hierarchy of the literary life in the US, and thus also agree to the lack of the romantic privileges that naturally came with being an artist in Poland. Apart from his unflattering opinion about the local reader of literature, an additional complication was his belief, expressed in 1948, that he would not be able to create in any language other than Polish. During this period, Miłosz understood the importance of all the roles in which he appeared publicly in the USA, at the same time being aware of their inadequacy, and his own inability to perform other roles, better suited to his aspirations.

During the summer, the diplomat took part in a Writers' Conference, organized annually by Middlebury College in Bread Loaf, Vermont, which lasted from August 13

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<sup>63</sup> At that time, he published the first translations of Pablo Neruda's poems *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 23, p. 10. As Zofia Nałkowska wrote, Miłosz met with Neruda at the theater during his stay in Poland in 1949. See Nałkowska, Zofia: *Dzienniki 1945–1954. Część 2 (1949–1952)* [Diaries 1945–1954. Part 2 (1949–1952)]. Preparation, introduction and commentary by Hanna Kirchner, Warsaw, 2000, vol. II, p. 107.

to 28. He was the only representative of the world on the other side of the Iron Curtain, so he found himself having to correct opinions about Poles, Slavs and Europeans on multiple occasions. As he wrote in his report:

As the only European at the conference, I had to represent “Europe” in general, arguing as much for Polish literature, as for French theater, etc. Knowing the American environment, I avoided bringing Polish matters to the fore, treating Polish affairs as part of European affairs. Meeting a Polish writer seemed a surprise to many people, because in general American Poles are believed to be workers and farmers, and the existence of Polish intellectuals is doubtful for many people in American literary circles.<sup>64</sup>

Miłosz then entered the circle of New York intellectuals, about whom he wrote that they were:

very critical of the current American policy. (...) Politically, they sympathize mostly with Wallace, while finding it regrettable that Wallace is a non-serious and naïve figure. A strong anti-capitalist attitude, parallel with very critical attitudes towards Russian politics, is typical of this milieu. This environment fanatically supported Roosevelt’s New Deal; now it is without leadership or assignment.<sup>65</sup>

The poet maintained the relationship with Bread Loaf. He particularly wanted to disseminate war-related novels – he was persistent in seeking to have *Dymy nad Birkenau* [Smoke over Birkenau] translated and published. From October 30 to November 1, he participated in the convention of the Commission for International Educational Reconstruction in Washington D.C. to obtain book donations for the National Library, and scholarships for students and scholars.

## The Realities of the Cold War

Undeterred by the progress of the Cold War, Miłosz became involved in activities for the development of Poland. He supported the reconstruction of the prehistoric Polish settlement of Biskupin, seeking support from the Rockefeller Foundation. He involved the Kellogg Foundation in helping Polish dentistry. His efforts did not bring the expected results, in part because Poland was being perceived with growing distrust.

I keep thinking about ways of bringing Polish writers here – we read in a letter to Iwaszkiewicz.  
– Recently, I wrote a huge memorandum in this matter to the Commission for International

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**64** *Raport z pobytu na Konferencji Pisarzy w Bread Loaf, Vermont w czasie od 13 VIII do 28 VIII 1947* [A Report on the Stay at the Writers’ Conference in Bread Loaf, Vermont from Aug. 13, to Aug. 28, 1947] AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 86, f. 1171, p. 2. Miłosz published an account of this conference was published under the pen-name Żagarysta in the article “Zabawy i spory” [Games and Arguments].

**65** *A report on the stay at the Writers’ Conference in Bread Loaf, op. cit., p. 3.*

Reconstruction. In a few days, I will be meeting with the president of the Rockefeller Foundation – I'm going to pitch it to them, too. I am not losing hope, although there are two trends battling in the Americans when it comes to the east of Europe – a desire to show the newcomers what a beautiful place America is, and fear of the “reds.” Slavs make them so *disgusted* [originally in English] that they cancel all programs in Polish on the radio, regardless of the political color (i.e. programs made by American Poles for the Polish community) (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 185).

Neither the Polish community, nor the policies of the Polish state were able to counteract these assessments or the difficulties resulting from them. The poet noticed not only the end of a boom for Polish literature that was harmful to Poland, but also the unfair stereotype of Slavs based on the psychological and cultural principle of grouping, which equated Russians with all other Slavs. In this situation, the poet enjoyed any signs of positive interest in Poland. In a report for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he discussed the success of the *Warsaw Lives Again*, exhibition which showed plans for rebuilding the capital, developed by Warsaw architects – Miłosz coordinated it himself on behalf of the Embassy. After success in Minneapolis, it was shown from October 9 to November 1, 1947 at the Architectural League of New York. It was graced by a lecture by Lewis Mumford – Miłosz never mentioned that he had the opportunity to meet him. He sent letters to Poland, in which he demanded that children's drawings, toys, pottery and folk crafts, photographs and reproductions of avant-garde painting be sent for propaganda purposes. He considered it necessary to educate teachers of Polish from the local diaspora in Poland, and to create language-related university majors for the needs of American Poles – he made efforts in this matter along with Stefan Mierzwa, president of the Kosciuszko Foundation.

The development of this cooperation was hindered by the US Information and Educational Exchange Act of January 27, 1948, which was one of the first manifestations of the Cold War in state policy. As Miłosz assessed:

The adoption of this *bill* [originally in English] is an important event in the history of the United States. It marks a new stage for a country which has not yet recognized the notion of official propaganda and endows the State Department's information service with a statutory basis, as well as legal grounds to request special funds for its operation. The main argument in the discussions was the organization of the British and Soviet services, and the need to oppose the latter was emphasized.<sup>66</sup>

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66 *Amerykańska służba propagandowa na zagranicę* (ref. Czesław Miłosz, Washington, Feb. 12, 1948) [American Propaganda Service for Abroad (prepared by Czesław Miłosz, Washington, Feb. 12, 1948)]. *Propaganda [Amerykańska służba propagandowa na zagranicę. Omówienie raportu Komisji Kongresu Stanów Zjednoczonych, sporządzone przez Czesława Miłosza – Attaché Kulturalnego Ambasady R.P. w Waszyngtonie]* [Propaganda [American Propaganda Service for Abroad. Discussion of the Report of the United States Congressional Committee, prepared by Czesław Miłosz – Cultural Attaché of the Polish Embassy in Washington], AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 91, f. 1232, p. 1.

The following figures illustrated the differences: the planned budget of information and cultural services for Poland provided for 58,362 dollars, and 732,000 dollars for Great Britain. The justification for allocating the funds in this way was that Poland is controlled by a “‘Communist stooge clique’.”<sup>67</sup>

At that time, Miłosz had an established position in the intellectual milieu, which is why he continued to participate in the work of literary and university circles. From May 10 to 12, 1948, he participated in a conference on international student exchange at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. As he commented in his report:

The conference, like all American conferences, was prepared in an exemplary manner, with the time divided and allotted to the minute, and with a large amount of duplicated materials given to each participant. It was distinguished, as many American conferences, by an absolute lack of consideration of the essential issues, focusing instead solely on the technical details of student exchange.<sup>68</sup>

The attaché did, however, notice a change in the atmosphere surrounding academic exchange:

The ‘increased vigilance’ of the Emigration Office under pressure from the Congress is, as is easy to guess, directed against students with leftist beliefs, while a rather popular opinion (albeit not stated expressly at the conference) is that only communists are allowed to leave the countries of Eastern Europe. On the other hand, American universities fear students who may refuse to return to their countries, causing many problems to university authorities.<sup>69</sup>

## The Turn of 1948

Despite the unfavorable conditions, after the winter of 1947 there was a breakthrough in Miłosz’s life, which he confided in a letter to the Brezas dated May 16, 1948. He was now navigating with increasing ease in the multiracial and multiethnic environment, more easily identifying differences between the North and the South, the metropolis and the small town. He was using English not only to describe the things and phenomena that did not exist in Europe – he was delighted to find out how much the English language favors succinctness and economy of expression.

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 3.

<sup>68</sup> *Współpraca intelektualna [Sprawozdanie Cz. Miłosza z konferencji w sprawie międzynarodowej wymiany studentów, 10–12 maja 1948 w University of Michigan]*, [Report of Czesław Miłosz from the Conference on International Exchange of Students, May 10–12, at the University of Michigan] 1948, AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 83, f. 1131, p. 1.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2.

On April 1, he was appointed Second Secretary of the Embassy in Washington. He owed this promotion to this assessment of his work from January 28, 1948:

He is an outstanding employee of this unit and a real expert on cultural issues. He is not the clerical type and does require some supervision in team work – otherwise he easily breaks out of work routines. He shows a great aptitude for making contacts and speaking publicly. In the Polish work, he still needs be controlled due to his poetic ease of deviating from the particulars – he is, however, improving every day. He is specially suited to the American area, but his interests are extensive. It seems to me that the use of his work depends most on the person of his superior, and with good management, Miłosz is a good employee in his area.<sup>70</sup>

In parallel, a letter of January 21, 1948 was sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, requesting the promotion:

I confirm in the strongest possible terms that at the Polish Embassy in Washington, the position of attaché is of utmost importance and in this particular case, it does not require adepts, but rather highly qualified employees.<sup>71</sup>

His reports were rated very highly:

The reports prepared by Citizen Miłosz on cultural matters, and more recently his political elaborations, attest to his extraordinary diligence and mobility, high abilities, and high level of accomplishment.<sup>72</sup>

As Miłosz's work gained momentum, his activity brought results. The creation of the Adam Mickiewicz Department of Polish Culture at Columbia University contributed to strengthening his position. However, in July 1948 Kridl had to explain himself on account of his cooperation with Miłosz:

Since the establishment of the status quo in Poland, I believed that cooperation in the area of cultural affairs with institutions of the American government is not only advisable, but necessary; in truth, the only specific, positive work for the country that we can do here in foreign parts is aid [*illegible word*] clothing, food, etc., hence I cooperated with Mr. Miłosz with regard to scholarships for Polish students at US universities (we had two female students at Smith College), in providing books to Polish Universities, and clothing and food for students. From Smith College alone, dozens upon dozens of crates with such things have been passing through the Polish Consulate in New York, which also pays for their transport, and our Committee would

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<sup>70</sup> *Czesław Miłosz's Personnel File*, p. 8.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 14. On March 8, 1948, a motion for a salary raise for Miłosz was submitted, and on April 5, 1948, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs received a letter requesting the issue of diplomatic passports for Miłosz and his wife, upon nomination to the post of Second Secretary of the Embassy. *Czesław Miłosz's Personnel File*, p. 25.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 15.



not have funds for it otherwise. Thanks to this official procedure, everything arrives intact. Can this sort of work be considered an act of national betrayal?<sup>73</sup>

Confirmation of these words came from Miłosz himself in an article from 1946 describing, among others, his official meeting with Kridl:

My stay here [in Massachusetts – E. K.] is filled with a range of visits paid to various professors, during which I am eloquent, witty, and vividly descriptive – doing anything I can to garner aid for Polish universities. (...) I am supposed to meet with good Miss Wilson, a professor of US history. Miss Wilson, dividing clothing for students of France, Italy, Greece and Poland, makes sure that Polish women get the warmest clothes: sweaters, sports shoes, fur coats, and warm underwear. Then I'm supposed to discuss the issues of books, scholarships, and lectures on Poland, and I hope to get a full set of publications for our botanical institutes.<sup>74</sup>

In 1950, the poet returned to the scandal surrounding the appointment of Kridl as the head of the Adam Mickiewicz Department of Polish Culture at Columbia University:

There are very strong cultural longings among the Polish diaspora, but satisfying them is by no means the goal of the Polish leaders. Regardless of their cunning and agility, the leaders can be said to be dim-witted people, and the influence they exert is a tragedy of the Polish emigration. Out of multiple examples, suffice it to mention but one: the action against the Adam Mickiewicz Department of Polish Culture, established at considerable cost and effort at Columbia University in New York on the 150th anniversary of Mickiewicz's birth. Professor Manfred Kridl, appointed by Columbia University as head of this department, was in numerous articles named “a dangerous Bolshevik” (?). A biting, damning argument against the Polish activists is the fact that they themselves have not thus far won the support for establishing a similar department in America, which, seeing that they act on behalf of “6 million Americans of Polish descent,” requires no further commentary.<sup>75</sup>

Miłosz continued his series *Życie w USA* and kept sending articles about culture in the United States to various periodicals,<sup>76</sup> as well as translations of Pablo Neruda's poetry, a review of the anthology of French poetry by Adam Ważyk,<sup>77</sup> and an outline of the work of William Faulkner. He worked on an English-language essay on Mickiewicz. Tadeusz Unkiewicz encouraged him to cooperate with the magazine *Problemy* [Issues] – Miłosz sent him scientific literature and wrote about American discoveries in

73 Letter of Manfred Kridl to unknown addressees of July 10, 1948. Manfred Kridl Collection. Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Box 3.

74 Miłosz, Czesław: “Massachusetts”, *Odrodzenie* 1946, issue 31, p. 6.

75 Miłosz, Czesław: “Poeta-pieśniarz” [Poet-Bard], *Kuźnica* 1950 issue 5, p. 5.

76 See Miłosz, Czesław: “Książki i pisma w Stanach Zjednoczonych” [Books and Journals in the United States], *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 6, pp. 1–3; “Abstrakcja i poszukiwania” [Abstraction and Searching], *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 7, pp. 3–4.

77 Miłosz, Czesław: “Wiersze polsko-francuskie” [Polish-French Poems], *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 37, p. 1.

astrophysics.<sup>78</sup> In the 4th issue of *Twórczość* his *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals] was published.<sup>79</sup> Aleksander Janta-Połczyński referred to it, quoting fragments in his reportages first published in *Kultura*, and later collected in the book *Wracam z Polski* [Returning from Poland].<sup>80</sup>

In the spring of 1948, Miłosz coordinated the visit of Józefa Wnukowa, who brought with her an exhibition of contemporary Polish painting to the Kosciuszko Foundation. The Information Bulletin of the Library of Congress notes their joint visit.<sup>81</sup> During her stay, he observed tensions between the Polish diaspora and the Foundation, which resulted in a poor reception for the exhibition.

As a regular guest of the Library, he made the acquaintance of its director, Luther Evans, active in UNESCO, and of Archibald MacLeish.

## Organization of the World Congress of Intellectuals in Defense of Peace in Wrocław

In September 1948, the diplomat organized a series of talks by Edmund Osmańczyk on the subject of Poland's Recovered Territories, but he was most devoted to preparations for the Congress of Wrocław. Invitations to the event were sent to scholars, writers, artists, critics, and journalists. They mainly included sympathizers of Henry A. Wallace, supporters of the left, including those not necessarily supportive of the Progressive Party, struggling as it was for political relevance. Among others, Ruth Benedict and Randall Jarrell were invited. Some people were invited under code names; this group included the writer Herbert Agar, a supporter of Roosevelt's presidency, Samuel Bernstein, a historian of social movements, recommended by the left-wing magazine *Science and Society*, and Mervin Jules, a painter and art critic. Probably due to unfavorable voices about the Congress from the Polish diaspora press, organizational details and were kept secret, as was the exact list of guests.

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78 See the Letter of Tadeusz Unkiewicz to Czesław Miłosz of Jan. 2, 1947 roku. Beinecke Library, Box 3, Folder 74.

79 It was officially commented on only by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz and Bogdan Ostromecki. See Ostromecki, Bogdan: "Na marginesie pewnego traktatu moralnego" [On the Margins of a Certain Treatise on Morals], *Dziś i Jutro* 1948, issue 50, p. 4. More comments on this work are found in the correspondence of the time. Anna Kowalska writes: "In Polna [Street] we passionately read 'Treatise on Morals'." Hardly any piece caused this much delight in some, and this much regret in Eleuterids." Letter of Anna Kowalska to Czesław Miłosz of Nov. 7, 1948. "Ale cóż ma począc poeta, jeśli nie może wyrażać litości i grozy?" Korespondencja Czesława Miłosza i Anny Kowalskiej z lat 1948-1950. ["What is a Poet to Do, Being Unable to Express either Pity or Horror?" The Correspondence between Czesław Miłosz and Anna Kowalska, 1948-50]. "Teksty Drugie" 2019, issue 3, p. 356.

80 See Janta-Połczyński, Aleksander: *Wracam z Polski* [Returning from Poland]. Introduction and preparation by Grażyna Pomian, Paris-Krakow, 2013, pp. 171, 184, 188.

81 *The Library of Congress Information Bulletin*, May 25-31, 1948, p. 8.

Although opinions of this initiative formulated in American papers were fairly neutral, it was generally believed that reaching an agreement in new political realities was impossible. In addition to renewing, developing, and establishing contacts in the scientific and journalistic milieu, Miłosz was tasked with convincing the most important writers to participate in the Congress. He tried to curb the appetite of his superiors for the arrival of authors of international renown like Steinbeck, Caldwell, Hemingway, Faulkner, Buck or Chagall.

Apart from the above people, the diplomatic service was counting on the participation of persons and organizations referred to in the reports as *key contacts*: One World Award Committee, the editorial team of *Science and Society*, Christian Gauss, the outstanding astronomer Harlow Shapley, a historian of literature from Harvard University Francis O. Matthiessen, Samuel Eliot Morison, a historian and sociologist at Harvard, well-known composer and musicologist Walter Piston, painter and sculptor Philip Evergood, economist Wesley Clair Mitchell, a renowned lawyer Robert R. Kenny, and Albert Einstein. It is not known how many of them Miłosz met in person, or with how many he communicated through the embassy. In the report, he only referred to the meeting with Einstein:

The visit (of the Ambassador and Cultural Attaché) [at Albert Einstein's] lasted two hours. He was very cordial. He spoke about the lack of freedom in America, because "he who has the power, begins to want to wield it" and the fact that, for example, atomic physicists are in practice prisoners of the state. He sympathizes with the Congress entirely and will write his address. He said that cannot help organizationally, because he knows nothing about it and does not deal with such things, "he usually just lends his name." The conversation concerned, among others the importance of moral authority at the time when everything can be said of churches, except that that they have a moral authority. Einstein provided a whole series of tips, among others that trips directly to the Congress (with no connection to trips for other purposes and to other countries) would be impossible without a consent of the State Department.<sup>82</sup>

## Expositions of Wanda Telakowska's Exhibition

Miłosz also helped Wanda Telakowska, who came to America with her exhibition of Polish folk art. It was shown after the Wrocław Congress in ten cities in various states, including the Proctor Arts Institute in Utica, New York, the Butler Institute

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<sup>82</sup> *Kongresy [Kongres wrocławski w 1948 r. Sprawozdanie Ambasady R.P. w Waszyngtonie z akcji przygotowawczej do Kongresu (ustalenie składu delegacji amerykańskiej). Sprawozdania z oddźwięków Kongresu na terenie Stanów Zjednoczonych], 1948, [Congresses [The Wrocław Congress of 1948. A Report of the Polish Embassy in Washington regarding the Preparatory Activities for the Congress (decisions on the composition of the US delegation)] Reports on Reverberations of the Congress in the USA] AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 92, f. 1254.*

in Youngstown, Ohio, the American British Art Center in New York, the New York Fine Arts Collection and the National Collection of Fine Arts in Washington, and in museums of the Smithsonian Institution.<sup>83</sup> Miłosz made contact with galleries and museums, researched market demand, visited stores with folk art, and gathered knowledge about methods to document and archive folklore. Initially, the exhibition was met with a cold reception. After the failure of the Congress, cooperation between American institutions and communists was criticized. Polish art, accused of sterility and academism, was rated poorly. Finally, after overcoming the initial resistance in the museums, it achieved a degree of success, as attested by press reports in the *Magazine of Art*, *The New York Times*, *The Evening Sun*, *The Art Digest*, *The New Yorker*, *New York Herald Tribune*, *Christian Science Monitor* and *Santa Barbara News-Press*. As Miłosz summed it up, “This makes it much easier for us to work on other projects, and it is now the only counterweight to the extremely hostile political atmosphere.” The exhibition coincided with the cinematic distribution of the film *The Last Stage (Ostatni etap)* and presentations of Andrzej Panufnik’s *Tragic Overture*, which slightly improved the atmosphere around it.

Presentations of this collection required a good deal of traveling. At the end of May and early June 1948, Miłosz toured California: San Francisco, where he met with the painter Stefan Norblin, Los Angeles and Santa Barbara, where he visited the translator Tadeusz Skarżyński, Ganna Walska, Xenia Grzebieniowska, a friend of the Brezas and representative of the Embassy in California, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Tyszkiewicz. He also made attempts to reach Henry Miller.<sup>84</sup> On account of the exhibition, Miłosz also visited Santa Fe, where he went with Wanda Telakowska to local museums and stores with Native American products. On the way back, the poet flew over the Grand Canyon. The landscape looked to him “as if on day two of the world’s creation” (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 201), and this thought returned in his poems and essays written after 1960.

On June 12, 1948, a very flattering assessment of his activities was formulated:

1. Employee behavior: very good, shows professional reliability.
2. Professional qualifications and talents: a unique and brilliant intelligence. His cultural interests qualify him for the position of the Embassy’s Cultural Attaché.
3. Results of previous work: Very good.
4. Usefulness of the employee in the region: Very high. Has established extensive cultural contacts.
5. Moral and political aspects: High ethical standards and extensive political interests; trustworthy.

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<sup>83</sup> See *Wystawa polskiego przemysłu artystycznego i sztuki ludowej w Waszyngtonie 12 I – 31 I 1949 w National Collection of Fine Arts*, [Exhibition of the Polish Industrial Design and Folk Art in Washington, Jan. 1 – Feb. 3 1949, National Collection of Fine Arts] AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 87, f. 1174, p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> At that time, Miłosz’s essay was published under the pen-name Żagarysta, titled “Henry Miller, czyli dno” [Henry Miller or Rock Bottom], *Odrodzenie* 1948, issue 39, pp. 1–2.

6. Prospects for development: His exceptional literary interests do not stand in the way of his development into an eminent diplomatic officer, provided that in further practice, he develops his organizational skills, which are still lacking.<sup>85</sup>

In the autumn of 1948, Miłosz carefully observed and commented in his reports on the press dispute surrounding the Adam Mickiewicz Department of Philology at Columbia University, chaired by Professor Manfred Kridl after the resignation of Arthur Coleman – he described the Polish diaspora pickets in New York and Chicago. Miłosz arrived in Chicago with Wanda Telakowska. There he talked to the Art Institute about the possibility of exhibiting her collection. Also there, on December 19, 1948, he gave a groundbreaking lecture on Adam Mickiewicz.<sup>86</sup>

## Creative Work after 1948

With the start of 1948, the poet's reading, translation and essay writing begin to blossom – a demonstration of his impressive self-education effort, aimed mainly at strengthening his relationship with the Polish reader. Miłosz was invited to cooperate with *Teatr* magazine by Leon Schiller and the editorial team of *Zeszyty Wrocławskie*. Mieczysław Brahmner from the publishing house Czytelnik encouraged him to write a study of English-speaking poetry in the planned series *Foreign Literatures*. He wanted to use previously submitted materials for an anthology of English poetry and to include translations and sketches about Latin American art, but the project never came to fruition. He sent American literature to the country, to Maria Dąbrowska and Anna Kowalska among others – to her he sent short stories by William Saroyan and John Steinbeck. It was then that most of his poems, articles and translations were published in *Kuźnica*<sup>87</sup>, *Odrodzenie*, *Nowiny Literackie*<sup>88</sup> and *Twórczość*. He

<sup>85</sup> *Czesław Miłosz's Personnel File*, p. 9. In that year Miłosz published his last article in the Embassy's bulletin – "Literature in Poland", *Poland of Today* 1948, August, pp. 7–8 and 16.

<sup>86</sup> It became the basis for the later article "Mickiewicz and Modern Poetry", which the poet presented to various circles. It was rated very highly by Roman Jakobson, who, as may be gleaned from the letter of August 23, 1948, received a copy to read.

<sup>87</sup> See Sandburg, Carl: "Przekłady Czesława Miłosza" [Works of Translation by Czesław Miłosz], *Kuźnica* 1948, issue 13–14, pp. 8–9.

<sup>88</sup> Neruda, Pablo: "Oda do Federyka Garcia Lorca w przekładzie Czesława Miłosza" [Ode to Federico Garcia Lorca translated by Czesław Miłosz], *Nowiny Literackie* 1948, issue 18, p. 1; "Nowe przekłady Czesława Miłosza" [New Translations by Czesław Miłosz], *Nowiny Literackie* 1948, issue 4, p. 2; "Pablo Neruda. Pogrzeb na wschodzie w przekładzie Czesława Miłosza" ["Burial in the East" translated by Czesław Miłosz], *Nowiny Literackie* 1948, issue 3, p. 3; Miłosz, Czesław: "Notatnik" [The Notebook], *Nowiny Literackie* 1948, issue 8, p. 1 and issue 15, p. 1; Miłosz, Czesław: "Negro spirituals," *Nowiny Literackie* 1948, issue 26, p. 4; "Notatnik amerykański" [The American Notebook], *Nowiny Literackie* 1948, no. 40, pp. 1–2.

wrote essays on Adam Mickiewicz,<sup>89</sup> and on Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz's<sup>90</sup> poetry. He encountered the books of literary criticism by Edmund Wilson. He translated a fragment of "The Wild Palms" and the short story "Red Leaves" by Faulkner. *Moby-Dick* made a great impression on him. He discovered *Negro spirituals* and argued:

the only living people (...) are Blacks and Indians – if you consider groups of people, not individuals. And thus the lowest, the poorest, the most disadvantaged. Mexicans, who live in mass at the level of Polish peasants, or even lower, are alive: they love, create art, fill the exhibition halls with crowds, from there the grand, leftist, political Mexican painting draws its juices (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 428).

In this tone, Miłosz wrote to many people. Reflecting, after many years, on the legitimacy of interpreting Neruda's poetry, he claimed that it was "part of the action against the barbarity" of Moscow (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 413), "as an antidote to the grayness coming from the East" (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 149). By providing translations of *Negro spirituals*, Neruda, or Chinese poetry, the poet could feel safe and, at the same time, have a sense of participating in a game with the authorities.

Nevertheless, many years later he asked himself:

To what extent was my sense of 'mission' self-deception? Surely, such a cure for pangs of one's conscience can be said to be of little more consequence than keeping one's fingers crossed. However, today, looking back on the decades of the People's Republic of Poland, one can admire the enormity of the work done by the writers of literature who played this game, and above all excellent translators of world classics, poetry, drama, novels, and essays (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 413).

The poet also looked for opportunities to publish his own books outside the domestic market. Starting in 1948, Miłosz would provide in his letters broader diagnoses of American culture, society and politics. Of note is also another fact: from this year on, he talked more and more about the New World from its own perspective. He acted as a mediator between cultures, without anticipating that this would be his role for the decades to come.

## Participation in the Conference for Peace

Miłosz also played the role of an intermediary during the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace, which took place from March 26 to 27 at the Waldorf-Astoria hotel in New York. He looked after the Polish delegation, including Paweł

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<sup>89</sup> The article in question is "Mickiewicz and Modern Poetry", *The American Slavic and East European Review* 1948, issue 7, pp. 361–368.

<sup>90</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: "Nad książką, czyli cudze chwalicie" [Over the Book, or the Grass is Always Greener], *Odrodzenie* 1948, issue 4, pp. 3–4.

Hoffman, the editor of *Kuźnica*, Leon Kruczkowski and Stanisław Ossowski. The event was boycotted by the New York anti-Stalinist left. Under the guidance of Sidney Hook, it organized its own Congress of Intellectual Freedom. An active role in it was played by Dwight Macdonald, editor of *politics*, whom the poet approached earlier and to whom he – as he recalled in *Inne abecadło* [Further ABC's] – “owed much of his political education” (*Inne abecadło*, 204). Nowhere – except for the report for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, displaying the alleged success of the venture<sup>91</sup>– did Miłosz report on the conference, which took place in an atmosphere of scandal and was accompanied by a press war.<sup>92</sup> This single example would be a testimony of Miłosz's consistent strategy of not disclosing the knowledge he gained and accumulated in America, and processed in later years. Alex Ross writes the following about the stormy deliberations at the Waldorf-Astoria hotel:

This was one of the first great propaganda battles in the cultural Cold War, and more than a few artistic reputations fell victim to the clash of ideologies. The martyr in chief was Dmitri Shostakovich, who had gone to America at Stalin's behest. Weird scenes surrounded Shostakovich from the moment he arrived on American soil. The Broadwood Hotel in Philadelphia canceled his dinner reservation on account of threats of violence. Demonstrators carried placards exhorting him to speak out or to defect (...) He read the speeches that were placed in front of him; he answered questions in accordance with instructions that were whispered in his ear. (...) Left-leaning American artists of all disciplines and persuasions gathered at the Waldorf to greet their Soviet counterparts. (...) Henry Wallace was there, and drew cheers as he entered. *Time* observed snidely that the event could have been mistaken for a Wallace rally. Clifford Odets, Lillian Hellman, and Arthur Miller also attended. Thomas Mann sent a message of support. (...) Most of the attendees did not know to what extent the event had been engineered by Soviet propagandists, who were under the aegis of the Cominform organization. Assembled on the other side of the political barricades was a coalition of disenchanted leftists who called themselves Americans for Intellectual Freedom. They holed up in the bridal suite at the Waldorf, trying to stem the tide of Communist and fellow-traveler propaganda. (...) The members of Americans for Intellectual Freedom fanned out to various speeches and panel discussions at the conference. (...) Several days later *Life* magazine opened fire on the entire world of Henry Wallace, the New Deal, the Popular Front, and the U.S. Communist Party. A sardonic photo essay on the Waldorf conference highlighted Wallace as the “standout fellow traveler,” and a two-page photo gallery identified fifty “dupes and fellow travelers” who were said to be aiding the Communist cause. Copland, spelled “Copeland,” appeared alongside Thomas Mann, Albert Einstein, Langston Hughes, Charles Chaplin, and all the above-mentioned attendees of the conference. Among

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91 *Sprawozdanie Czesława Miłosza z pobytu na Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace w Nowym Yorku w dniach 25–27 III 1949 r.* [A report by Czesław Miłosz of his stay at the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace in New York] Archiwum Akt Nowych, collection 237/XXII, file 553.

92 An extensive account of the conference was published as a four-page insert titled *The Waldorf Conference* attached to *politics* 1949, Winter. Miłosz also probably knew the article by Howe, Irving: “The Culture Conference,” *Partisan Review* 1949, May, Vol. XVI, No. 5, pp. 505–511.

other things, Luce's attack indicated that the media's lionization of refugee intellectuals was at an end. A "strange rogue's gallery," Mann called the *Life* spread.<sup>93</sup>

Miłosz did not mention these events, nor was he asked about them in published conversations or extended interviews. The only person to ask him for a comment was Michael Wreszin, a Woodrow Wilson Fellow. The copy of the response to Wreszin's letter written in 1990 remains in the poet's archival collection.

## The Future and Its Dilemmas

At the end of the 1940s, Miłosz understood better and better that a moment of choice was approaching. On April 18, 1948, he gave a bold lecture on Polish literature at Columbia University. After the Chicago lecture, the publication of *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals] and press polemics with Jerzy Putrament, under the pen name Wincenty Bednarczuk,<sup>94</sup> the lecture at Columbia may have worried his superiors all the more. Although Miłosz now moved much more freely in the American environment, he did not abandon his plans of returning to Europe, which resulted in disagreements with his wife. Miłosz even considered such improbable scenarios as joining the Primavera Hutterite community, members of which he met in Washington.<sup>95</sup> His relations with the Polish community were still frosty – in letters he confessed his antipathy to some in the local environment, and he generally preferred to be in the company of Americans. Even though Jerzy Giedroyc (with the help of Aleksander Janta-Polczyński and Józef Czapski<sup>96</sup>) tried to encourage him to cooperate, the poet did not avail himself of this opportunity. For all his contacts, travels, and meetings with famous figures from the world of science and art, his sense of alienation did not abate. His attitude to the country was unequivocal, especially

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<sup>93</sup> Ross, Alex: *The Rest is Noise. Listening to the Twentieth Century*, pp. 406–411 in the 2007 Picador edition.

<sup>94</sup> See Pasiński, Emil: *op. cit.*, 202.

<sup>95</sup> At the Beinecke Library there is a letter of Arnold Stevenson to Czesław Miłosz of May 9, 1949, along with extensive informational materials on the communities of Hutterites in Paraguay and England, Box 2, Folder 67. See also Miłosz, Czesław: "Primavera." In *Miłosz's ABC's*. Translated from the Polish by Madeline G. Levine. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2001, pp. 224–225. The poet's correspondence shows that he paid a visit to Pendle Hill in 1947. See Letter of Czesław Miłosz to Thomas Merton, undated. In *Striving towards being. The letters by Thomas Merton and Czesław Miłosz*. Edited by Robert Faggen, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1997, p. 59.

<sup>96</sup> Czapski, announcing his arrival in Washington D.C., refers to an earlier conversation with Miłosz and finds him to be introverted. The letter implies the meeting with Miłosz did not pass easily. See the Letter of Józef Czapski to Czesław Miłosz of April 13, 1950. Beinecke Library, Box 1, Folder 15. The poet probably did not attend Czapski's talk "Co widziałem w Rosji" [What I Saw in Russia] delivered in New York at the invitation of the Polish Institute of Sciences and Arts in America.



after the publication of the poem “Toast (Poemat satyryczny)” [The Toast (A Satirical Poem)] in *Odrodzenie*.<sup>97</sup> The poem did not go down well with editor Jerzy Giedroyc, and in Poland the attitude towards it was mixed. Miłosz complained to Józef Wittlin: “They performed an operation on my ‘*Toast*.’ They even went so far as to change the word ‘Vlasovites’ to ‘Hitlerites’.”<sup>98</sup>

Moderators of cultural life in Poland kept trying to get the poet to cooperate – he was asked for a chapter of a monograph about Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz.<sup>99</sup> Miłosz himself did not abandon his intention to publish an anthology of English-language poetry in Poland – he urged Władysław Ryńca to have his translations published.<sup>100</sup> Miłosz’s uncertainty about his future in the West deepened, and his business trip to Poland gave it an additional coloring.

It is worth noting, however, that as one of the few poets, he praised Janta-Półczyński’s reportage *Wracam z Polski* [Returning from Poland],<sup>101</sup> in a situation when the reportage was rejected by part of the emigration. As Grażyna Pomian writes:

Most of the emigrants took Janta’s reporting as a betrayal of independence ideals. Evidence of this was supposed to be Janta’s alleged depiction of Polish citizens’ acquiescence to the occupation by the USSR, and thus renunciation of independence, while the emigration deeply believed that the majority of the nation thought like them, rejecting the regime categorically, and awaiting the war that would liberate Poland. Criticism of Janta’s reporting spilled to all continents where Polish émigrés were found. The most biting pieces – criticizing Janta along with Jerzy Giedroyc – appeared in *Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza*. Both the reporter and the publisher were accused of undermining the “struggle for independence and integrity of the homeland,” giving in to a system of violence imposed on Poland by the Yalta Conference.”<sup>102</sup>

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**97** Miłosz, Czesław: “Toast (Poemat satyryczny)” [The Toast (A Satirical Poem)], *Odrodzenie* 1949, issue 16–17, p. 3 and 5. The deleted fragment was published in *Kultura* 1951, issue 5, pp. 14–15. Miłosz included remarks on censoring the poem in his letter to Wittlin of May 11, 1949, Miłosz, Czesław: “Z listów do Józefa Wittlina” [Excerpts from Letters to Józef Wittlin], *Zeszyty Literackie* 2001, issue 3.

**98** Miłosz, Czesław: “Z listów do Józefa Wittlina” [Excerpts from Letters to Józef Wittlin], *Zeszyty Literackie* 2001, issue 3, p. 127.

**99** See Letters of Jerzy Eugeniusz Płomieński to Czesław Miłosz. Beinecke Library, Box 2, Folder 58.

**100** See the Letter of Władysław Ryńca to Czesław Miłosz of March 20, 1949. Beinecke Library, Box 2, Folder 63.

**101** Janta-Półczyński’s reportage appeared in installments in *Kultura*, but upon the intervention of General Anders Giedroyc stopped its publication, issuing it in whole as a book he himself financed – See Janta-Półczyński, Aleksander: *Wracam z Polski: Warszawa–Wrocław–Kraków–Poznań–Szczecin–życie–polityka–gospodarka–sztuka–ludzie i zagadnienia* [Returning from Poland: Warsaw–Wrocław–Kraków–Poznań–Szczecin–Life–Politics–Economy–Art–People and Issues], Paris, 1949.

**102** Pomian, Grażyna: “Awantura emigracyjna” [The Emigration Controversy]. In Janta-Półczyński, Aleksander: *Wracam z Polski* [Returning from Poland]. Introduction and preparation by Grażyna Pomian, Paris–Kraków, 2013, p. 10.

## On the Visit to Poland in 1949

Miłosz left the United States on May 6, 1949. A day earlier the Ministry of Foreign Affairs received an encrypted message with instructions regarding his stay in Poland:

I am sending Miłosz to Warsaw, as per our conversations, for 10 days. Miłosz has not been in the country since 1946, and I am keen for him to refresh his impressions and meet with as many people as possible. He will bring an urgent package and discuss the details of cultural propaganda.<sup>103</sup>

According to the encrypted message of May 31, 1949, the diplomat's stay in Poland was to last until June 15,<sup>104</sup> but it was extended:

Regarding dispatch no. 584 from the American Department, I agree to extend Miłosz's stay, as I believe that it is very useful. In August, the month of holidays in the press, I am going to send you Jaworski. I expect to have Miłosz back here on July 10.<sup>105</sup>

The poet reached Paris, where he met with Jerzy Putrament and Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz. On May 24, he arrived in Warsaw. Elsewhere in Poland, he visited his family in Sopot, then had an author's evening in Szczecin, where he met Andrzejewski. Then he went to Wrocław – there he visited Anna Kowalska. In Katowice, he was present at the congress of the Association of Polish Visual Artists and at the Silesian State Theater, at the play *As You Like It* in his own translation, and in June in Krakow he met with Jerzy Turowicz and Tadeusz Różewicz. He also saw Wanda Telakowska, and then went to Olsztyn to visit his grandmother. From there he traveled to Warsaw, where he had the opportunity to meet Pablo Neruda in a theater, and at the Iwaszkiewiczzes he talked to Zofia Nałkowska.

On July 4, he flew to Paris to give a lecture on the poetry of Oscar Miłosz at the Maison de la Pensée Française – at the reception at the Embassy he engaged in a discussion with Jules Supervielle and Louis Aragon. During his brief visit, he also managed to visit the Kroński family. On July 12, he flew to America, and after an emergency stopover in New Brunswick, he reached New York. The journey, which he called a “transplant” (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 230), gave him an opportunity to make new observations. His image of Paris had changed: “Paris has caused a sensation in me – its ineffable beauty and a complete shift of my attitude towards this city from my old times spent in it” (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 103); “Paris in July is so beautiful that it is breathtaking, but maybe it's too sweet, the human being probably needs more plain foods” (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 230). On the other hand, returning to America

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**103** Czesław Miłosz's Personnel File, p. 24.

**104** For this period, it was planned that Miłosz would receive a daily allowance. See Czesław Miłosz's Personnel File, p. 17.

**105** *Ibidem*, p. 25.

meant the necessity to re-adapt: “In fact, I was overwhelmed by these two months of travel and I had to adapt over again. In the end, in this country, if one wants to lead a European way of life, one might just go insane” (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 103). He wrote about the journey at greater length, and with more audacity, to Janta-Polczyński: “I left Poland impressed by the apocalyptic gravitas of the things that are happening there, and after Poland America now tastes completely bland.”<sup>106</sup> Franaszek adds: “On his return from Poland, the depth of Miłosz’s estrangement from the new Polish status quo left him perplexed as to how he might extricate himself from what he increasingly saw as a distasteful situation.”<sup>107</sup> Probably after his July visit to the country, a decision was made to dismiss him from the function of secretary of the Embassy and bring him to France, where he would work under Putrament’s supervision.<sup>108</sup>

## On Returning to Washington

Despite of his sense of foreignness and irritation, Miłosz entered the New World more gently. On September 1, he reassumed his old duties and took what America had to offer in terms of culture: he began to celebrate American holidays, went to see exhibitions of paintings and posters in New York museums, finished his translation of *Othello*, frequented the cinema, and after buying a phonograph, started gathering a collection of records. In his letters, he described the celebrations of the centenary of Chopin’s death at Carnegie Hall, preparations for the Year of Adam Mickiewicz and a volume of articles and essays on Mickiewicz.<sup>109</sup>

In his pragmatic assessment, Poland’s participation in the meeting was free advertising of sorts, a form of a reminder that Wrocław, Gdansk and Szczecin were Polish cities, thanks to which “the fact of the western borders is hammered home.”<sup>110</sup> To the editors of *Masses and Mainstream*, with whom he got acquainted more closely after the conference in Bread Loaf and the Congress of Intellectual Freedom, Miłosz gave Polish books: the prose of Zofia Nałkowska, *Shakespeare* by Adolf Rudnicki, and poems by Adam Ważyk and Tadeusz Różewicz. He urged correspondents to send in articles that the magazine agreed to accept also in Polish. He worked closely with

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**106** Letter of Czesław Miłosz to Aleksander Janta-Polczyński of July 12, 1950. The typescript is stored at the National Library, in the Archive of Aleksander Janta-Polczyński, call no. III 12 956, pp. 17–20.

**107** Franaszek, Andrzej: *op. cit.*, p. 271.

**108** It was only on October 4, 1950 that Czesław Miłosz received a letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs notifying him of his nomination to First Secretary for Cultural Affairs at the Polish Embassy in Paris, as of October 5, 1950. See *Czesław Miłosz’s Personnel File*, p. 19.

**109** This refers to a volume edited by Manfred Kridl: *Adam Mickiewicz. Poet of Poland. A Symposium*, New York, 1951, in which Miłosz published the essay “Mickiewicz and Modern Poetry”.

**110** *Ibidem*, p. 5.

the national press, publishing poetry<sup>111</sup> and translations of poems in *Odrodzenie*<sup>112</sup> and *Kuźnica*.<sup>113</sup> In the latter, he published an essay on Melville, which – after national cultural policy became more restricted in 1949 – was censored.<sup>114</sup> Under the pseudonym Dr Pamfil, in *Odrodzenie*<sup>115</sup> he defended the work of T. S. Eliot, who was attacked more and more violently after being awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. He reviewed the prose of Norman Mailer and William Gardner Smith.<sup>116</sup> He offered editors subscriptions to *Masses and Mainstream*, *Science and Society*, and *Saturday Review of Literature*, and encouraged them to read *New Foundations* and *Political Affairs*. Hoffman wrote to him about the merger of *Odrodzenie* and *Kuźnica*, inviting him to cooperate with the resulting *Nowa Kultura*.<sup>117</sup> His last translations printed before leaving the diplomatic service were fragments of Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*,<sup>118</sup> *Othello*,<sup>119</sup> and poems of Chinese poets,<sup>120</sup> and his last essays – “Obyczaje” [Customs], “O stanie poezji polskiej” [On the State of Polish Poetry] and “Poeta-pieśniarz” [Poet-Bard] on the work of Andrzejkowski.<sup>121</sup> His last poem the readers could read was titled “Żuławy” [The Fens of Żuławy].<sup>122</sup> On January 13, 1950, Miłosz wrote to Anna Kowalska:

The year is bad for me, and my heart is heavy – to put it shamelessly. I am translating *Othello* and besides, [I have] the feeling of a man with his arms and legs bound. I read a lot, for instance, I discovered that there is an ugly thing in the new literature – there is no place in it for translations of Jewish literature created in Poland, and you need to come to America to discover it. In addition,

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111 Miłosz, Czesław: “Nowe wiersze” [New Poems], *Odrodzenie* 1949, issue 22, p. 1.

112 See Miłosz, Czesław: “Przekłady z poezji murzyńskiej” [Translations of African American Poetry], *Odrodzenie* 1949, issue 20, pp. 1–2.

113 See Ai Qing: “Człowiek który umarł drugi raz.” Translated by Czesław Miłosz [“He Died the Second Time.” Translated by Czesław Miłosz], *Kuźnica* 1949, issue 19, pp. 8–9.

114 See Miłosz, Czesław: “Moby-Dick”, *Kuźnica* 1949, issue 6, p. 9. In his correspondence with Matuszewski, the author vehemently protested against shortening the essay in print (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 452 and 467).

115 See Dr Pamfil [Miłosz, Czesław]: “Awantura o nagrodę” [Controversy over an Award], *Odrodzenie* 1949, issue 39, p. 6.

116 Miłosz, Czesław: “Dwie książki o wojnie” [Two Books about the War], *Odrodzenie* 1949, issue 15, pp. 1–2.

117 Letter of Paweł Hoffman to Czesław Miłosz of March 14, 1950. Beinecke Library, Box 1, Folder 24.

118 Miłosz, Czesław: “Małe wypisy historyczne” [A Small Historical Reader], *Nowa Kultura* 1950, issue 20, p. 4.

119 Miłosz, Czesław: “Otello. Maur wenecki. Akt 1” [Othello. The Moor of Venice. Act 1], *Twórczość* 1950, issue 7, pp. 116–146.

120 Miłosz, Czesław: “Przekłady z poezji Chin Ludowych” [Translations from the Poetry of People's China], *Twórczość* 1950, issue 9, pp. 83–86.

121 See Miłosz, Czesław: “Obyczaje” [Customs], *op. cit.*; “O stanie poezji polskiej” [On the State of Polish Poetry], *Kuźnica* 1950, issue 3, p. 3; “Poeta-pieśniarz” [Poet-Bard], *Kuźnica* 1950, issue 5, pp. 5–6.

122 Miłosz, Czesław: “Żuławy” [The Fens of Żuławy], *Nowa Kultura* 1950, issue 10, p. 8.

I've become interested in automobiles, I go to a series of presentations of the history of film since 1903 (these are amazing things – a taste of half a century's worth of developments) and I go to the only theater in Washington, i.e. burlesque – another strange thing, nowhere to be seen outside of America: it is a representation of pure vulgarity, not even slightly colored by sentimentality, a kind of pornographic circus (and what else is Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* ultimately?)<sup>123</sup>

In February 1950, he proposed publishing various works of translation and essays:

1. A translation of *Othello*. Would an entire act fit in? Is Shakespeare palatable? It is not, in all fairness, an outstanding writer and his grandmothers were all wrong.
2. An essay about Shakespeare – mainly an analysis of the economic changes of his time and his life status – almost nothing has been written about it in Poland.
3. Translation of fairy tales (folklore) unknown in Poland. Folklore of Polish Jews? Blacks? Egyptians? (prose)
4. Free translations from ancient poets (but essentially according to the English translations).
5. Poems of my own – not much there for now.
6. Your own suggestions, Madam.<sup>124</sup>

As he recalled in *Native Realm* Miłosz became a regular at Washington's cinemas– he considered the dilemmas of returning to the past during the screenings of films he once saw in pre-war Wilno:

In the same month of January 1950, I attended a series of film screenings depicting the history of film from its beginnings. I saw the first German motion pictures, *Life of an American Fireman* (1903), fragments of other old American films, the German comedy *Misunderstood* (1912), short comedies by Chaplin, the comedy *Male and Female* (1919) directed by Cecil B. de Mille, starring Gloria Swanson, the German comedy *Don Juan's Marriage* (1919), and Cavallanti's Impressionist reportage from Paris *Nothing but Time* (1926). I also saw films particularly famous in the history of cinema: *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919), directed by Robert Wiene, with Kraus, Veidt and Lil Dagover, *The Italian Straw Hat* (1927) directed by René Clair, with Préjean and *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1929), with actress the [Renée Jeanne] Falconetti.<sup>125</sup>

In February 1950, the poet prepared an exhibition of children's paintings from Visual Arts and Culture Centers – he made a comment about them to Kowalska, saying they were better than many painted by adults he saw in the US.<sup>126</sup>

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123 Letter of Czesław Miłosz to Anna Kowalska of January 13, 1950, *op. cit.*, p. 357-358.

124 Letter of Czesław Miłosz to Anna Kowalska of February 15, 1950, *op. cit.*, p. 361.

125 Miłosz, Czesław: "Obyczaje" [Customs], *op. cit.*, p. 80.

126 Letter of Czesław Miłosz to Anna Kowalska of February 23, 1950, *op. cit.*, p. 363.

## How He Left the USA

While Miłosz maintained his *activités de surface*, the decision to leave the USA grew stronger in him. His observations of the international scene, and the course of politics in Poland during his stay in the spring of 1949 turned his doubts into certainty, and his discomfort into suppressed fury, and despair. He confessed to Anna Kowalska:

I think a lot and I struggle. I cannot look at this country anymore – it's an insane asylum. However, the years of my stay in America have been decisive for me. In what way? – we have yet to see that. In any case, I have a great deal of knowledge about this country, and this knowledge is quite crushing.<sup>127</sup>

He sought help in making his decision from Saint-John Perse, Thornton Wilder and Albert Einstein.<sup>128</sup> What happened next Miłosz describes in many places – uncertain as to his true viewpoints and intentions, Warsaw first lured Miłosz to Paris,<sup>129</sup> so he might be brought back and<sup>130</sup> kept in Poland. This proved difficult not only due to Miłosz's tactics of evasion – he wanted his wife to give birth to their second son in America (the first birth, by caesarean section, indicated possible complications in the future). In Warsaw, attempts were made to remedy this situation, as mentioned in the encrypted message of July 7, 1950:

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**127** Letter of Czesław Miłosz to Anna Kowalska of 1950, *op. cit.*, p. 363. It is worth seeing this situation from a broader perspective, as does Tony Judt in the book *Postwar. A History of Europe since 1945*, which describes the terror of Stalinist purges and show trials in all of Central and Eastern Europe.

**128** In his letter to Anna Kowalska, Miłosz considered publishing the poem “Do Einsteina” [To Einstein] in *Zeszyty Wrocławskie*. He added: “You would not like an ode to Einstein, whom I'm very proud to know in person. (...) He has just announced the crowning achievement of his life – equations providing the ‘key to universe’ demonstrating the identity of gravity and electromagnetism, i.e. providing the same explanation to the macrocosm and the microcosm. This is indeed a great century, as it sees the fulfillment of cabalistic expectations of the alchemists. My hidden second nature of the “sorcerer's apprentice” (without which it is not possible to practice poetry) is rejoicing. Letter of Czesław Miłosz to Anna Kowalska of Jan. 13, 1950, *op. cit.*, p. 358-359.

**129** This decision was not formally made at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on February 7, 1950: “Czesław Miłosz – Second Secretary to the Embassy in Washington: ‘A person who is entirely ideologically alien. After his last stay in Poland he revealed in his comments a decidedly hostile and denigrating attitude toward all aspects of life in the country. His wife – a bitter enemy of the Soviet Union. Call off – via Paris.’” After: Pasierski, Emil: *op. cit.*, pp. 213–214.

**130** Putrament recollected: “[Miłosz] also came to Warsaw. He came over to my place, as always, charming. We had a long conversation, which gave me the impression that everything in the country seems bizarre to him, if not downright hostile. That he is very far away from us. There was nothing particularly alarming about it, but when Berman called me several days later, he said that based on confidential information, they were afraid Miłosz may defect, and asked what I thought of keeping him in the country, and I admitted that there was probably no other way.” In Putrament, Jerzy: *Pół wieku. Literaci* [Half a Century. Men of Letters], Warsaw, 1986, p. 57.

I inform you that M. received a letter from Putrament, announcing his transfer to Paris, and responded negatively. It can be expected that he will refuse to move even to Paris, because he is under the influence of his wife's early pregnancy and her belligerent moods. I suggest one more alternative: call him back to Warsaw to discuss his future, and stop him there. Then, of course, we risk that the wife will begin to scream at us over here.<sup>131</sup>

These predictions did not materialize, of which we learn from the cryptogram of July 13, 1950 which says:

I report that M. came to me and said that after consulting with his wife, he was not going to ask to extend their stay in the US in the event of his transfer to Paris.

I would like to point out that he knows from Putrament about the plan to transfer him.

I would like to remind you that you must now move him to Paris as soon as possible. Further:

1. I strongly advise that he be appointed a cultural adviser there.
  2. Please formulate the telegram in such a way that I can hand it to him.
  3. In the event of a dispute, I will put him on a plane to Warsaw to communicate with you directly.
- I shall be very pleased when the embassy is finally relieved of this burden of "Polish poetry." I am afraid of the effect of the mounting atmosphere of war on types such as this one.<sup>132</sup>

The negotiations were prolonged and took various turns. Originally the diplomat was to leave America on September 14, but this did not happen, as mentioned in the cryptogram of September 25, 1950:

Please be advised that on the 14th of August, Miłosz was supposed to leave. He approached me today with a request for a 2-week extension. I have concerns about his return. In conversations with him, one sees not only the fear of war, but also an unwaveringly hostile attitude towards the goals Poland is aiming for. He is trying to mask it with care for his family. I request information: To what extent do we care about Miłosz? Do we need to continue to handle him with kid gloves? Should I agree to postpone his date of departure, which still does not exclude further obstruction, one time it's his wife's pregnancy or a dental appointment, another time it's the war.<sup>133</sup>

Stalling for time, Miłosz made a request, which is reported in the cryptogram of September 21, 1950:

Justifying it with the opinion of the physician who found a pregnancy complication in Mrs. Miłosz, M. is asking for permission to let his wife stay here for about 4 weeks. M. wants to leave for Paris on Sept. 28, 1950, take office there, and go to Warsaw for talks with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We think that you should agree. Although the wife's condition is even dangerous, we think that:

M. does not want to break his ties with us.

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131 *Czesław Miłosz's Personnel File*, p. 26.

132 *Ibidem*, p. 27.

133 *Ibidem*, p. 28.

His wife refuses to travel, but she will break when her husband is in Paris. Otherwise, there may be undesirable complications here in the US. In addition, Miłosz's continued presence here, despite the dismissal, demoralizes the personnel in Washington. When Miłosz leaves, even without his wife, he will be removed from the staff list and his permit to stay will be revoked.

I request an immediate confirmation of our position, because it would be very detrimental to cancel the meeting with M., who should be leaving in one week.<sup>134</sup>

Eventually, the attaché left the United States on September 28, 1950, which was commented on in another cryptogram:

Today Miłosz is finally leaving. Please, make sure that they respond to him cordially in Paris and give him help in finding a flat. I ordered his wife be paid \$300 for October. M. asked me to pay for her an allowance until she gives birth. I replied that it was up to the Head Office and that I would support his request. I am of the opinion that we should agree and have some means of exerting pressure in this way. After a longer conversation with Miłosz, I am fairly optimistic about further development in this matter.<sup>135</sup>

On October 5, 1950, the Embassy was notified that he had arrived in Paris.<sup>136</sup> Along the way, however, there was a misunderstanding:

Miłosz was informed by Slonimski that he was to become the director of the Polish Cultural Institute in London from April and that this matter was already agreed with the Headquarters. Give me an explanation.

Please, tell ambassador Wierbłowski. Miłosz is living in Duammont d'Urville and is happy with this because he has a nice room that costs him little. He wants to rent an apartment only for the arrival of his wife, i.e. in February or March, and he has seen some likely ones, but has refrained from looking further in view of the letter from Slonimski.<sup>137</sup>

As is well known, after Miłosz arrived in Warsaw, his diplomatic passport was taken away, which meant that he was forced to stay in Poland. Thanks to an extraordinary intervention from Minister Zygmunt Modzelewski on January 15, 1951, Miłosz departed for France.<sup>138</sup> On February 1, he secretly left his official apartment, took refuge in Maisons-Laffitte, and then asked the French authorities to grant him political asylum. Warsaw was immediately informed about it:

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**134** *Ibidem*, p. 29.

**135** *Ibidem*, p. 30. In the Beinecke Library, Box 181, Folder 2810 there is a certificate of nomination from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dated October 4, 1950, which names Miłosz First Secretary for Cultural Affairs at the Polish Embassy in Paris, as of October 5, 1950.

**136** *Czesław Miłosz's Personnel File*, p. 31.

**137** *Ibidem*, p. 32.

**138** This is described at some length by Modzelewska, Natalia: "Miłosz w Polsce na przełomie 1950/51" [Miłosz in Poland at the turn of the year 1951], *Kultura* 1981, issue 3.



Citz. OGRODZIŃSKI in telegram No. 171, dated 1.02.51 communicates that on Feb.1, 1951 in the morning, Miłosz left his flat, taking all the things he could take away by taxi. There is no doubt that he has deserted.

Citz. Ogrodziński asks for instructions as to whether he should try to contact him through Citz. Grzędzielski and people close to the embassy from the world of culture, who know M. well, in order to try to agree with him on a peaceful breakup, with a promise from M. that he will leave France and will not issue any statements to the press.<sup>139</sup>

Following this, he was dismissed from work on January 31, 1951. The consequences were felt by Janina Miłosz – in the cryptogram of February 12, 1951, we read:

Ambassador Winiewicz reports in telegram 69 from the 9<sup>th</sup> of this month that apart from *Voice of America*, it is still quiet about Miłosz. Ambassador Winiewicz asks for information about his behavior in Paris after the desertion. He is concerned about the impact on the affairs of the Mickiewicz Institute. He asks to whom he should send the boxes containing the library that Miłosz kept at the embassy, which he thinks will be useful in Poland. Before the message from director Wilski, Mrs. Miłosz was only paid the hospital costs. Payment of \$825 for different medical costs was withheld. Nor did she receive the allowance for February.<sup>140</sup>

## The “Miłosz Case”

If Miłosz’s departure for the diplomatic posting was accompanied by various reactions in the country and abroad, his decision in February 1951 reverberated even more strongly. His resignation from the function of the First Secretary of the Polish Embassy in Paris, application for political asylum, and establishing close cooperation with *Kultura* grew into the ‘Miłosz case,’ although, as Renata Gorczyńska aptly put it, the ‘Miłosz case’ can be said to have started the moment he arrived in New York.<sup>141</sup> In 1946, Dominik Horodyński wrote:

I wanted to visit you, Poet. I wanted to talk to you about *Rescue*. I kept looking for you, to no avail, until I was finally told you were gone – you had left the country – Natigoing away far and for long. (...) My goodness! – is it any wonder you had left? Nevertheless, you see, your departure in particular saddened me – saddened, but did not surprise. Because, clearly, it is better to be consistent in one’s words and one’s deeds, and your trip is a simple consequence of your book – the only justifiable consequence of your attitude and your entire appraisal of what happened. In fact, the sole thing you could do was leave. Somehow, after all, one has to save one’s own soul.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>139</sup> Czesław Miłosz’s *Personnel File*, p. 33.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 34.

<sup>141</sup> Gorczyńska, Renata: “Miłosza Ameryka dyplomacji, Ameryka imigracji” [Miłosz’s America of Diplomacy, America of immigration]. In *Czesława Miłosza “północna strona”* [Czesław Miłosz’s Northern Side]. Edited by Małgorzata Czermińska, Katarzyna Szalewska, Gdansk, 2011, p. 246.

<sup>142</sup> Horodyński, Dominik: “Gdzie ocalenie? Do Czesława Miłosza list otwarty” [Where Is the Rescue?

Stefan Kisielewski, in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, echoed these sentiments. After 1951, those who did not speak publicly, reacted vividly in letters and diaries. Assessments of this decision also varied among his faithful readers. The poet repeatedly mentioned the circumstances of his trip and stay in the USA, without shying away from such assessments as this one:

From the beginning, my departure from Poland occurred under the sign of deception, because I was guided by a single desire: to leave. And then we shall see. Before her death, my mother simply ordered me to leave. Later, finding myself in America, I noticed that I had absolutely nothing to do there, in any sense at all. Aside from earning my living, along with “eating, defecating, and sleeping.” My conflict with *Kultura* when I wound up there in 1951 – a conflict that may seem funny today but wasn’t funny then – gives me some idea of the extent to which any integration at all into émigré circles was internally impossible for me (*A Year of the Hunter*, 212).

Miłosz repeatedly justified his decisions to accept and then leave the post of a diplomat. His subsequent statements were elaborated by further comments and explanatory remarks. They can be accounted for by a need to come clean, an attempt to understand; one can see in them an act of constructing his own biography, which the poet called “creative fabrication.”

These attempts became more understandable when he started being referred to as a national bard.<sup>143</sup> The moment of bringing his wife and sons to France closes the first period of being abroad; it is also the initial stage of Miłosz’s many years of discovering America. To this day, this period of the Nobel Prize winner’s activity and creativity has not been fully discussed. Perhaps a role here is played by the poet’s own intimidating statements, as in *A Year of the Hunter*:

I have been thinking a lot about quite an important topic – about an examination of my stay in America from 1946 through 1950. More precisely, what America meant to me in those years. It was not what it is today, nor, I think, what it is for almost all of my contemporaries. Were I to try to ascertain this on the basis of my verse and prose writing from that period, I would not come to any unambiguous conclusions. I would characterize my situation as backbreaking, unbelievable, illogical, immoral, indescribable. After the passage of so many years, what I have managed to achieve in literature is projected backwards, the false game of those days is grounded *ex post*. At the same time, the historical phase loses its sharpness, and its most important features, perhaps, sink into oblivion (*A Year of the Hunter*, 116).

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An Open Letter to Czesław Miłosz], *Dziś i Jutro* 1946, issue 8, p. 1.

**143** See “Pamięć ran” [A Memory of Wounds]. A Conversation between Czesław Miłosz and Jerzy Turowicz, *Rozmowy polskie 1979–1998* [Polish Discussions 1979–1998], pp. 33–43; Jarzębski, Jerzy: “Być wieszczem” [To Be a Bard], In *Poznawanie Miłosza* 2. Part Two (1980–1998) [Appreciating Miłosz 2]. Edited by Aleksander Fiut, Krakow, 2001, pp. 102–124.

## Chapter 2: Miłosz as a Public Speaker and Popularizer of Polish Culture in the USA

As an officer of the Consulate, Miłosz was assigned the task of maintaining relations with Poles living abroad, building a favorable image of Poland, and later – upon assuming the post of second secretary at the Embassy in Washington – organizing events, developing contacts with academic and artistic circles, and participating in American and Polish educational and cultural events. These duties involved giving public talks to various audiences.

The poet's relations with the Polish diaspora were marked by reserve and distrust. This was especially true of post-war émigrés, who did not recognize the government in Warsaw, and boycotted the activities of its diplomacy.<sup>144</sup> Establishing closer relations with this group was hampered by Miłosz's divergent attitude toward pre-war Poland. Perhaps the sharpest comment regarding this polarization of positions is found in the note he wrote on New Year's Eve, 1945:

That New Year's Eve was a descent into hell, into the bottom of a historical nightmare; I drank and behaved like a buffoon in order to extinguish thought, but in vain; my consciousness was clear and, unable to cope with such a grotesque situation, turned it into a tormenting nightmare. Eternal Polishness, the Polish manor, Nawłóć<sup>145</sup> one minute before the day of reckoning, before its disappearance forever, and I, with my shame and my ambition to escape from the manor, thrust back into it once again as a sign that, like it or not, here is where I belong, that I had tried in vain to escape from the traditionalism that I disliked and the religion of absolutized values. A Dante of Sarmatia was needed to portray a scene from this *Finis Poloniae* (*A Year of the Hunter*, 89).

In time, the poet managed to convince some people about his initiatives, but – as he reports – he was supported only confidentially. Officially, for fear of ostracism, very few would openly back the activities of the Consulate or the Embassy. The cooperation of people and institutions with the communists could attract severe criticism, as was the case with the Kosciuszko Foundation, involved in organizing academic exchange. After several years, Miłosz recalled that he found it easiest to move in the circles of émigrés with Jewish roots, who shared his assessment of the political possibilities in Europe, and among his old friends from Wilno. The diplomat was critical of wartime castaways who tried to recreate the capital's literary salon culture – already in A

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**144** On this see the essay by Lukas, Richard C.: "Polish Americans and the Polish Questions" in his book *Bitter Legacy: Polish-American Relations in the Wake of World War II*, Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982, pp. 119–138.

**145** In Stefan Żeromski's novel *Przedwiośnie* [*The Spring to Come*, 1925], Nawłóć is a manor, presented satirically as the epitome of the gentry's carefree life, in contrast to the miserable life of the peasants.) Żeromski (1864–1925) was a prominent Polish novelist and dramatist.

*Year of the Hunter* he explained the reasons for his distrust of the romantic myth of emigration. Even before making a decision to break ties with Warsaw, as he recalled. He did not consider joining the post-war émigré community in the US:

At that time, both Jan Lechoń and Kazimierz Wierzyński were living in New York. Ultimately, I could have beaten my chest in contrition and would have been accepted, but it was probably not merely pride that prevented me from taking my walk to Canossa. Besides, I was aware of what the writing émigrés were living on. Their source of income was the Cold War, and institutions such as Free Europe enjoyed the privileges of a monopolist (*Zaraz po wojnie* [Right after the War] 592).

However, what Miłosz then criticized, he deeply cared about, and was moved by it:

No other nation has managed to get into a similar situation, with several hundred thousand soldiers abroad who do not want to return. Their fate will be the fate of the Russian emigration, not for the same reasons – since Russian émigrés fought against the revolution, and the Poles fought to defend their homeland against fascism. They will be taxi drivers in Uruguay, overseers of copper mines in Africa, waiters in Paris and they will waste away in nostalgia. Here in New York, I met my university friend who is “uncompromising.” He is a lawyer and speaks English, French, Spanish and German fluently, and these skills have helped him to become a senior waiter in a New York hotel. The wife also works so that they can stay afloat, the child is in a nursery and cannot speak Polish anymore. And how many of these people will even get to the United States?<sup>146</sup>

Due to the distance separating Miłosz from these circles, and due to consular duties, he was pushed toward the Polish diaspora originating from the economic emigration of the 18th and 19th centuries, now residing in the industrial cities of the East Coast and in central states. The poet would write about them in his letters, reports, articles and editorials. He would talk of traditionalism, the mentality of old peasants and current laborers, the long road to social advancement, political passivity, life in the social lowlands due to poor education – this image is consistent with how Nelson Algren described the lives of Poles in Chicago in *The Man with the Golden Arm*.

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**146** Miłosz, Czesław: “Polska z Nowego Yorku” [Poland from New York City], *Polska wyzwolona* (Buenos Aires) 1946, issue 66, p. 6 and *Przekrój* 1946, issue 66, pp. 7–8. Janta-Polczyński remarked: “Let us, in turn, call to mind England. In Poland it is a very painful subject. I already mentioned the reactions to Churchill, as an advocate of Western morality. An additional, complementary factor in relation to Great Britain as an ally is the circumstance that almost all repatriated former soldiers of the Polish Army in the West express deep resentment towards England’s stance vis-à-vis the Polish cause, and towards the treatment they themselves received. (...) As for this revolution in Polish views of other countries, it took place most visibly in relation to England, as compared with the other wartime allies. This is because somewhere, at the bottom of their souls, there lies, not always justified, but nonetheless a very important sense of having been deeply wronged by the English.” In Janta-Polczyński, Aleksander: *Wracam z Polski* [Returning from Poland], *op. cit.*, pp. 181–182.

Even though the diplomat often visited Polish émigrés, we know of these meetings mostly from reports and letters.

We do not know how long Miłosz's visits lasted, whether they were official in tone, or accompanied by informal conversations, nor do we know if the speaker only presented the text, or if he made unscripted comments that were not included in the remaining official records. We will never know who asked questions, if any, and what they were, how the speaker responded, or even the extent to which he was involved in any discussions that may have ensued. We cannot recreate the atmosphere of the lectures, nor ascertain how the diplomat was received in the circles of pre-war and post-war émigrés. We do not know how, or even if, his words were understood. We may analyze the texts of the talks today in isolation from their historical context and interpersonal contacts. Only Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier noted:

As a cultural attaché, Miłosz was eager to speak in public on Polish literature or culture, and my father arranged for him to lecture at Smith College, where he taught at the time. I well remember one appearance in Northampton in 1947. Since Miłosz gave his talk in Polish, the audience consisted almost entirely of Polish American farmers from the neighborhood. The lecture did not go well. Some in the audience objected that the speaker concentrated on post-World War I innovative writers and failed to mention Henryk Sienkiewicz – a nineteenth-century author of popular historical novels with stirring descriptions of seventeenth-century Polish military exploits. Miłosz did not take that criticism kindly, and in the privacy of our home, he fulminated against the narrow-minded ignorance of the little peasants. (...)

He showed no more forbearance for our American friend Virginia Pickett, who offered to put up Miłosz and his first wife, Janka, during another lecture at Smith. A college graduate and well-off member of local society, Virginia tried to entertain the poet with some appropriately “elevated intellectual” conversation, steering their talk to some well-known names in music or literature. Again, rather than take this incident lightly and see its comical aspects, Miłosz expostulated to us on Virginia's attempts at “cultured talk” as unbearable middle-class pretense and banality (*Invisible Rope*, 12–13).

More can be said about Miłosz's impressions of his visits in Polish émigré centers, as they produced more than comments in letters or official reports. These visits were also discussed in special memoranda, with which Miłosz tried to induce others to take actions he believed to be necessary.

The main sources we have at our disposal are manuscripts or typescripts of speeches that Miłosz gave. Because they usually do not contain information on the time, place and audience, it is not easy to arrange them in chronological order, and thus discover possible links between them. Based on their content, it is sometimes possible to determine the year of their composition and presentation, for example, when Miłosz mentions the latest books, *Sprzysiężenie* [The Pact] by Jerzy Kisielewski, *Jezioro Bodeńskie* [Lake Constance] by Stanisław Dygat, or the US edition of *Smoke*

over *Birkenau* by Seweryna Szmaglewska. There are more unknowns: first and foremost – the context. In what circumstances did the diplomat prepare the lectures, how long did he work on them, which did he use more than once, when and for what reasons? Typescripts in English contain shared content, and shorter pieces are sometimes woven into longer ones. This would mean that the author intended the first ones as small speeches or that, over time, he built larger wholes, merging his older thoughts. Presumably, Miłosz considered the issue of how to combine informing with influencing, and who the listeners were and how to reach them. Judging by the surviving texts of “Dzieci Europy” [Children of Europe]<sup>147</sup> and “Odczyt o literaturze wygłoszony na Columbia University 18 IV 1949 r.” [My subject is post-war literature in Europe...],<sup>148</sup> it does not seem that he treated these issues as a matter of priority.

Whoever read Miłosz – writes Marta Piwińska in reference to Mickiewicz – knows. So I can only add that the *Visions from San Francisco Bay*, sketches about the “agony of the West,” the story of American roads, and California as “the last place” seem as if they were a continuation the Paris lectures.<sup>149</sup>

Equally, if not more, they also seem to be a continuation of his American lectures and journalistic writing from the 1940s. From the notes made by Manfred Kridl it is known that the poet’s first talk, a lecture on underground literature, was delivered on April 27, 1946, at the New York Public Library, which his teacher from Wilno preceded with a speech. While Kridl’s text has survived,<sup>150</sup> the talk itself did not. Chronologically, the first preserved lecture is the text of “Dzieci Europy.”

## “Dzieci Europy” [Children of Europe]

The lecture “Children of Europe,” although this is not confirmed by the available sources, may have been delivered at the ceremony commemorating the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. In it, Miłosz talked about events and phenomena that,

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**147** Miłosz, Czesław: “Dzieci Europy” [Children of Europe]. Typescript, not dated, Beinecke Library, Box 114, Folder 1624.

**148** Miłosz, Czesław: “Odczyt o literaturze wygłoszony na Columbia University 18 IV 1949 r.” [My subject is post-war literature in Europe...] Typescript, no title or date, Beinecke Library, Box 125, Folder 1973. Beinecke Library, Box 156, Folder 2465].

**149** Piwińska, Marta: “Prelekcje o Polsce dla Zachodu. Mickiewicz – Miłosz.” [*Talks on Poland for the West. Mickiewicz – Miłosz*]. In *Poznawanie Miłozsa 2* [Appreciating Miłosz 2], Part Two 1980–1998, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

**150** Kridl, Manfred: “Introductory speech preceding the talk of Czesław Miłosz on underground literature, New York Public Library, 27. IV. 46.” Manfred Kridl Collection, Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Box 8, Lecture Notes (Miscellaneous).

to a Pole living under Hitler's occupation, were either part of everyday life or common knowledge. He starts with how, starting in the summer of 1943, he fed two Jewish boys who survived the Ghetto Uprising. He explains what the Jewish quarter was, how the transports of Jews to Auschwitz ended, and how the gas chambers at Auschwitz worked. He talks about the price of death that Poles paid for helping Jews, and describes German gendarmes rounding up some boys, after which no one saw them ever again. He presents the figure of a certain janitor, who threatened to denounce him to the Gestapo for feeding them, but who knew that an illegal printing house was operating in the building, so he remained silent, fearing the judgment of the underground state. Miłosz reports on the kinds of games the youngest played, imitating arrests, round-ups and scenes from life in a concentration camp. The relationship is interwoven with digressions meant to encourage empathy and compassion:

What is the "normal" world to a person? It is the world that we get used to in childhood. To these children, round-ups and concentration camps were institutions as normal as baseball and movies would be to American children. I asked myself in fear if these children would not consider round-ups and concentration camps to be the easiest ways of resolving political disputes.

I worried about the early political awareness of children and the heroism with which they died in the name of their homeland. Reports from various European countries cite numerous examples of boundless sacrifices made by teenage boys and girls. These reports do not lie. However, whoever wants a harmonious type of human to arise, developed comprehensively, not one-dimensionally, must demand that a certain age limit be set from which the passions of martial arts befitting adults are allowed to the young. There was no such limit in Europe, and when twelve-year-olds become soldiers, this means that the balance of societies in which it happens is utterly disrupted and it will take a long time to restore it.<sup>151</sup>

Miłosz explains what the scouting resistance movement was about, and minor sabotage; he talks about the participation and death of children in the Warsaw Uprising. He talks about child labor, ranging from children being involved in innocent but risky activities, such as collecting donations for performing anti-Nazi songs in a streetcar, to downright dangerous and corruptive ventures, such as currency trading, smuggling and fencing:

In this environment, the children were learning cool realism, cunning, and absence of scruples. Their ability to calculate and their knowledge of exchange rates were truly stunning. There were young men, whose place should have been in the school bench, dressed elegantly in loose jackets reaching almost to their knees – such was the latest European fashion between 1939–1945. Their pockets bulged with excess banknotes; their fingers were decorated with gold rings. The elders were looking on with sadness – yes, but the young man brought money home. The families lived a difficult life: each day, their members set out into the city as an animal goes out hunting – they did the hunting, and they were hunted. Will he be back or won't he? With loot or with nothing? Only this mattered.<sup>152</sup>

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151 Miłosz, Czesław: "Dzieci Europy" [Children of Europe], *op. cit.*, p. 7.

152 *Ibidem*, p. 9.

The author discusses orphanhood and wartime homelessness, wandering, death by starvation, and child trafficking. The talk ends with a description of the failures in raising the youngest survivors of the war:

One of my friends brought from Warsaw two of his sons, aged eight and nine. When they were at home, their first question was, “How much does a kilogram of meat cost?” They told them the price, and the second matter-of-fact question was asked immediately: “With bone or without?” Their attitude to the new country in which they found themselves was completely down-to-earth, sober, and they were not to be bothered with skyscrapers, neon lights and the multitude of cars (...)

Someone else, who brought his thirteen-year-old niece from Warsaw to London after her parents died, wrote to me: “I must admit that my wife and I are constantly embarrassed. This child is an old, experienced woman; she looks at us with eyes that have seen too much, and we cannot bring ourselves to send her to school, to be among giddy girls.”<sup>153</sup>

The end of the talk reveals the concept on which it was built. This is the thought that the poet shared with Tadeusz Różewicz, expressed in the poem “*Lament*.”<sup>154</sup>

Miłosz’s account is deliberately modeled somewhat on Różewicz’s style. It presents facts that are known to Poles, but are new and shocking to the listeners. The advantage of experience allows him to choose the simplest and most suggestive narration: restrained testimony, cool, precise reporting. The poet knows that this is sufficient. The shock of the recipient arises from a confrontation with inconceivable experiences and this is the shock he aims for. The implicit context of his talk is firstly the trauma of war, and secondly, the thought he often repeated about the absence of a sense of history in Americans, their lack of awareness of what went on in Europe during the Nazi period.<sup>155</sup> Also in the talk, he makes this indictment:

To millions of people, politics has hitherto been a highly vague field, devoid of any relation to their daily work and play. To these two, as to a huge number of people in Europe, it was what it really is: a matter of life or death.<sup>156</sup>

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**153** *Ibidem*, pp. 10–11.

**154** See Różewicz, Tadeusz: “Lament.” In Różewicz, Tadeusz: *Niepokój. Wybór wierszy*, [Anxiety – a selection of poems] Warsaw, 2000, p. 9. In 1948 Miłosz translated to English Tadeusz Różewicz’s poems “Róża” [Rose], “Oczyszczenie” [Cleansing] and “Lament” [Lament]. Manuscripts of these translations are kept in the Beinecke Library, Box 145, Folder 2285.

**155** Miłosz never mentioned whether he knew the essay by Hannah Arendt in which she used the term “banality of evil.” See Arendt, Hannah: “German Guilt.” In *Essays of Understanding: 1930–1954*. Edited by Jerome Kohn, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1954.

**156** Miłosz, Czesław: “Dzieci Europy” [Children of Europe], *op. cit.*, p. 4.



Not often did the poet express these sentiments in his poems, nor did it make any sense to rub salt in the wounds in his letters, upsetting relations with those who had been similarly affected by the war. In America, as he was unable to express the trauma he experienced, the trauma only intensified, to the point of turning into passion, which manifested also a prosecutor's passion. In the content and form of the talk, Miłosz shows a type of fortitude, a grim bravery, putting himself above his audience. However, he does not stop there. His intention is not so much to remove the veil from the eyes of his listeners, but to stimulate their sense of joint responsibility and brotherhood.

Miłosz does not build a monument to national heroism, he is also far from psychologizing. His relation to people's behavior meets the requirements of a behaviorist description. He speaks of everyday heroism and cowardice, of the regularity and inevitability of wartime fate:

It is very difficult to show this European upbringing for what it really was. There is always a tendency in us to speak separately about heroism, separately about depravation, and to divide people into black and white characters. In fact, courage, dedication, insensitivity and cunning are often intertwined and cannot be separated.<sup>157</sup>

And that is why he makes intellectual and moral demands, speaking not as partner, but rather as a mentor. This imposes thinking in global terms, and takes away the comfort of one's conviction about the local significance of history. Miłosz roots out the shallow mythologizing evident in common clichés:

*One world or none?*<sup>158</sup> It is a pity that more and more worlds are being created. Those who think that the nations of Europe can be "tamed" merely by giving them (if giving is the operative word) injections of money and food – we, people from Europe, perceive things as those who would like to grow corn in the greenhouse. In history, greenhouses are not possible. Who once set foot on a path of tough, bloody experiences that every one of us would be glad to spare the human race, shall continue on this path.<sup>159</sup>

Balancing on one side of the scale the dangers of the recent and still possible use of nuclear weapons, and on the other – those resulting from the emergence of a new mindset of people wounded by war, Miłosz does not hesitate:

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<sup>157</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 8.

<sup>158</sup> This was the title of the report that the Federation of American Scientists published in March 1946. A book of 86 pages, it consisted of essays by scholars and intellectuals (including Albert Einstein, Julius Robert Oppenheimer, Walter Lippman, with a preface written by Niels Bohr). It was critical of the deployment of the atom bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki; it was also the first collective appeal for imposing international control over political use of nuclear weapons. Soon after its publication, it became a subject of numerous discussions, and one of the bestselling books of 1946.

<sup>159</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: "Dzieci Europy" [Children of Europe], *op. cit.*, p. 11.

Yes, we are embittered. We have seen cities of millions which were depopulated within a month, and then served as capitals for rats; children who were drowned in pools with stones tied to their necks, we saw young generations that were hateful, zealous, heroic, ironic, and cunning. Our imagination is weary. We have crossed the line of shadow. We look at the atom bomb with indifference. Let those who have more to lose worry about it. We too have deliberated on peace.<sup>160</sup>

Miłosz's words seem to be a paraphrase of a fragment of the poem "Ocalony" [Rescued]. Aleksander Janta-Pończyński presented a similar position:

I once talked to John Hersey, the author of a reportage about Hiroshima, who was in Warsaw as one of the first American journalists, after the "liberation," and I asked him what made the greater impression on him: Hiroshima or Warsaw? There was no doubt in his mind that it was Warsaw. At least because – as he put it – the destruction of Hiroshima took place within a fraction of a second, but in Warsaw it lasted for many long months. It is as if he wanted to emphasize that the reaction to these two most horrible acts of destruction of the latest war must be measured not so much in images of ruined houses and shattered stones, but in the experience of the people enduring the collapse of their world. When comparing these two horrors, it is necessary to take into account their duration. Death is not terrible; what is terrible is dying. Hiroshima fell struck by a lightning, while Warsaw lay dying until the very last round banged into her walls, tugging at the hearts of the remaining people. And that is the sole standard by which to measure her fate.<sup>161</sup>

"Dzieci Europy" [Children of Europe] is a prose rendition of the poem "Dziecię Europy" [Child of Europe]. The text of the talk and the poem were written in the same year, and the text in prose is an expanded explanatory note of sorts to the anti-catechism written in verse. In both, the more the author suppresses his emotions, the more he fumes and boils. In the poem, the principles of anti-pedagogy are delineated with such cold precision that – as Dante might have put it – so cold are they that they burn. The talk is different: Miłosz gives in to a sense of powerlessness, horrified by thinking about the future. It is possible that the talks were the only situations in which he allowed himself such a cathartic disclosure of despair.

## Articles and Talks in English until 1947

In his talks, Miłosz consistently equates being Polish with being European. His starting point is the idea of Poland as part of the civilization of the Old Continent. He expects this perspective to be accepted and treated as the only and obvious one.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 11.

<sup>161</sup> Janta-Pończyński, Aleksander: *Wracam z Polski* [Returning from Poland], *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>162</sup> Marta Piwińska says this on Mickiewicz and Miłosz: "And thus their talks are not a humiliating nationalist ceremony, proving that we rightfully deserve our citizenship in the family on nations, since we gave the world Copernicus and Chopin, and since we successfully passed the exam during the Renaissance and in the era of surrealism. For them it is different: we have the right to a citizenship

In the meetings with Polish-speaking audiences, the speaker could refer to some knowledge, or memory, even if it was the memory of national myths or the history of an imagined community;<sup>163</sup> there was a minimal plane, also linguistic and conceptual, on which certain issues could be articulated.<sup>164</sup> With English-speaking audiences, the poet encountered at least two additional complications: how to formulate theses without Polish maxims, terms, symbols, metaphors, or key words, and then how to capture his thoughts in the rhetorical structure adopted in English-language literature and – what is most troublesome – how to talk about the history and culture of a country the listeners know nearly nothing about, or are satisfied with a stereotype. These dilemmas concern both the texts delivered in public and the articles published in the bulletin *Poland of Today*. What is more, he faced the same problem from the opposite side – similar concerns were raised by writing about America and Americans for the Polish press. How to translate into Polish a phenomenon that is much more accurately expressible in English? How to discuss issues that are known less and less behind the Iron Curtain? Once again – and this time permanently – Miłosz faces the difficulties of intercultural translation, its possibilities, mechanisms and limitations, and the problem of memory, whose construction was the subject of various policies in Europe and America. His attitude is well described in the later concept of a “migrant intellectual,” proposed by Edward W. Said, who was defined “a person engaged in rethinking and reformulating the historical experience of his own nation with the view to bringing diverse groups closer together.”<sup>165</sup>

Miłosz’s talks in English illustrate his effort to construct a new message about Poland and Polishness. Their author moves between competing ways of addressing these subjects. The first of these, the American way, grows out of his observations of the old emigration, the new emigration, and the policies of the Stalinist government: it is often a mixture of journalistic clichés. The second is the official way, based on negating the past and glorifying the present, is the language of propaganda. The third, the way of the conservative Polish community, is at times founded on resentment and a cult of national sacrifice, incomprehensible from the American perspective. Miłosz understands that it is necessary to compose a message that is as independent

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in the overall human culture, as without us it would be incomplete. We bring unique values – so to say – in competition to the West,” *op. cit.*, p. 73.

**163** See Anderson, Benedict: *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London and New York: Verso Books, 1991.

**164** The poet also commented on this situation later, as a lecturer at Berkeley: “a professor, before weaning himself from Polish audiences, is unable to speak to foreigners. Myths rooted in the language, reverberating in one’s emotions, are dead to them.” In Miłosz, Czesław: “O historii polskiej literatury wolnomysłcielskiej i masonach” [On the history of Polish Freemason literature and the Freemasons]. In Miłosz, Czesław: *Prywatne obowiązki* [Private Obligations], Krakow, 2001, p. 153.

**165** Karwowska, Bożena: “Czesław Miłosz i jego anglojęzyczni czytelnicy” [Czesław Miłosz and his English-language Readers], *Ruch Literacki* 2011, issue 3, p. 262.

as possible from anyone else. This is the moment when, for the first time, he proposes a thoroughly new outlook, recontextualizing his reflection on Poland and Polishness. This separate way is of significant value in terms of identity: the poet determines that his identity is in relation to foreigners, but he must also confront the beliefs foreigners hold in relation to him as a Pole, and a Slav. The re-construction of Poland and Polishness in lectures becomes a way of re-constructing his own identity.

The English-language manuscripts contain deletions and handwritten corrections by the author and by two other people, probably more fluent in English. It is not known how the speaker negotiated the content of the readings with his superiors, in what way he applied for their approval, and whether he was assigned specific topics for his talks. A comparison of his English-language talks with the articles published in Poland of Today suggests that Miłosz, as a speaker, enjoyed much greater freedom in English.

## 1. The Articles in *Poland of Today*

In 1946, the Embassy's bulletin *Poland of Today* featured Miłosz's essays, "Literature in Poland Today"<sup>166</sup> "Renaissance of the Polish Theatre"<sup>167</sup> and "American Authors and Their Polish Public."<sup>168</sup> In 1947, the article "Intellectual Revival in Post-War Poland"<sup>169</sup> was published there, and another, titled "Literature in Poland"<sup>170</sup>, in 1948. They are all accompanied by a biographical note in which Miłosz is presented as a highly valued poet, the author of *Rescue*, involved in the literary underground during the war. All of these articles and essays are written in a style remote from his own. Editorial interventions are evident not only in their wording, but also in the syntax. While the English-language texts show a clear tendency toward dialogue, modulating tension through the use of examples and arguments, and coloring the argument with comparisons, phraseology, anecdotes, quotes, or aphorisms, the style of the Polish texts can be described, in the poet's own words, as *ulizany* – 'combed flat' or 'rendered squeaky clean.'

The constructional principle of the first two articles is based on a confrontation of the past with the present. The texts highlight the contrast between the scale of wartime destruction and the effort of the Poles to rebuild their country on the foundations of a new social order. The intention of both is to present the activity of the

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166 Miłosz, Czesław: "Literature in Poland Today", *Poland of Today* 1946, March, pp. 8–9.

167 Miłosz, Czesław: "Renaissance of the Polish Theatre", *Poland of Today* 1946, April, pp. 5–6.

168 Miłosz, Czesław: "American Authors and Their Polish Public," *Poland of Today* 1946, October, pp. 3–4.

169 Miłosz, Czesław: "Intellectual Revival in Post-War Poland", *Poland of Today* 1947, April pp. 7–8.

170 Miłosz, Czesław: "Literature in Poland", *Poland of Today* 1948, April pp. 7–8 and 16.

Polish resistance movement directed against the Nazi policy of denationalization. In the essay on literature, Miłosz raises the subject of mutual wartime assistance among writers and discusses personal losses in literary circles. He also characterizes post-war readership: that the publication of books increased despite shortages of paper, demand for new titles, discussions about new releases, and the activity of critics associated with the Polish Writers' Union. Miłosz addresses the path of advancement of rural and working youth wishing to achieve artistic or scientific success. Only in the second part of the article does he speak freely about the situation of literature after 1945. He emphasizes its serious, raw tone, its political and social commitment, the need for reckoning, which also means abandoning abstraction and vision in favor of the factual and the concrete:

The strain of tragedy and humor in real life had been too great for authors or the public to indulge in situations that are merely the product of imagination. Much rather there is a call in Poland for writers who would give a faithful picture of the stormy revolutions that shook Europe in the second quarter of our century: a difficult task indeed, demanding the stature of a Balzac or Tolstoy. The Polish novel shows a clear tendency to describe events that cover the span between 1939 and 1945, and in analyzing these phenomena, they go back to the original causes that led up to war and catastrophe. Hence, a great number of stories deal with the life and conditions in the years between the two world wars, with an emphasis on political trends (the growth in Europe of Nazi-totalitarian theories).<sup>171</sup>

Miłosz emphasizes the fact that contemporary Polish literature was still developing under European influences, especially French ones – in America such a rhetorical practice was well justified. He also explains the reasons for the heated nature of national artistic and philosophical discussions:

Europe had occasion to observe certain philosophical theories in the stage of their manifestation, when they took the form of gas chambers or manhunts for slaves. It can therefore be easily understood that expressions of opinion arouse passionate comments in Poland today. Even differences of opinion on such matters as theories on poetry or painting may give rise to discussions of fundamentally philosophical and ideological character, discussions that are being carried on with the fierceness of medieval disputes.<sup>172</sup>

In his opinion, the most important and most interesting disputes are those between Marxists and Catholics. Based on the course they take, Miłosz predicts the direction in which literature will develop, the place it will take in the public sphere, and its role in moral and psychological reconstruction:

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**171** Miłosz, Czesław: "Literature in Poland Today", *op. cit.*, p. 9. Cf. Matuszewski, Ryszard: "Polish Literature and the War," *Poland of Today* 1947, March, pp. 10–11; Matuszewski, Ryszard: "Polish Post-War Prose," *Poland of Today* 1947, December, pp. 3–4.

**172** Miłosz, Czesław: "Literature in Poland Today", *op. cit.*, p. 9.

The devastation caused by National-Socialism in the psychology of Europe's nations is no less serious than the destruction of homes and factories. One of literature's outstanding tasks is to provide a cure for these disorders (...).<sup>173</sup>

Less probabilistic are Miłosz's conclusions in his article on post-war theater. He explains that, as the theater holds more significance to Poles than it does elsewhere, the first stages sprang up on the smoldering remains of Warsaw:

A desert of burnt-out buildings, mountains of rubble, twisted pieces of rusty iron, that is all that marks the surroundings of the "Teatr Polski" in Warsaw. One wonders where the public comes from, as there is nothing around but demolished and seemingly uninhabited areas. And yet the theatre is working and is always crowded to capacity, notwithstanding the difficult approach through streets where passage is so obstructed that no bus or streetcar communication could be established as yet.

This picture is characteristic of the overall situation in which the Polish theatre finds itself at the present moment. No sooner had the first waves of the 1944–1945 winter offensive surged inland than the first theatres opened up in their wake. The actors often played in street clothes and the unheated auditoriums were crowded with a ragged and often hungry public. People sat in their overcoats and followed with bated breath the words of the tragedy enacted on the stage. It was an appreciative public, longing for a classical repertoire.<sup>174</sup>

The author lists new theaters, theatrical companies, and schools, and explains the phenomenon of the development of performing arts with understanding. He emphasizes that Poles do not treat theater as entertainment – they place it between a religious rite and a national tribunal, assigning it the mission of continuing the Greek tradition. From this follows a characteristic feature of playwriting – Miłosz points to *Dziady* [Forefathers' Eve] by Adam Mickiewicz – grown out of a local pagan rite, to Shakespearean motifs found in plays written by Juliusz Słowacki, and to the mythical and Christian roots of the plays written by Stanisław Wyspiański. He points out that, despite cruel sanctions, theatrical life during the occupation did not freeze – it provided a counterweight to the Nazi tingeltangels and it became one of the most important forms of underground cultural life. Miłosz recalls the figure of the actor Igo Sym, shot for collaboration with the Nazis, and the punishment that fell on the whole theater environment because of this execution. He writes about the classical and romantic wartime repertoire, and the organization of the theater underground, emphasizing the fact that theater in Poland acts as a state institution, which allows it to maintain a high artistic level. The background of these remarks is an unspoken aversion to Broadway, a belief in the predominantly entertainment-centered character of American theater and the observation that, as other areas of culture, this one has

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173 *Ibidem*, p. 9.

174 Miłosz, Czesław: "Renaissance of the Polish Theatre", *op. cit.*, p. 5. Cf. Ryszard, Matuszewski: "The Theatre in Post-War Poland," *Poland of Today* 1947, June, pp. 10–13.

also been harnessed here in the machinery of the market.<sup>175</sup> Thus, the activity of Polish theater is an argument in favor of the political changes in his native part of Europe:

A theatre that can produce an artistically valuable piece, thereby rising in general esteem, will be granted by the Government or the Association more liberal funds to improve its stage equipment, decorations, etc. than a second-rate theatre which must run on smaller appropriations (the Polish public itself is poor). That is why theatres are glad to produce classics which offer the producer, the stage-manager and the actor a wide field for the display of their skills.<sup>176</sup>

Miłosz does not mention the shadow sides of the post-war theater: its politicization, the influence of censorship, a pyramid-like structure of management and financing. Rather, he speaks about the rapid pace of preparing premieres, an inundation of young acting and playwriting talents, the internationalization of the repertoire, and plans to set up rural stages – he mentions the establishment of an Art Institute in Kazimierz Dolny.

In his opinion, the development of theater is hampered by infrastructural deficiencies, the loss of many actors during the war, a shortage of men relative to women in drama schools, and the repertoire lagging far behind social changes. Regarding the latter issue, he poses the following question:

The increased participation in the cultural life of the nation by the lower strata of the population raises new problems. An often repeated question is: How can we create popular drama and at the same time maintain the highest artistic level? Moreover, due to the frequent changes in repertoire, the theatres are in constant need of new material.<sup>177</sup>

The last doubt reveals that Miłosz already formulates problems of development of culture under the influence of the new environment, in particular when we contrast his comments with Aleksander Janta-Pończyński's critical remarks:

However, in view of the many stagings of plays by Russian writers in Poland, one wonders why, for example, *Fantasy* was not staged in Moscow at the same time? One does note, therefore, a one-sidedness to the cultural exchange between Russia and Poland, so that one can apply to it, in reverse, the saying concerning trade with our Eastern neighbor which has some currency today: we give them our coal, and in return they take away our sugar.<sup>178</sup>

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175 In his articles for periodicals in Poland, Miłosz does not describe new theatrical phenomena in the US, such as off-stages, the establishment in 1947 of the Tony Awards, among whose first recipients were Ingrid Bergman, Arthur Miller and Elia Kazan, the emancipation movement in African-American theater or the New York stage successes of Tennessee Williams' plays.

176 Miłosz, Czesław: "Renaissance of the Polish Theatre", *op. cit.*, p. 6.

177 *Ibidem*, p. 6.

178 Janta-Pończyński, Aleksander: *Wracam z Polski* [Returning from Poland], *op. cit.*, p. 164.

The essay titled “American Authors and their Polish Public” has an extensive autobiographical part. The poet mentions his childhood reading of novels by J. Fenimore Cooper, and Mark Twain, and his Grandmother Józefa Kunat’s fascination with the poetry of Longfellow; he talks about the merits of modernists in popularizing the work of Edgar Allan Poe, and the popularity of the novels by Jack London after World War One.

It is only in the second part of the article that the author changes his perspective to a less personal one: he explains the interwar growth of interest in Upton Sinclair, Theodore Dreiser and John Dos Passos, explaining the reasons for Wilder’s success on Polish stages. By suggesting which contemporary authors could gain success, he means success understood in American, that is, mental and economic terms. He recommends translation of Hemingway and Faulkner, who, in his opinion, would have a chance to be understood in Poland:

In Faulkner [a] Pole finds something of his own traditions. His presentations of the milieu of landed estates and his descriptions of the Civil War, which in its feats of desperate heroism resembles many an unfortunate Polish campaign, form a link between Faulkner and certain works in Polish literature. His descriptions of primitive nature as it is yielding ground to the march of civilization, is particularly near to our hearts (one of the classic pages in Polish literature is the description of a bear hunt). But above all, it is Faulkner’s analysis of social problems which may help spread the fame of this outstanding author in a country that is profoundly interested in Balzac.<sup>179</sup>

Writing for American readers, Miłosz uses an important criterion for describing literature: he takes into account both high and popular circulation, emphasizing the interest Polish readers have in adventure fiction, sensational prose, crime-related stories, and romance. He ends the essay with a story about the phenomenon related to the novel *Gone with the Wind*, whose triumph far surpassed other translations of American fiction.

The structure of Miłosz’s article, his choice of names, and the order in which he presents the translations allow the reader to look for parallels between his article and Sartre’s essay on the French reception of American literature.<sup>180</sup> They can, of course, be explained by analogies with European assimilation of cultural novelties from across the ocean; it is nevertheless also worth remembering the anti-Americanism shared by both Miłosz and Sartre, as was characteristic of intellectuals after the Second World War.<sup>181</sup> While it is easy to predict that in France and in Poland in the first decades of the twentieth century the same authors and the same songs gained

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<sup>179</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 4.

<sup>180</sup> This is about Jean-Paul Sartre’s article “American Writers in French Eyes,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 1946, August, pp. 114–118.

<sup>181</sup> This issue is analyzed by Judt, Tony: *Postwar. A History of Europe Since 1945*, New York: The Penguin Press, 2006, pp. 220–221.



audiences, this does not invalidate the significant similarities between the arguments made by Sartre and Miłosz, crowned with a half-jocular, semi-sarcastic commentary on the success of the novel by Margaret Mitchell. One of Miłosz's thoughts, which recurred later in his interpretation of short stories by Tadeusz Borowski, cannot be considered a borrowing – it is an observation on the tragic intermingling of life and literature:

The Polish boy owed a great deal of his education to his acquaintance with the adventures of the Wild West. I have no doubt that during the pitched battles the Partisans waged against the Germans, many youthful fighters found this an appropriate opportunity to emulate the heroes who were so expert at handling a lasso and who, with their pistols, hit the mark at 50 feet. Unfortunately this Wild West of theirs was infinitely more tragic, and millions of Polish mothers who today mourn the death of their sons are here to testify that the recent events had more in common with a Greek tragedy than with a thriller with a happy ending.<sup>182</sup>

The article “Intellectual Revival in Post-War Poland” was created on the margins of the deliberations of a UNESCO conference, where the program of cultural reconstruction of the West was elaborated. The article presents the progress made in reconstructing literary life in Poland through the development of state and private publishing houses and libraries, the initiative of making new translations and reissues of the classics of foreign literature. Miłosz emphasizes in it the country's openness to new Western art and the improving access to foreign magazines.

The article provides an opportunity to thank American institutions and organizations for their help thus far, and to encourage further support – the author mentions several times the needs of destroyed libraries and universities. In his discussion of the press market, he focuses on illustrated and literary magazines – he first talks about *Przekrój* and *Szpilki*, as if they were supposed to convey the freedom and optimism of the post-war press.<sup>183</sup> He also emphasizes their cosmopolitan content:

The fact that Polish magazines contain a great deal of foreign material, must be undoubtedly booked to their credit. Cultural events and achievements in America, England, France and the USSR, are discussed in detail, and foreign poetry and prose appear in translations. After years of war, Poland is actually starved for contacts with other countries, and a number of Polish writers are traveling abroad in order to supply their public with articles and reports.<sup>184</sup>

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**182** Miłosz, Czesław: “American Authors and Their Polish Public,” *op. cit.*, p. 4.

**183** In émigré circles, the objectivity of *Szpilki* was treated rather skeptically, as can be gleaned from the poem “Odpowiedź” [A Reply] by Marian Hemar. In Hemar, Marian: *Liryki, satyry, fraszki*. [Poems, Satires, Epigrams] A collection of poems selected by Włada Majewska, London, 1990, pp. 103–106. Miłosz, too, was no doubt aware of both the profile of the magazine, and the attitudes to it in emigration.

**184** *Ibidem*, p. 8.

The country on the Vistula is presented as friendly to avant-garde playwrights. The development of academic potential is stimulated by educational exchange – here a trip of physics and chemistry students to Denmark serves as a model example for cooperation with the West. Centers of musical culture are formed, whose task is to reach the widest possible audiences “in order to serve the country better as a whole, and to make musical instruction accessible to the broad masses.”<sup>185</sup> Musical culture is becoming an issue that involves communities in joint projects, such as the centenary of Chopin’s birth or the International Music Festival in London. The listing of achievements and innovations is concluded with a less optimistic reflection on the difficulties of artists and students of art colleges due to the shortage of materials, and with remarks on the difficult situation of filmmakers. Even there, however, the author can see positive changes: film chronicles are produced, foreign productions are more and more numerous, even though “[s]ince it is easiest of all to procure Russian films, there are more of these than any others. In the second place we find British, and then French films. American Pictures are in short supply because they are much too expensive.”<sup>186</sup> Miłosz’s last article in *Poland of Today* is a propaganda synthesis of Poland’s achievements in the short time following the country’s liberation. It is meant to justify the necessity of systemic changes guaranteeing equal and unrestricted access to goods of culture, and optimum development conditions within the orbit of international influence.

The last article is focused on post-war literature. In the introduction, the author signals the difficulty of discussing it, resulting from Poland’s history and the ties between poetry and drama and the national cause:

It is not surprising that Polish literature is little known abroad, for in Poland, the poetic and literary drama and poetry hold first place as literary events, while the novel, usually well received abroad, has not attained stability commercially, and pursues an erratic course. Besides, it is history that creates the literature of a nation. The history of Poland, due to her geographic position and social structure, has given her people many reasons for concern about her ultimate destiny. A literature of national prosecutors, national prophets, and national jesters, was the result. Sometimes, especially in poetic drama and in poetry, it evoked an unparalleled power of words and visions, but its essence was untranslatable.<sup>187</sup>

Miłosz puts Polish prose in the perspective of continental changes and argues that its current is a component of the pan-European process of development. He talks about Polish existentialism, starting with Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, whom he presents as a theoretician of art and philosopher, and considers his concept of the “novel-sack” as a genuine manifestation of European reflection on prose. Mentioning Witkiewicz’s

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**185** *Ibidem*, p. 8.

**186** *Ibidem*, p. 8.

**187** Miłosz, Czesław: “Literature in Poland”, A typescript of 7 pages. no date., *op. cit.*, p. 1.

suicide after the Soviet invasion of Poland, Miłosz emphasizes his keen awareness of the end of civilization, but presents it as the result of the outbreak of war: “Witkiewicz was a victim of the last war. Loathe to witness the victory of forces detestable to him, he committed suicide in 1939.”

The second writer Miłosz discusses in the article is Witold Gombrowicz. His work, presented in an existentialist frame, is shown using the example of *Ferdydurke*.<sup>188</sup> Miłosz draws attention to the themes of social satire in the fictional and non-fictional parts of the novel – citing *Gulliver’s Travels* as its closest Anglo-Saxon equivalent. However, he also articulates these surprising words: “Gombrowicz now lives in South America, and, as far as I know, is not interested in writing.”

The third author, Bruno Schulz, Miłosz first juxtaposes with Franz Kafka, and then with William Blake, due to the sheer expanse of their literary and illustratory visions. The example of Schulz, shot to death in the street of his hometown Drohobycz is used to visualize the fate of Jews in Nazi-occupied Poland. Interestingly, perhaps for practical reasons or for lack of a better common denominator understandable in the West, Miłosz lists the three authors as representatives of existentialism, long before this thought will become common in Polish literary studies. Miłosz contrasts this option with the pessimistic and realistic trends in prose. In the first one he places Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz with the story “Bitwa na równinie Sedgemoor” [Battle on the Plain of Sedgemoor]. The story inspires the poet to reflect on the insignificant role of man in history, the futility of effort and sacrifice. It is difficult to assess whether Miłosz talks about him as representative of Polish historiosophic reflection or as one closest to himself. In the realistic stream, Miłosz places the novel *Blessed are the Meek* [Polish title *Bez oręża*] by Zofia Kossak-Szczucka and *Smoke over Birkenau*, published in English in the Henry Holt & Co Publishing House. He confronts here the concept of realism resulting from the experiences of the war with the realism of the pre-war novel and the postulated Marxist realism. He does not hesitate to voice this important assessment:

There are many discussions on realism in Poland today, and for a good reason, too. The average Pole of today is able to tell true stories, in comparison with which Kafka’s fantasies look pale. Besides, to certain Marxist writers realism seems to be the truest concept of art. The trouble is that nobody knows what realism means. Is Proust, ask the critics, less realistic in his portrait of Charlus than Balzac? Do we have to return to Courbet in painting, and renounce all the history of modern art? It would be a step backward, not forward.

Poland does not afford a favorable climate for cultivating such extreme realism. That country has gone through the artistic revolutions of the twentieth century; and, what is no less important, most of the classical works of her literature are visionary and fantastic. A search for

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**188** A certain justification for putting *Ferdydurke* in the context of existentialism is the reception of Sartre’s writing by American literary and cultural magazines.

new forms which would fuse realistic and fantastic elements, is one of the common features of new Polish writings, while in painting abstract art is in favor.<sup>189</sup>

As examples of a successful fusion of realism and fantasy, the poet presents the novels *Lake Constance* by Stanisław Dygat and *Sprzysiężenie* [The Pact] by Stefan Kisielewski. The thought of the symbiosis of realism and imagination as one of the distinguishing features of Polish writing seems to be one of the first generalizations Miłosz formulates before becoming a literary historian in America. In the end, he devotes some space to poetry, pointing out the strong influences of French surrealism and affiliations with Eliot. Interestingly, Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński is the only author Miłosz decides to introduce. Gałczyński in the talk is the creator of “Bal u Salomona” [Ball at Solomon’s] and *Zielona Gęś* [The Green Goose Theater], a lover of Italian culture and pure-nonsense humor. How can this choice be justified? Did Miłosz intend to present the brighter side of post-war poetry, show its spectrum, prove its European roots? Following a recommendation from his superiors?

The articles in *Poland of Today* are not easy to comment on. First, the poet never mentioned them and was never asked about them – it is difficult to ask about texts one does not even realize exist. This creates a precedent in the space of Miłosz’s literary output of which he himself was an indefatigable commentator. Post-war émigrés in the USA were certainly aware of the content of these articles, hence the divergent echoes of the “Miłosz case” among American Poles, a different assessment of his resounding “No”<sup>190</sup> and a different overall outlook on the entire period of his diplomatic service. These articles cast new light on the “Miłosz case” and restate it. Aside from him, however, other well-known Polish authors cooperating with the bulletin also did not return to the period when they published articles in it. Among them were Aleksander Hertz,<sup>191</sup> Ksawery Pruszyński,<sup>192</sup> Jan Kott,<sup>193</sup> Ryszard Matuszewski,<sup>194</sup> Hanna Mortkowicz-Olczak,<sup>195</sup> Jan Parandowski,<sup>196</sup> Kazimierz Brandys,<sup>197</sup>

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**189** Miłosz, Czesław: “Literature in Poland”, Typescript, 7 pages, not dated, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

**190** “Nie” [No] – Miłosz’s famous article published in *Kultura* 1951, issue 5 (43), in which the poet explained his decision to emigrate; it was poorly received in Poland and in the circles of political independence émigrés in London.

**191** Hertz, Aleksander: “How Poland Plans to Educate her Children,” *Poland of Today* 1946, April, pp. 9–10.

**192** Pruszyński, Ksawery: “Books, Books, Books,” *Poland of Today* 1946, May, pp. 1–2.

**193** Kott, Jan: “Children’s Drawings,” *Poland of Today* 1947, January, pp. 8–9.

**194** Matuszewski, Ryszard: “Zofia Nałkowska,” *Poland of Today* 1948, March, pp. 5–6.

**195** Mortkowicz-Olczak, Hanna: “Polish Children Have a Press on Their Own,” *Poland of Today* 1947, March, pp. 6–7.

**196** Parandowski, Jan: “The Museum of Shame and Crime,” *Poland of Today* 1947, August, pp. 3–4 and 16.

**197** Brandys, Kazimierz: “The Unconquered City. The Third Anniversary of The Warsaw Uprising,” *Poland of Today* 1947, September, pp. 5 and 18.

Michał Rusinek,<sup>198</sup> Maria Dąbrowska,<sup>199</sup> Józefa Wnukowa,<sup>200</sup> Halina Wittlin,<sup>201</sup> Irena Krzywicka,<sup>202</sup> Stanisław Dygat,<sup>203</sup> Stefan Kisielewski,<sup>204</sup> and Mieczysław Jastrun.<sup>205</sup> Zofia Nałkowska published here a fragment of the short story “Dwojra Zielona” and *Dom nad łąkami* [House in the Meadows],<sup>206</sup> while Helena Boguszewska published “Bukiet bzu” [A Bunch of Lilacs].<sup>207</sup> In contrast to writers living in Poland and in emigration, Miłosz and Pruszyński wrote for the newsletter in an official capacity, as part of their work, which they had to face as diplomats; this no doubt affected the form of their articles. Secondly, the manuscripts of these texts have not survived (except for the essay “Literature in Poland”, which also served as a text of the public lectures),<sup>208</sup> and thus it is not known to what extent they were written independently. The English of the articles suggests that their language underwent modifications, but it remains a mystery whether there was any discussion regarding their final version, who took part in it, who approved them for publication, and what position was assumed by Miłosz.

On the other hand, the poet repeatedly expressed categorical disagreement with any interference in his literary works and articles published in Poland, beginning with the script of the film *Robinson warszawski* [Robinson Crusoe of Warsaw] written together with Jerzy Andrzejewski, and ending with his refusal to print the censored versions of his essays on literature. Thus we are left with numerous questions that can neither be rejected or verified – it is wise to look at this type of journalism as a manifestation of the post-war émigré fate of many writers. Witold Gombrowicz also prepared reports for Banco Polacco, although he did not sign them – while Miłosz lent his name to the bulletin of the institution with which he was bound in a “devilish pact.”

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**198** Rusinek, Michał: “Theatre in Poland,” *Poland of Today* 1948, January, p. 4.

**199** Dąbrowska, Maria: “Children of the Ghetto,” *Poland of Today* 1947, March, p. 8.

**200** Wnukowa, Józefa: “Sopot Institute of Fine Arts,” *Poland of Today* 1948, February, pp. 10–12.

**201** Wittlin, Halina: “Polish Post-War Stamps Series,” *Poland of Today* 1948, July, pp. 10–11.

**202** Krzywicka, Irena: “Idealists in Action,” *Poland of Today* 1948, September, pp. 18–19.

**203** Dygat, Stanisław: “The Philosopher Panteleon,” *Poland of Today* 1948, November, p. 12.

**204** Kisielewski, Stefan: “Chopin,” *Poland of Today* 1949, October, p. 5.

**205** Jastrun, Mieczysław: “Adam Mickiewicz. A Revolutionary Mind of Many Faces,” *Poland of Today* 1950, March, p. 12.

**206** Nałkowska, Zofia: “Dwojra Zielona,” *Poland of Today* 1947, December, pp. 8–9 and 16; “House in the Meadows,” *Poland of Today* 1948, May, pp. 7–8;

**207** Boguszewska, Hanna: “A Bunch of Lilacs,” *Poland of Today* 1948, May, pp. 5–6.

**208** The lecture in question is Miłosz, Czesław: “Literature in Poland”, Typescript, 7 pages, no date, Beinecke Library, Box 123, Folder 1910. In the manuscript, the information on Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz’s suicide in the wake of the Soviet invasion in 1939 was crossed out. It was preceded by an enigmatic remark that Witkacy took his life in protest against the victory of the forces that he hated. Also the remark on Gombrowicz’s lack of interest in writing is crossed out. The manuscript shows signs of being read by an editor, whose comments are then further commented by Miłosz – there are suggestions in black ink, in a different handwriting, some of which have handwritten replies next to them.

## The English-Language Talks

One of the first and most frequently presented talks by Miłosz was devoted to the issue of Polish antisemitism. The poet writes from the position of a witness to the Holocaust, which is to make his position credible regarding the post-war situation of Jews. He begins with the statement that antisemitism is a pan-European phenomenon, however strong the tendency to attribute it to just one nation:

Because I lived in hell, I don't think it is proper to mince words. I think that the greatest danger for the world is a fear to name black what is black and white what is white. The problem of antisemitism in Europe is just an example of that fear and every nation tries to whiten its conscience, lest it be accused of a trace of moral complicity with Germans.<sup>209</sup>

Miłosz talks about Poland's unique situation on the European scale, in which the Nazis set up death camps for Jews from across the continent and punished with death those who dared help them. He discusses cases of people who helped Jews despite their personal dislike for them. He points out that the war united Poles and Jews against the common enemy only to some extent. He does not conceal the fact that pre-war antisemitism was strong in Poland. It seems that these fragments of the talk prepare the ground for *Native Realm*. They are an attempt to refute the accusation the diplomat struggled with overseas and that was also leveled at the communist government. Miłosz argues that post-war antisemitism is marginal, as only one and a half percent of the former 10-percent Jewish population survived and remained in the country. He claims that antisemitic attitudes are alien to intellectuals and politicians, and the government condemns them by imposing the death penalty for assaults on Jews. People of Jewish descent hold high positions in state administration, the army, and institutions of science and art. How does Miłosz explain the phenomenon of post-war antisemitism?

Antisemitism is by no means encouraged and protected by the official political parties as it was in pre-war Poland. If it still exists, it is a remnant of the past and has no chance of remaining in the future. (...) You must realize that Europe as I said before, is not only a wasteland of demolished towns and villages, but it is morally destroyed. The recovery will be slow. The most important factor in the problem of antisemitism in Poland is political struggle. The Jews, as it happens, perish at the hands of armed gangs, are victims of a terror directed by fascist reactionary groups against the leftist parties. As you know, Jew baiting is and has always been the strongest weapon of the reaction. The groups, which before the war, promoted anti-Jewish actions and were opposed to all social reforms, are now very grudgingly accepting their loss of power.

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**209** Miłosz, Czesław: "I have lived through all the years..." Typescript no title or date, Beinecke Library, Box 156, Folder 2468, p. 1. Left-wing papers wrote extensively on American antisemitism, in particular *The New Republic*.

They try to gain public support spreading the opinion that too many Jews are occupying high positions in the government and in the central committee of the political parties. They commit murders on Jews as well as on leaders of the democratic movement.<sup>210</sup>

This short passage contains several threads of thought in highly abbreviated form. The abbreviations, however, are not the only reason he departs from reality. The poet was aware that the problem he was trying to explain briefly was far more complex and less clear. Perhaps the choice of this line of argumentation, apart from propaganda reasons, stemmed from the conviction that it belongs to that kind of historical entanglements of Polishness, which are not easy to unravel even for Poles, and explaining them to foreigners is all the more difficult.<sup>211</sup> As the poet confessed in a letter to Henryk Grynberg, in America explaining the fate of Jews under the occupation posed a formidable challenge as many of his interlocutors believed that round-ups in Warsaw, for instance, applied only to Jews.

It was not only the subject of the Holocaust that did not lend itself to be easily handled in the framework of a lecture – the very question of war in Europe caused similar problems, as Miłosz wrote in *Inne abecadło* [Further ABC's]:

When I found myself in America right after the war, I could not tell anyone about what went on in Poland in 1939–1945. They did not believe. They believed that, of course, during each war the press wrote out the most horrible things about the enemy, but when the war would end, everything would turn out to be just propaganda. Pure evil? Would you really want us to believe in the existence of the devil? (*Inne abecadło*, [Further ABC's] 58–59).

## “Literatura w Polsce” [Literature in Poland]

Another single-thread talk by Miłosz was the lecture “Literature in Poland”. There was also a shorter version,<sup>212</sup> a compilation of fragments from the earlier, longer text<sup>213</sup> (which version is older can be determined thanks to the information on the date of publication of *Smoke over Birkenau*). In both texts, the poet appears as a historian and critic of literature for the public who lack elementary knowledge about his country.

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<sup>210</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 3.

<sup>211</sup> Issues of the Holocaust, the situation of Jews and antisemitism in Poland were touched on in *Poland of Today*. See Galewicz, Jan: “Jews Find a New Life in Poland. Antisemitism – Weapon of the Reaction,” *Poland of Today* 1946, April, pp. 3–4; Dr. Michael Szuldenfrei: “Rehabilitation of Polish Jews,” *Poland of Today* 1946, April, pp. 5–6.

<sup>212</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: “Literature in Poland”, Typescript, 7 pages, no date, Beinecke Library, Box 123, Folder 1910.

<sup>213</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: “Literature in Poland”, Typescript, 12 pages, no date, Beinecke Library, Box 123, Folder 1910.

This is a challenge and an opportunity at the same time. In the shortened version, Miłosz does not make any use of this, but in the more extensive version, he appears for the first time in the role of a creator of his own image of Polish culture. Interestingly, the image he outlines at the time, closest to his own experience and convictions, was to remain unchanged in its basic form and would become the basis for his later views.

The shorter (and later) version of the talk, with editorial additions and alterations, was presented as an article in *Poland of Today*. In the earlier version, also written in 1947, Miłosz problematizes the issue of Polish literature and provides a wider historical context for it. The introduction serves to consolidate two important assumptions: first, that Polish literature is European literature par excellence, and second, that its source is social change typical of the Old Continent – Miłosz emphasizes Poles’ involvement in various national uprisings abroad, such as the Paris Commune, and the American War of Independence. The poet takes the opportunity afforded by giving a talk on literature to mention the traditions of Polish Golden Freedoms, religious tolerance, and Protestant movements in the sixteenth century, the age of Golden Liberty, *liberum veto*, the fall of the magnates and the rise of the intelligentsia, the influence of Catholicism and Latin culture on Polish national culture, the role of the Church and the Papacy in history, and the influence of France and Italy on Polish art. He emphasizes that the landscape of culture in Poland changed radically after the war, and one of the causes was the death of many artists and the most promising young talents. For the first time he reaches for the figure of Joseph Conrad, whose world-view helps Miłosz present the national character of the Poles – Miłosz juxtaposes it with the French character:

(...) Frenchmen do not like to die. Instead, they write good books about the underground and produce good pictures; and they have a sufficient number of heroes for their purposes. A Polish writer who glorifies patriotic duty is like a person who throws a spark into a keg of powder. A French statesman said: ‘The Pole is a man who, if you show him a precipice, jumps over it immediately.’ He was right. The Polish writer should try to prevent such jumping.’<sup>214</sup>

Important discussions on Conrad’s writings were taking place in Poland and in the USA at the time.<sup>215</sup> Giving an account of them in the lecture holds personal significance for Miłosz; it also provides the lecture with greater persuasive power. The speaker argues that in a country ruled by communists, free dialogue is possible with reference to the leading figures of literature, who wrote in exile, achieved international success and enriched the heritage of Western culture. Conrad’s duality, a writer with a Polish mentality writing in English, as Miłosz presents him, is a prism through which he

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<sup>214</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: “Literature in Poland”, Typescript, 12 pages, no date, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>215</sup> They centered on the edition of *The Portable Conrad*, with an introduction and notes by Morton Dauwen Zabel, New York: Viking Press, 1947.



wants to show the intellectual achievements of Poles; it is also a prism through which he looks at his own personal situation. He outlines a critical-literary typology here according to which the most important dispute over Polish culture is led by radical and moderate Marxists against right-wing and left-wing Catholics. For the first and only time in this talk, he uses a form of quasi-dialogue to synthetically include polarized opinions. This agonization of the discourse, frequent in his poetry and essays of the time, also proves to be an effective strategy for presenting contradictory views in the lecture. Where Marxists tend to emphasize that Conrad was a nobleman, loyal to a cause; he saw loyalty to a cause as good in and of itself, without questioning whether his sacrifice is useful to humankind, and it cannot be useful if it is for the sake of capitalism, which is, after all, doomed to fail. In contrast, Catholics will underscore Conrad's unshakable code of ethics, irreducible to utility, and they separate the social implications of sacrifice, regardless whether one wins or loses, from its moral value, as the judgment of one's deeds by history is always biased towards the winners, and it bears no influence on the moment when the decision is taken, when man is eye to eye to God.<sup>216</sup>

We are at the center of Miłosz's dilemma at the time, one that may be related to literature only distantly. The author of *Rescue* had been trying to settle this over the entire period of his diplomatic service, and probably even longer, as evidenced by the recollection quoted from *A Year of the Hunter*. As one can see, the poet did not separate expository writing from his own situation and creative output. In the lecture, Miłosz considers the same issues as the author of *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals and "Dziecię Europy" – and at a deeper level his literary work and diplomatic activity turn out to be coherent. This would also prove that Miłosz's official writing had a certain share in the reconstruction of his identity that took place in America. Unveiling a moral pain in a place where it was not visible (it is difficult to suspect that the American public understood the Polish background of his reflection on Conrad's ethics) was perhaps a mental safety valve in the situation of being forced to practice mimicry in diplomacy.

Miłosz also makes several comments in the lecture about post-war theater, emphasizing the popularity of Shakespeare on Polish stages. In the final part, devoted to poetry, alongside Gałczyński, he mentions Tadeusz Gajcy as a poet who was lost in the Warsaw Uprising. He seems to care little about extending the essay with more names or titles. It is also clear that with time and experience, Miłosz made various adjustments to his talks, when necessary limiting himself merely to providing information, and when possible, problematizing the issues, revealing mechanisms and complications of history, and outlining the political, social and mental background of contemporary works. By raising the bar ever higher for the listener, he argues that reflection on Polish culture is a prerequisite for understanding the

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<sup>216</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: "Literature in Poland", Typescript, 12 pages, no date, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

experience of Europe in the past years and decades. The year 1947 is a breakthrough in this respect – perhaps at the moment of his promotion to secretary of the Embassy, he consciously adopts a very strong voice, setting the tone for the local discussion on Poland and Polishness, and forcing the recipient to make a considerable effort if he wishes to keep pace. A culmination of the Miłosz’s public speaking activity is the publication “My subject is post-war literature in Europe...” translated into Polish and delivered at Columbia University in 1949. In both versions, Miłosz appears not only as a literary historian, but as a writer, sociologist and philosopher of culture, a political scientist, historian, and perhaps even a prophet.

## 2. Lectures and Talks after 1947

Miłosz’s English-language lectures written after 1947 are seldom devoted to merely one issue. Several common themes recur, such as accounts of the European wartime experience, reflections on the possibilities of art, thoughts on the development of Western Civilization in the light of political decisions in America and – the most important question from the perspective of Miłosz’s own development – how one can define the East and the West today.

In the lectures in English, the author often starts with the subject of war, because this issue is linked in a fundamental way with the issue of identity. He talks about the twilight of traditionally understood Europeanism. In the US he sees a discrepancy between the perception of Europe and its real image, unknown to Americans. He addresses this issue in an attempt to answer the question of how memory works in a situation where the world is changing at a pace that is increasingly more difficult to follow:

In one American literary review I found the following sentence: “We already know there is no escape from ourselves. The signature of ourselves is written over all our dreams like the criminal’s fingerprints across his crime.” (...)

I think it is true for people who, living in an unchangeable world, feel their own slow inner changes brought about by time. During all their lifetime they look through the window, seeing the same tree; years pass, nothing happens, and they are very busy with counting and recounting their past loves, past mistakes, and achievements. It is false for people who play their lives in a moving scene of a violent, impetuous world. They are so interested in what is going on outside and are compelled to so many quick decisions that their past mistakes and achievements lose any importance. They willingly admit the old wisdom of Catholic priests who believed that complacency in the subconscious darkness of the soul is a mortal danger.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: “In one American literary review...” Typescript from 1947, no title, Beinecke Library, Box 125, Folder 1972, p. 1 and p. 3.

The worn-out psychological remark in the review reflects the illusory belief that people can resist the influence of a dynamic reality, and that this manifests itself in supposedly constant and predictable reactions in new situations. Miłosz reminds the audience that such sentences, belonging to the psychological canon of pre-war discourse, could also be found in the Wilno literary press. However, the war falsified many of the early assumptions of the psychology of the individual, and altered the conditions of human development to such an extent that it posed entirely new questions for psychology. In the background of Miłosz's above remarks is one of his main beliefs about the role of the acceleration of history as the *signum temporis* of the 20th century. This conviction inspires him to reflect on the future human, shaped by the war and the consequences of a fast-paced and short-lived change. In this context, the central issue, related as it is to the problem of identity, is the question of memory. Existentialists, as the speaker claims, took away from the observation of change the conclusion about the decreasing importance of memory. Miłosz contrasts this statement with Marxist thought, which in its turn diminishes the role of individual memory:

On the other hand, Marxists ensure us that what happened has a meaning only if measured by the result of our actions. A heroic but useless death is nothing – neither good nor bad. The past for them is being continuously sacrificed for the future. Not individual memory, which is full of illusions, but the development of history can throw a light upon past events.<sup>218</sup>

Convictions of this sort, claims Miłosz, give rise to literature leaving less and less room for psychologizing. This still does not worry the poet much. He is, however, concerned about the direction in which people discarding the past and relinquishing memory will head, preoccupied as they are with the short-lived present.

You can say: They try to forget the years of war. Not only that – it is a mood of a constant revolt against one's own past, not only of the war, but also against the previous hour, the previous day. I have observed a febrile activity developed by people in ruined cities. America, which I had expected to be a country of calm, in comparison with the ant-like fretting of the human mass on the fallows of Europe. Obviously, there are, besides material reasons, some other reasons reaching further than the struggle for life.<sup>219</sup>

He is concerned about the direction in which literature will develop, when it is written as if the past had not existed. Miłosz presents his own understanding of memory which, burdened with the baggage of experience, governs thinking about the present and the future. Miłosz's European is someone who obsessively remembers. The poet places him between the poles of despair and the desire for purification. These poles

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<sup>218</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2.

are marked by Różewicz's poems, "Lament" and "Oczyszczenie" [Cleansing], quoted in full in his translation. The role of memory in building one's identity, as Miłosz understands it, goes beyond psychoanalytic definitions, but also cannot be reduced to an inventory of even the most broadly understood past. The past of which average Americans know little about regardless. Miłosz makes it very clear that the difference between an American and a European does not concern only the most dramatic difference in experience, but it depends on the style of thinking and action derived from individual and collective experience, sustained and motivated by memory. The poet uses here the traditional concept of history as life's teacher, wanting to prove that contemporary America and Europe are differentiated by their experience of war and its mental aftermath, which is the foundation of a new philosophy of life, morality, aesthetics, politics, etc.<sup>220</sup> This gives rise to differences in practicing and understanding literature, and literature is the subject Miłosz wants to focus on the most:

There are some human experiences which are able to create in men a new philosophy of life. Such experiences, I dare say, were given to a great number of Europeans. It is difficult to define their new philosophy of life. One does not build a system of philosophy on such a thesis, as for instance, that it is good to live and to see one more spring, or that a loaf of bread is a treasure and woe to them who do not understand their happiness when eating their daily bread.<sup>221</sup>

Where Americans see no complications, Miłosz emphasizes their significance, sometimes taking recourse in simple rhetorical devices, such as quasi-introspection, as when he recalls going through the bullet-slashed streets of Warsaw one afternoon during the war, daydreaming of being able to go to the US and shout out all the atrocities on street corners, in all their horrendous details, to convince people such unimaginable crimes as manhunts and public executions are possible, and indeed that the very experience of war may in someone's mind take on a perfect permanence. Miłosz contrasts the vivid experience of war with the faded memory of it saying: "(...) now, when I try to remember and to tell, I cannot. I don't remember. Only a rough draft of a dream is left, dim and lacking color. I don't remember, or perhaps I don't want to remember."<sup>222</sup>

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**220** Marta Piwińska comments on this as follows: "The most important message that our culture may present to the West is of our historical experience, which is most difficult to understand. After all, what is the value of all these bad experiences – the partitions, the Second World War under the General Government, which looked very different from that in Paris, the passage through Stalinism? Both of them [Mickiewicz and Miłosz – E. K.] do not mean to obtain moral and political support on the basis of a history of martyrology. They tell their stories mostly for the West, to teach and to warn," *op. cit.*, p. 87.

**221** Miłosz, Czesław: "In one American literary review...", *op. cit.*, p. 3.

**222** *Ibidem*, p. 2.

In his English-language lectures, Miłosz provides many details of daily life under the occupation, despite his rhetorical stipulations that he does not remember them. He also does not avoid comments on the responsibility of the Allies for the fate of Poles:

In the summer of 1942, a big transport of Greek turtles was stolen in Warsaw. Its destination was the Eastern front for the German Army in Russia. The merchants would sell them in the streets, and masses of slow moving reptiles crawled on the pavements. The people of Warsaw called them “the vanguard of the American invasions.” It was a cruel joke, too, because the people who were joking knew well the price in human lives which the occupied countries, and especially Poland, were paying for every month of the delay.<sup>223</sup>

Not only in his poetry, but also in the talks addressed to Americans, Miłosz complains about the problem of form. The American listener makes him realize that in time everyone would learn about the history of war without being able to refer to experience. In the record of this thought for the first time appears the metaphor of an avalanche, which made one of the lines of *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals] an aphorism, in which Miłosz says that in Europe the memory of war will fade and die away in a matter of several years, but the experience of it will continue to exert unpredictable influences, much like a stone starting an avalanche down a slope.

Seeking a way to talk about the war and its long-term consequences, Miłosz feels more and more clearly the lack of a community of experience, which precludes agreement on a more abstract ground. In addition, aware of the national disputes over the realism of the literature under occupation, he shares his doubts:

There is no lack of heroic stories and novels in Poland. It is an outburst of long stifled passions – during the war all printing in Polish was forbidden; only underground printing presses worked. Incredible stories of guerrilla fighting, prisons, escapes, concentration camps fill the pages of books and periodicals. The tragedy of Polish Jews impressed writers especially strongly.

All that is a realistic literature. Readers know the subject by heart, and they expect a good knowledge of details from a writer. Sometimes they ironically ask an author whether he has ever had an automatic gun in his hand, which is, of course, a deadly kind of literary criticism.

Zofia Kossak, a Catholic novelist, whose novel, *Blessed are the Meek*, was a bestseller in America a few years ago, has spent a certain amount of her time in one of the worst German concentration camps – that of Oświęcim (Auschwitz). She recently published a book on what she had seen there and was immediately attacked by former inmates of that camp for “not presenting the whole truth.” The attacks were right to some extent, because a book on the same subject, *Smoke over Birkenau*, by Szmaglewska, a debutante, seems to be more accurate (the translation will be published in the fall in this country).

There are many discussions on realism in Poland, and for a good reason. An average Pole of today is able to tell true stories, in comparison with which Kafka’s fantasies look pale.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 5–6.

<sup>224</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: “Literature in Poland”, Typescript, 12 pages., *op. cit.*, p. 10.

Miłosz problematizes here the issue of occupation literature and tries to explain the sources of its specific form. This is the first time that he discusses irony as the hallmark of Polish creativity. He lists Fielding, Defoe, and Swift as icons of ironic literature in a sense close to his own. These authors – with the exception of Defoe, whose novels became the subject of a wartime essay – grew closer to Miłosz after he came to the USA. In the talk, the poet reveals the books he is currently reading, but their choice is a partial continuation of his pursuits under the occupation. He explains further the sources of the Polish authors' propensity for absurdity, black humor, and grotesque:

One of the most important factors of equilibrium and the best remedy against hysteria is humor. To tell the truth, the sense of humor developed during the war was cruel and cynical. The apparent cynicism, however, had an inner dignity and respect for human values. It was a sense of tragedy, and every witty expression could be classified in a category where no clear limits exist between the laughter of humans and the anger of gods.<sup>225</sup>

The war, as he argues, revived the importance of the literature of distance, which emphasizes the repetitive nature of fate, and typicality of behaviors. Reality, which blurred social and personal differences, gave precedence to those instincts and traits that guaranteed survival, and eluded psychologizing descriptions in favor of a reporting-based or more parable-like approach. Somewhat in reference to the occupation essays, Miłosz's talk on literature delivered at Columbia University on April 18, 1949, intimates that one of the few artists who did not lose value during the war was the author of *The Human Comedy*:

What fascinated us in Balzac is the ability of his characters to assume new incarnations. As my listeners will recall, Balzac's characters appear on the surface, sink and reappear in new roles, with a completely changed social position, dress, type of smile and a variety of reactions.<sup>226</sup>

Miłosz creates a typological portrait of a European artist, reader, and theatrical spectator formed by the war – a trained eye will find in it the outline of the author himself:

It would be very interesting to examine the literary taste of that poet as representative of a certain generation. I guess that he would like very few literary works from the first half of the twentieth century. He would probably be opposed to the so-called "roman noir" in France. It means the novel exploring desperately the abyss of the human soul. He would look critically, too, at the naturalistic violence of certain novels. Probably his favorite authors would be Rabelais, Defoe,

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<sup>225</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: "In one American literary review...", *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>226</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: "Odczyt o literaturze wygłoszony na Columbia University 18 IV 1949 r." [My subject is post-war literature in Europe...] Typescript, no title or date, Beinecke Library, Box 125, Folder 1973. It is not known when and how many times the talk was delivered in English.

Fielding, Swift, and Balzac, all of whom are eager to know as well the song of the nightingales as the life of human society; and, what is important, all of whom are very angry, but never hysterical.<sup>227</sup>

This new type of reader and viewer sets new tasks for of the author, ones that Miłosz jointly calls ethics:

After purely psychological interests have been reduced, an invasion of new elements begins. What are these new elements? First of all, ethics. I am afraid that in a few years the literature of many European countries will be a kind of big treatise on morals, and one can foresee the appearance of a new Prince of a modern Machiavelli. If I say “ethics,” I do not have in mind the ethics of family life. A poor love story has no chances, and with regret I dismiss the beautiful female demons, whose charms I fully appreciate. They used their lipstick during the war; they carried shotguns when making up their faces; and those who survived continue to be impoverished demons. The writers pay very little attention to them. The ethics of the new literature are the ethics of ruling and being ruled, the ethics of war and of a difficult peace.

I am aware of a danger which threatens the writers when they become involved too much in the ethics of collective movements. I hope, however, that the old humanistic tradition of Europe will be able to reduce our errors. I do not believe that a man who reads Rabelais could be a fanatic.<sup>228</sup>

Reflecting on the directions and possibilities of literary development after the war, the speaker recalls Tolstoy’s views. He considers them not so much because of his listener, but rather for personal reasons. In the USA, the poet found himself in the pincers of contradictory views on the future of art, between Tadeusz Różewicz’s pessimism, Joseph Conrad’s ethics, the Marxists’ historic determinism, Balzac’s irony and Tolstoy’s condemnation of art, bearing in mind Maritain’s personalism, Eliot’s diagnosis of the civilization, and his own conclusions, drawn before and during the war. In the position of a regime official in exile, without his own audience and with no hope for a new one, his doubts seem to intensify. From the difference between the experiences that shaped divergent philosophies of life in Europe and America, the poet derives still other questions: what are the East and West at present and what may post-war Western Civilization become?

I think that Western Civilization is something real. But, just as many things are real as long as we do not try to define and classify them, Western Civilization also seems to lose all reality when we divide the phenomena into two kinds: one of the Western, and another not Western.<sup>229</sup>

Miłosz asks rhetorically which country is supposed to be the border of Western Civilization, and he argues that such a border has never existed in history:

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227 Miłosz, Czesław: “In one American literary review...”, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

228 *Ibidem*, p. 7.

229 *Ibidem*, p. 7.

Ancient Greece and Rome. But Jesus brought a teaching which was rather hostile to the Greek and Roman way of life. His message could be easily dismissed as un-Greek and un-Roman. Medieval Italy? But one of the greatest poems of Europe, *The Divine Comedy* of Dante was created not only as a result of the influence of Latin poetry, but also as a result of some literary ideas taken from Arabic poets, who were infidels and decidedly Eastern. The history of medieval philosophy shows continuous Arabic influences, and one should remember what chasm existed at that time between the Christian and the non-Christian world. It would be easy to quote many examples. It would not be an exaggeration if I say: Every real civilization is universal and open to all kinds of new ideas. The critical moment arrives when it becomes self-conscious to such an extent that it is afraid to lose its ideal purity. We have then the case of Julian the Apostate who did not want to accept Christianity and fought in the name of old gods – not because he believed in them, but because they were Western.<sup>230</sup>

Miłosz's reflection had at least two motivations. The first resulted from his observation of the foreign policy of the US. The second derived from his reading of global history and works of literature from ever widening linguistic and cultural circles. The year 1947, from which the talk comes, saw the beginning of the Cold War. When in his Fulton speech Prime Minister Churchill used the term *iron curtain*, President Truman announced his doctrine, and the Congress passed a law on immigration quotas discriminating against Eastern Europeans, it was evident that the definition of Western Civilization was based on the narrowly understood political criterion. The diplomat therefore presents the position of a representative of the world behind the Iron Curtain, to demonstrate the myopia of such reasoning:

We in Europe observe with anxiety how the words “Western Civilization” are being transformed into a political weapon. I think there are many much cheaper words which could be used for such a purpose. Whoever draws a line through the heart of Europe and says: On this side is West, on that side is East, can be accused of making from the common inheritance of mankind a ball for the game of politics.

Let us suppose that such a line is drawn and that Poland or Czechoslovakia do not belong to Western Civilization. Let us state, however, that what is going on in Poland and Czechoslovakia is much more similar to what is going on in France, than what is going on in the United States. So, perhaps we should be obliged to move our line and make the Atlantic a frontier between the two civilizations. Now Descartes is already an Eastern philosopher.<sup>231</sup>

Miłosz's hypothesis, even though it might have seemed to be an interesting thought experiment, was not speculative for the poet himself. Miłosz is convinced that if the current boundary of civilization should run somewhere, it was marked out in the hell of wartime experience that integrates Europeans opposite Americans who did not live through it:

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**230** *Ibidem*, pp. 7–8.

**231** *Ibidem*, p. 8. A different perspective on the division into the East and West is taken by Judt, Tony: *Postwar*, *op. cit.*, pp. 100–128.



Speaking of war experience, I had an obvious aim: to look for elements common to the people of all the countries which suffered during the war. Hitler's ambition was to unify Europe in serfdom. He succeeded not in the way he planned, but nevertheless he succeeded. When I meet a Frenchman or a Dutchman, I ask him about the manhunts in his country during the war, or about their black market, or about their underground press, and we [understand] each other perfectly. If I try to communicate to an American a bit of our irony or of our childish joy typical to the men who are glad to see one more spring, we stammer, and I confess that we are bores.<sup>232</sup>

The poet was a witness to the breakup of the continuity of civilization in Europe – he will say it even more clearly in his lecture on literature at Columbia. Burying the old Europe and the necessity to build a new one seem to him to be urgent tasks as they are insurmountable. For this reason, he considers belief in the civilizational unity of the Old and New World a manifestation of a certain sentimentality, less and less justifiable in post-war reality, whereas attempts to create a new map of the West based on political calculations are to him more harmful nonsense.<sup>233</sup> In these views he was not isolated – discussions in a similar spirit took place on the pages of the American press; one may also ask about the influence of Eliot's *Notes on the Definition of Culture* on Miłosz's thinking. His own comments on civilizational fluidity have yet another value – in his ironic assessment of the political attempts to build a new rampart, he questions the possibility of creating a world on the principles of the center and the provinces. Does the then dialectician, but also reader of Faulkner, have a sense of the emergence of a polycentric civilization?

## The Chicago Lecture

The archives show that at least once the lecturer drew different conclusions from the experience of war. He talks about them in his lecture of December 19, 1948 at the Art Institute of Chicago, which accompanied the exhibition brought from Poland by Wanda Telakowska. Does his bright tone result from the presence of a guest from home, or from predictions that the audience will include Poles and representatives of the local Consulate, or is it a result becoming acclimatized to the realities of life

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<sup>232</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: "In one American literary review...", *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>233</sup> It is interesting what Miłosz says about it then in the "Notebook:" "Bednarczuk [Jerzy Putrament] is proposing writers to finish looking to the West. Where does he see this West? What is it supposed to be? The cheese trimmings: France, Italy, Switzerland – a few small countries in transition and of secondary import? America is not the West; no one believes it. Unless one accepts that the West is capitalism, which American journalists do 10,000 times a day. They print reproductions of Italian Renaissance painters in their magazines, trying to convince their readers that America is the rightful heiress of Raphael and Tintoretto, which is obviously untrue. The Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the Baroque had a completely defined territorial range in Europe, these layers were deposited in folklore, even in folk painting." In Miłosz, Czesław: "Notatnik" [The Notebook], *Nowiny Literackie* 1948, issue 15, p. 2.

in the USA? Utopian visions of the development of Poland and humanity diverge significantly from previous statements about the impasse of Western Civilization. The reason for this seems to run deeper and it was, I believe, revealed in the essay “Mickiewicz and Modern Poetry”, published in December 1948; the Chicago lecture and the article written at the same time share a common patron, and so it can be assumed that at least a part of their assumptions and points also converge. In the essay, Miłosz says that the sense of equilibrium permeating Mickiewicz’s works would suggest that it is periods of transition that are richest in literary terms, as they are periods when certain modes of feeling and reasoning are taken away but remain as a basis for a new effort.

However risky this statement may be, around 1948 Miłosz himself was similarly at the end of a transition period in which some processes and transformations had been completed, and new intuitions had become clear. This situation is radically changed in 1949, particularly after the poet’s return from Poland, but 1948 seems the most fruitful in his entire first American period. The figure around which several threads of reflection in the talk are spun is of course Adam Mickiewicz. Miłosz describes him as he did in the 1930s, both in his journalism and in correspondence.<sup>234</sup> Here, too, Mickiewicz embodies a harmonious convergence of poetic talent and sociopolitical activity, a unity of word and deed. Mickiewicz in the talk becomes at the same time the archetypical Polish poet, to whom successive generations entering the literary stage must relate. Miłosz talks about resurrecting the paradigm of independence literature during the war, about a renewal of Polish underground traditions, about the artistic and educational activities of the underground, about the hunger for poetry in the realities of poverty under occupation, and the illegal, perilous ways of its dissemination. Nowhere else does he speak with such sympathy and appreciation for the poets of the Warsaw Uprising. It is worth bearing in mind that Gajcy, who was killed in the Warsaw Uprising, is for him still their most interesting representative.<sup>235</sup>

Miłosz does not use the term “Romanticism” anywhere. He clearly separates the romantic attitude from literary form. The former he discusses in the lecture – although without the use of the word “romantic” – in his accounts of the activities of the Polish Underground under occupation. He explains the complexities of this terminology in Poland in the essay, while in the talk he avoids oversimplified classifications. Remarks in the essay and the lecture coincide with their treatment of the style of Mickiewicz’s poetry and his attitude to tradition. In both places Miłosz

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**234** See Miłosz, Czesław: “Mickiewicz. (Na marginesie wielkiego cyklu Polskiego Radia)” [Mickiewicz. (On the Margins of the Great Polish Radio Series)], *Antena* 1939, issue 23, p. 4. A reprinting of *Przygody młodego umysłu. Publicystyka i proza 1931–1939* [Adventures of a Young Mind. Journalism and Prose 1931–1939]. Collected and edited by Agnieszka Stawiarska, Krakow, 2003, pp. 285–290.

**235** Miłosz, Czesław: “*Let us avoid generalities...*” Typescript, no title or date, Beinecke Library, Box 156, Folder 2467, pp. 3–4.

emphasizes Mickiewicz's simplicity of style – he defines it in Eliot's terms, as the ability to use language. Likewise, he characterizes Mickiewicz's fusion of tradition and modernity – although it is less apparent in the talk, Mickiewicz's portrait of 1948 is put in an Eliotesque frame. Speaking about Mickiewicz, Miłosz explores personal questions about the relation between poetry's autonomy and its social engagement. It is no coincidence that Miłosz portrays the bard as a young exile to Russia, editor of *La Tribune des Peuples* [The People's Tribune], who granted his support to the American aspirations to freedom, a creator of the legions, and above all a lecturer of Slavic literatures at the Collège de France, who lost his prestigious post as a result of spreading radical political views and philosophical ideas. Let us not forget that Miłosz himself at the time considered the possibility of joining the Hutterites. His Mickiewicz is a visionary, prophet, tribune, believer in pan-Europeanism built on the foundations of Christianity – a prime example of a Polish poet who also grows into the sort of symbolic image of a poet in the sense of what Whitman means in America. Miłosz does not hesitate to build a bold parallel between the bard and the visionary poet; moreover, he makes this juxtaposition the plane of a kind of brotherhood, the basis for seeking unity – seeking a covenant. Most interesting here seems to be the reinterpretation of Mickiewicz's biography, so that he could be his patron at that time. Mickiewicz – the ardent poet of the suprapartisan left, the Christian poet, the poet of the future, the Polish poet, teacher, social activist, political activist, leader, and organizer legitimizes the employment of a secretary of the Embassy in his secret service of the invisible legion. As Ryszard Nycz writes about the author of *Rescue*:

Miłosz 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 (...) Seen from this perspective, the “more capacious form” of Miłosz's designs 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, 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.<sup>236</sup>

Miłosz adorns his remarks about the inalienable role of poetry in society with a propaganda account of the successes of the post-war reconstruction of Poland – he

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**236** Nycz, Ryszard: *Czesław Miłosz: The Twentieth-Century Poet in Public Space*. Translated by Jennifer Croft. In *Czesław Miłosz, Multiple Worlds, Game of Forms*. Published under the direction of Stanisław Latek, Krakow, 2011, pp. 24–25.

maintains that poetic energy, and the desire to revive humanity and create a new world flow from a single source. He cleverly uses reports from press correspondents of the *Manchester Guardian* and *The Washington Post*, who commented with some admiration the pace of reconstruction in the war-ruined country. However, the main topic of the lecture goes deeper and coincides with reflection on the possibilities of shaping reality with the help of verse. In Miłosz's own words:

I do not feel guilty of disrupting the continuity of my speech by talking about economic reconstruction of my country. Poetry is life; it is as I said, the very essence of life activity, so industrial activity is life too, and it is absurd to separate those things. The same daring and bold spirit which created the great Polish national poetry and led young poets in the fight against the invaders, explains the successes of Poland's reconstruction.<sup>237</sup>

In this talk, for the first time Miłosz answers in the affirmative the question about the salvational dimension of poetry – about its significance in repairing people and the world. A point of departure for the talk is the issue of happiness, in which:

[p]oetry is nothing else but a sort of revolt against the unhappiness of man. (...) Poetry is more than an occupation, it is activity at its purest, the essence of activity, since a true poet criticizes the world in which he lives for the sake of a better world of the future.<sup>238</sup>

## The Lecture at Columbia

As I mentioned, the Chicago lecture seems exceptional in comparison to all the other American lectures. A lecture that gathers all the previously spoken thoughts, doubts and opinions, a crowning of the public speaking efforts of the diplomat, is the one delivered on 18 April 1949 at the University of Columbia. It is a translation of an earlier talk written in English – it is not known where and for which audience it was presented. It can be regarded as the crowning of Miłosz's lecturing activity, if only for the reason that he says the same to the Polish and English-speaking audiences, without differentiating the subject, or the manner of its communication, as if at the end of his stay in America both communicative situations finally became one. Phrased differently, after several years of living overseas, Miłosz's identity is refined, becoming coherent with all partners with whom he needs to negotiate it. This is the moment when everyone can be told the same thing. The poet knows the audience he will speak to – these are lecturers and students in the Department of Polish Literature, some

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**237** Miłosz, Czesław: “*Let us avoid generalities...*” Typescript, no title or date, Beinecke Library, Box 156, Folder 2467, pp. 4-5.

**238** *Ibidem*, p. 2.

of whom he knows in person. He knows what he wants to say and why – although the title of the lecture suggests a literary subject matter, it is a personal, sometimes very intimate confession of a writer forced to re-evaluate many of his beliefs, one who reached an awareness allowing him to make use of his experience. On that day Manfred Kridl wrote the following:

At the second meeting of the “Koło Polonistów” [Polish Circle] Mr. Czesław Miłosz, noted Polish poet, gave a lecture about “Post-war Polish Literature.”

Mr. Miłosz characterized the spiritual and moral condition of post-war writers in Europe in general, their new tasks, their attitude toward the recent past and their search for new forms of expression.

The situation in Poland is analogous, generally speaking, although there are differences caused by the devastating war and basic social changes after the war.

The lecture was attended by approximately 25 persons. A lively discussion followed the lecture.<sup>239</sup>

The speaker refrains from listing names and titles, and cataloging phenomena; he forsakes the role of a historian or critic. In other words, if Miłosz devotes a lecture to literary issues, he constantly emphasizes the subjectivity and dynamism of his account. Speaking of literature, he talks about himself, and in turn, he objectivizes this confession and derives it from his own experiences the situation of a European author in the first half of the twentieth century. The reading is governed by the rule of pendulum-like oscillation, going from the personal to the literary and back again, and from the personal to the typical and back. The center of reflection is the “I” subjected to the variability of historical experience, redefining oneself, one’s duties and possibilities of acting under its influence. Starting from the definition of evolutionary change, as in all the previous lectures, Miłosz talks about war as world-shattering formational experience, incomparable to his earlier experiences. After a few years of living in the USA, he finds a new way to talk about it – he compares it to natural disasters.<sup>240</sup>

The breakdown of identity – a fact about unpredictable, long-term consequences – is the right prism through which, in his opinion, one should look at Europe. Miłosz appears here as a castaway who, unlike Daniel Defoe’s protagonist, has no hope of resurrecting the old world with its people.

Even though the author alternately speaks in the first and third person, there is no doubt who he is talking about – a former critic of avant-garde formalism, author of

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**239** Kridl, Manfred, “Polish Circle (Koło Polonistów), Columbia University, Dept. of Slavic Languages.” Manfred Kridl Collection, Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Box 17, Subject File: Polish Circle (2) At Columbia.

**240** See: Czesław Miłosz, “*My subject is post-war literature...*,” Beinecke Library, Box 125, Folder 1973, p. 3. Through this analogy Miłosz refers to the way in which Americans described the experience of the Great Depression.

the “Piosenka o porcelanie” [Song on Porcelain], a translator of T.S. Eliot, a reader of Tadeusz Różewicz. He is the Robinson Crusoe of Warsaw, walking through the ruins of the city with no illusions that the culture of Europe can preserve its continuity:

(...) there is a sharp dividing line between pre-war Europe and the Europe of today. In spite of all the illusions many people cherish in this country, nothing can be patched up and forgotten. There is no such thing as a “return to normalcy” (...)

In the spring of 1945, I revisited, after a several months absence, my home in Warsaw. The house had been split by an artillery shell. A page by André Gide was flying on in the ironic wind. There were some trampled covers of other books – the treasure of a pre-war writer: Rimbaud, French surrealists, Kafka, Proust. They looked rather silly against the background of ruins.<sup>241</sup>

In these observations, Miłosz could be close to Tolstoy’s condemnation of art, to which he had alluded in his previous lectures. On the other hand, he is accompanied by the following thought:

The basic question is: what values remain? No one can live forever amidst the rubble of his destroyed loyalties and convictions. Even the smallest bit of ground cleared of debris is better than a vast space strewn with bricks and haunted by ghosts. Those who succeed in clearing a little bit of their own are happier, I feel, than those who have never been confronted with the necessity of doing such a work.<sup>242</sup>

The paradoxical advantage of this situation is, in his opinion, the awareness of the relativity and changeability of the world reorganized from scratch. Persisting in the reality that is undergoing elusive changes creates a dangerous faith in its universality and durability. This is the charge he brings against Americans:

Perhaps it is good for man to remember that the world in which he lives has been made by his own hands. Not only the houses in which he lives, the clothes he wears, but mental and moral atmosphere which surrounds him is a product of his own will, or lack of will. Deprived of the electrical shock which comes from the sudden events of history, he takes too often the order of things established in his little town for a pattern of the universe. What is typical for a moment in the development of mankind appears, for him, to be an immovable law. There is no better example of such an attitude than *Spoon River Anthology* of Edgar Lee Masters, that tragedy of a provincial microcosm. Many other names of American literature could be mentioned in this place. Here is probably the source of American selfthoughtness on one hand, and the naturalistic and biological tendencies of American literature on the other.<sup>243</sup>

One can debate whether Miłosz’s judgments are fair. The above passage, however, does explain many of his idiosyncrasies of the time, concealed in his claims that the

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241 *Ibidem*, p. 4 and 7.

242 *Ibidem*, p. 4–5.

243 *Ibidem*, p. 5.

American city is reminiscent of a museum of technology, that it is a distorted imitation of the European original, that because of isolationism, America is like a flower folding back its petals, that it resembles the world on the first day after creation. Overseas, the poet constantly stumbles over the relics and reduced survival forms of a reality that is considered very much alive here:

To my astonishment, I noticed, after coming to America, that writers and publishers have been busy with translating, commenting on and publishing Gide, Kafka and surrealists, as if nothing had happened. Those phantoms of my youth, which symbolized for me the past, flourished in a mental climate which was a strange mixture of the early 20 century refinement and the American Revolution. As for rational behavior, I had to say farewell to it, and very soon, while still in Poland. Nevertheless, my journey to a country untouched by war was no less exciting than that of Gulliver to the country of the Houyhnhnms. I assure you that it is the greatest fun a man can have. I felt I had that god-like eye which can, as you will remember, see through the vanity and emptiness of human desires.<sup>244</sup>

Therefore, in the Columbia lecture the poet mentions two types of despair: of necessary transformation and of persistence – in his opinion the former is reflected well in the situation of Robinson, the latter was described ironically and with no illusions by T. S. Eliot on the eve of the war. Is this said by a believer in the Spirit of History? Explaining the selected fragment of *The Waste Land*, the author uses terms from a very different vocabulary:

The stony rubbish of our civilization can be interpreted (...) in terms of a mystical night of soul. But there is a place for a suspicion that those who limit themselves to sitting in a dark room and expecting a sudden change through grace, hope to be reborn without the pain of dying. Like the people who are unable to imagine immortality without their glasses, their radio-set and their liquor-store, they wish to get something without giving anything away.<sup>245</sup>

Who would die here? Robinson of Warsaw. Who would be reborn? At this point in the lecture it becomes evident that it was created at the end of Miłosz's diplomatic service. The speaker is able to look at his situation from a distance – to objectify it and put it in a paradigmatic form. He puts his wartime experience and his American experience in a broader perspective, which allows him to believe that the process of death and rebirth presented here was already largely behind him.

This argument allows Miłosz to deal with the literary programs debated in America and Europe. Once again he recalls his criticism of psychological literature, rejects existentialism as a new form of dreamy idealism, he confronts Tolstoy's view of the immorality of art, and finally explains the phenomenon of the popularity of Marxism:

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<sup>244</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 8.

The Marxist theory of literature is indebted, I feel, as much to Marx as to Tolstoy. That theory is winning more and more followers in Poland. It treats literature as a politico-moral weapon and is concerned more with aims, than with means, more with content than with form, more with actuality than with everlasting beauty. Or to put it in the other way, it maintains that means, form and beauty are lifted and perfected if the content is good.

One should remember that the experience of change which I tried to touch upon, preceded the successes of the Marxist theory in Europe. The ground had been explored in all the directions and all the possibilities exhausted. The advent of the Nazi empire cast a shadow of complicity upon many a school of pure poetry and many a philosophical doctrine. The liberal faith was dying out and those liberals who survived can hardly be counted among the liberals, since they saw the death of millions and millions of innocent human beings and anger does not go together very well with liberalism. So the field was prepared. That explains, too, the weakness of the anti-Marxist opposition to literature. The opposition inscribe on their banner fine-sounding words, dear to everybody who is not a beast. The only trouble is that those words are just words, nothing more and we are fed up with meaningless words.<sup>246</sup>

It is difficult to imagine that the superiors of a poet who proclaims such views publicly could continue to have confidence in him. It is clear that Miłosz had made decisions regarding his future and he put the ability to express himself freely over the Embassy's approval. The talk at Columbia is probably the only opportunity to talk about the past as a model, in his opinion, in relation to an intellectual from the Old World; it is a prime opportunity to outline the spiritual and mental condition of a European; ultimately it is a kind of proclamation of Miłosz's own literary program, clarified under the influence of experience and in the heat of disputes with his opponents. Miłosz makes use of this opportunity. He attacks both the Marxist vision of culture and the attitude of moralists trying to achieve a similar educational goal using other means, only reduced politically:

Literary quarrels and discussions are centered around this core. What I mean is a conflict between an effort to establish a socialist society on a new basis and a reluctance to render him miserable through forcing him into a mold to which he is unsuited. Man changes, but when he is compelled to change his habits and customs too quickly, he can be harmed just as young plants can be. On the other hand, there is a great unknown – his inner nature – which demands songs, music, and disinterested beauty.<sup>247</sup>

The poet goes beyond both utopias, returning to the beginning of his argument:

Man changes and literature is to be a sort of a treatise on his changing morals. But how far does the change reach? To what extent are we prone to delusions? What is the link between his past and his presence? Whoever says: morals, says: human happiness. Does a certain limit of change

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**246** *Ibidem*, pp. 11–12.

**247** *Ibidem*, p. 11.



exist, a limit, or a certain core of human nature, which should not be destroyed, unless we want to make Man unhappy? Man is a being full of contradictions. He loves to work and to be lazy: to concentrate and to relax; to sacrifice himself and to have his little fun. The moralists are severe people. Their zeal increases with practice of morals, in the case of moralistic writers, with the new volumes they produce. They are inclined gradually to forget that man cannot live only by duty, sacrifice, and thought about the generations to come.<sup>248</sup>

In the current discussion on literature, the speaker sees a renewal of Plato's dispute with the poets. He takes a consistent position in it, already evident in his wartime poems. A clear subtext for the defense of the autonomy of poetry in the talk at Columbia is his awareness of the tightening course of cultural policy in the country. The lecture given in April 1949 seems to be a response to the inauguration of socialist realism at the January Congress of the Polish Writers' Union. It is not a coincidence that the poet utters these words prior to his trip to Poland in May, pre-announcing his position in this matter. He continues:

My personal observation is that the moralists of today distrust beauty as much as the Puritans distrusted Flesh. The Puritans reluctantly permitted sexual acts as a means of begetting children. The moralists agree, reluctantly, to tolerate beauty, but under the condition that beauty serves a serious purpose. They have very good reasons to distrust beauty. I have told you about our vehement refusal to accept the withered charms of pre-war literature. But perhaps that beauty was not a true one. True beauty speaks a simple language and tells us how splendid life is and how much better it is to be a man than a stone.<sup>249</sup>

Miłosz does not explain further his concept of beauty – he discusses it partly in the essays printed in Polish magazines, and then he puts it forward in “Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook], arranged anew for the needs of the volume *Kontynenty* [Continents]. There are clear parallels between his literary output and public speaking practice; it even seems that the talks played the role of a workshop in which the poet refined his views, discussing with himself. At the end of the Columbia lecture, he utters a thought that seems to herald his future situation and foreshadow his further work. He compares writers and creators of programs to sinners and theologians, and this parallel seems understandable several years before writing *The Captive Mind*, in which communism is called the New Faith. The allusions in the metaphors of sinners and theologians are clear. Moreover, Miłosz, mentioning here the Dantesque practice of placing opponents in literary Hell, unambiguously suggests how he sees his future:

Since a writer has always to pay a price. Here, in this country, he pays the price by teaching at colleges and universities, by being divided from the people by the greensward of campuses or the

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<sup>248</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.

walls of an office. In many countries of Europe, he pays the price by being a privileged individual who is supposed to be a teacher of his nation and by bearing the burden of responsibility. That responsibility cannot be limited to the problems of his art. He has to be – to some extent – also a politician and a philosopher. To stress the analogy of passing from the Latin to the vernacular, let us remember that Dante was a theologian poet and author of political enemies in Hell. Whether we like it or not, there is no other course open to us than to put our enemies in Hell and to try to do in our new vernacular at least a part of what Dante achieved in his. (...) What I fancied to convey to you is our common belief that it is too early to expect the end of the world and that we are convinced that many generations will profit from our achievements if our hearts are pure enough.<sup>250</sup>

Everything that was to be said was said. Nowhere else will the poet ever reveal the connection between the *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals] and the Dantesque tradition. In no other place did he say so much about the despair of personal transformation, the effort by which he overcame the psychological effects of the occupation, what work he did to ultimately sustain his faith in the teaching duty of the writer. The lecture at Columbia is perhaps the most intimate self-presentation the poet ever made at that time, although – as usual – he made efforts to sound a tone of the generation, so that history might speak through him. He never published the lecture, although it might have cast additional light on his psychological condition at and worldview at the time, and explained partially the violent tone of the resounding “No.”

There are no other archives related to the poet’s speaking activity. Kridl noted that on February 27, 1950, in room 301, Philosophy Hall, at 8 PM Miłosz delivered a lecture to the Polish Philology Circle at Columbia University:

Mr. Czesław Miłosz, Polish poet and writer had a talk about “Problems of the contemporary Polish writer.” He presented the situation of the writer in present day Poland in comparison with that in pre-war Poland, analyzed works of novelists, poets and playwrights and explored problems they are concerned with; furthermore he spoke on the material situation of the writers, the number of copies printed, the reaction of the public, and so on. The lecture was attended by about 30 persons.<sup>251</sup>

However, the preserved texts of the lecture seem to illustrate the process of transformation in Miłosz’s thinking about Poland and Polishness, Europe and America, East and West, the past and the future. Perhaps – in addition to Miłosz’s correspondence – these are the most valuable autobiographies of an intellectual who practiced a kind of auto-pedagogy and unknowingly assumed the role of a pedagogue without limiting himself to the duties of a lecturer. It is easy to agree with Marta

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<sup>250</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 14–15.

<sup>251</sup> Kridl, Manfred: “Polish Circle (Koło Polonistów), Columbia University, Dept. of Slavic Languages.” Manfred Kridl Collection, Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Box 17, Subject File: Polish Circle (2) At Columbia.

Piwińska when she writes: “Looking for answers to certain questions in all of Miłosz’s work, I hasten to add that I understand *The Captive Mind*, *Native Realm*, *The Land of Ulro*, and *Prywatne obowiązki* [*Private Obligations*] also as his ‘lectures on Poland for the West’.”<sup>252</sup>

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252 Piwińska, Marta: *op. cit.*, p. 74.

## Chapter 3: Around the Series of Articles *Życie w USA* [Life in the USA]

### Introductory Remarks

Under the pseudonym Jan M. Nowak,<sup>253</sup> Miłosz published in *Odrodzenie* a series of twenty articles on society entitled *Życie w USA* [Life in the USA], with the subtitle *From a special correspondent of Odrodzenie*. The installments, varying in length, were published at irregular intervals within the space of one year. The first (in December) was printed in the last issue of 1946, while the final one (in November) in issue 43 of 1947. Installment twenty-one, which would have appeared in 1948, was withdrawn at the request of the author.<sup>254</sup> Correspondence with Karol Kuryluk does not explain why the series was discontinued. A possible reason seems to be his dismissal from the post of editor-in-chief in February 1948. Another reason may be Miłosz's encounter with the community of *politics* in mid-1947, and his disappointment with Wallace, the editor of *The New Republic*, a biweekly which was one of the main sources of the topics covered in the series. In 1947, Dwight Macdonald, under whose influence Miłosz was by then, penned a damning characterization of Wallace.<sup>255</sup> Another reason could be that Miłosz's choices were crystallizing – the last episode of the series clearly refers to the completed *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals].

In addition to the texts signed Jan M. Nowak, the diplomat also sent in articles written under the pseudonym Żagarysta<sup>256</sup> and under his own name.<sup>257</sup> This was not the first time for him as a correspondent. In the United States, his situation was different than in pre-war France, from where he also sent articles – experienced with

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**253** See *Słownik pseudonimów pisarzy polskich XV w. – 1970 r.* [Dictionary of Polish literary pen-names – 15th Century to 1970] Jankowski, Edmund et al. (eds.) Wrocław, 1995, vol. 2, p. 705. Nowak's identity remained unknown for so long that neither Jacek Natanson (see *idem Tygodnik Odrodzenie 1944–1950*, Warsaw, 1987) nor Wiesław Paweł Szymański (see *idem: Odrodzenie i Twórczość w Krakowie (1945–1950)*, Wrocław, 1981) mention the series *Życie w USA*, or its creator.

**254** His manuscript is kept in the Adam Mickiewicz Museum in Warsaw, collection issue 4, call no. 4135.

**255** Macdonald, Dwight: “Henry Wallace (Part 1),” *politics* 1947, March–April, pp. 1–38; “Henry Wallace (Part 2),” *politics* 1947, May–June, pp. 96–117. These articles were the basis for Miłosz's analysis in “Henry Wallace w opinii amerykańskiej” [Henry Wallace in the American Opinion] of Feb. 2, 1948. AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 82, f. 1108, pp. 101–109.

**256** These are the essays “Książki i pisma w Stanach Zjednoczonych” [Books and Journals in the United States] and “Zabawy i spory” [Games and Arguments].

**257** These are the features and essays “Abstrakcja i poszukiwania” [Abstraction and Searching], “Massachusetts”, “Na Independence Day” [For Independence Day], “Faulkner”, “Henry Miller, czyli dno” [Henry Miller or Rock Bottom]. Miłosz also published his new poems here, and he occasionally reviewed theatrical plays.

war, he was here as a regime official, writing about a country belonging to a competing political bloc, and the sources of his reports were more diverse. This had an impact on his style, choice of material and manner in which it was discussed.

At the time, the role of a correspondent from across the Atlantic was not an easy one: more and more propaganda about the West, and in particular about the United States, appeared in the Polish press. Attempts to represent America objectively were risky. In turn, any justified criticism – since there was no access to information or possibilities to verify its credibility – might expose one to accusations of propagandizing from the circles opposed to the system. Jerzy Jarzębski comments on this as follows:

Of course, one might doubt the sincerity of this criticism of the New World: ultimately it could have been due in part to the political choices Miłosz made at the time, which demanded confirmation by means of the somewhat ritual gesture of rejecting America. But he repeated his criticism several years later at Berkeley, so it seems that he never achieved full acceptance of the New World, even though he did change his mind on many issues.<sup>258</sup>

Miłosz was aware of how delicate a mission he was undertaking, creating a series of this sort in the years of growing tensions in the relations between the USA and the USSR. Sometimes he vented his impatience, engaging in polemics with the editors of *Kuźnica*, which he also published under his own name:

You can say very unpleasant things about the United States. It is interesting to note that those who fire at the US usually miss the most. Both listening to foreign radio stations and browsing the American press give American journalists a great deal of very entertaining material, which is often printed here with no comment, and the reader, roaring with laughter or fuming with indignation – depending on his disposition – no longer needs to be convinced that the rest of the world is barbaric and hypocritically bent, and let us note that such a chauvinistic mentality is hardly conducive to international cooperation. Writing that in New York people have to stand in long lines to buy bread (in one of the most prosperous periods in US history), or that demobilizing soldiers are destitute (the draft budget submitted to Congress by the government provides a twelve-digit sum for veteran education in schools and universities) or arguing that there is a Negro hanged on every tree – these would be examples of such firing and missing.<sup>259</sup>

Under these circumstances, the use of a pseudonym was probably a prerequisite to inform the public – as far as censorship would allow – about American politics, economy, culture and customs. *Odrodzenie* and *Kuźnica* published other correspondence from the USA, sent by Ilya Ehrenburg, Aleksander Janta-Pończyński, and Aleksander Hertz. These articles provided some of the context for Miłosz's series – he engaged in polemics with some of the authors writing for these magazines. The

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**258** Jarzębski, Jerzy: “Obrazy Ameryki w *Świetle dziennym* Miłosza” [Images of America in Miłosz's *Daylight*], *Ruch Literacki* 2012, issue 3, p. 296.

**259** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA*, *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 7, p. 9.

poet proposed his own pseudonym, but the editor of *Odrodzenie* managed to dissuade him: “The pseudonym I put in is different than what you suggested, more appealing to the average Pole: ‘J. M. Nowak’ – an average person. I know that the first article aroused enormous interest and attracted a great deal of attention” (*Zaraz po wojnie* [Right after the War], 573). By choosing a popular surname, Kuryluk puts Miłosz in an everyman costume, at the same time emphasizing his alien status in the New World. It is not known whether or not the name was meant as a reference to the figure of Jan Nowak-Jeziorański.

Writing under a pseudonym could help the poet hide from his superiors and opponents – this would follow from the letter dated February 10, 1948. Asking for the publication of one installment, the poet explains: “The reasons are related to my diplomatic status and are serious – both public and private. I do not wish to dwell on them, you will guess what they are yourself, if you take into account that Nowak’s identity is doubtful to certain circles, as I have recently learned.”<sup>260</sup> On the other hand, he guided his readers to the right trail himself, referring to a stay in France, or writing stinging comments about the authors of *Kuźnica* that all but revealed who their author might be. Other reasons may be indicated for using a pseudonym. In addition to the correspondence for *Odrodzenie*, Miłosz sent regular official reports to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As a diplomat, he might have been reluctant to appear as a columnist. In a report for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he deftly defended himself against allegations of cooperating with Kuryluk in secret: “I supply the editorial team of *Odrodzenie* with short articles covering the most important events in America and other materials (e.g. Wallace’s letter).<sup>261</sup> For the magazine *Twórczość*, I obtained the right to print two American literary essays (on Caldwell and Steinbeck), written by [Wilbur M.] Frohock, a professor at Columbia University.”<sup>262</sup>

Although the articles touch on similar subjects, the author did make the effort not to disclose the common identity of the diplomat and the correspondent. Reading the reports confirms the poet’s later statements that he wrote bravely, and his reports were not – to use his own language – combed flat. A letter from Aleksander Jackowski, deputy director of the Press and Information Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, contains an admonition:

Unfortunately, we must say that this report departs significantly from the reports that cultural attachés are accustomed to sending. There is no word in it about the essence of the work of the

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**260** Letter of Czesław Miłosz to Karol Kuryluk, of Feb. 10, 1948 roku, *Nowa Dekada Krakowska* 2013, issue 1/2, p. 15.

**261** This is Wallace’s open letter to the president of the United States. After a series of speeches criticizing the foreign policy of the Truman administration, it was the direct reason for Wallace’s dismissal from the post of Secretary of Commerce.

**262** *Report of the Activities of Czesław Miłosz, Cultural Attaché at the Polish Embassy in Washington for Nov. 1 – Dec. 1, 1946.* AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 86, f. 1171.

Attaché's Office, its activities, meetings with important figures in literary and scientific spheres. The report does not cover at all a characterization of the predominant moods, or the cultural and educational activities conducted among the American Poles. Nor does it cover the issue of propagating Polish culture in the United States.<sup>263</sup>

The freedom with which Miłosz described the beginnings of the Cold War, the position of communists in the USA, and the knowledge he used in evaluating the policy of the Soviet Union, all demand that his analyses be treated with attention. The poet did not hide the fact that he enjoyed the freedom of expressing his opinions in official letters. He wrote to Matuszewski: "I like writing reports for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in general, because they give me much more freedom in presenting the situation objectively" (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 404).

It would seem he enjoyed less freedom in his literary essays. A comparison of his reports with *Życie w USA* shows the latter in the appropriate light. The content of the series is reduced: fewer issues are addressed here, and comments on them are less extensive. What is more, Miłosz clearly separated these roles on various levels, hence the decision to divide both these very different modes of discussing American news also at the level of the signature. However, it would be mistaken to think that in the diplomatic reports he shared his full knowledge. On the contrary! As a reader of *politics* and *Partisan Review*, Miłosz kept to himself a deeper understanding of the history and politics at the time, carefully selecting his secret reading list, which will be mentioned only after the publication of *The Captive Mind*, and *Native Realm*, but in the meantime he perfected the strategy of concealment and discovery. One can verify this on the basis of the texts in which he reevaluates the American postwar period, and particularly in *A Year of the Hunter*, where he returns to the beginnings of his acquaintance with the organizers of the Congress for Cultural Freedom.

He wrote them as an intellectual shaped not at the embassy desk, but in the heat of debate of Macdonald's editorial office. Miłosz, who is in the circles of the New York and Washington intellectual elite, knows more about America than he is willing to reveal at the time. How do we know this? Not from his letters, articles, or reports, but from indirect sources: the forms and compositions used in his journalism, his reading choices, his translations, and the allusions he makes later in his articles for *Kultura*. In America, Miłosz is a poet seeking for himself the most distant horizon possible, at the same time showing a closer horizon to those unable to keep up. *Życie w USA* delineates the limits of such a circle of initiation, which he himself regarded as elementary and operational; for him, however, decidedly too small.

What does this separation of roles in the reports and essays in fact consist in? The reports, although they do not contain elements of literary imagery, have a journalistic nerve and are characterized by considerable freedom in their choice

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263 AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 87, f. 1182.

of subjects. In the articles for *Odrodzenie*, paradoxically, it is easier to notice self-censorship or setting up false trails. First of all, the author does not duplicate his topics and sources. With acrobatic caution, he avoids quoting the same papers, journalists, or using the same data and opinions. Only in a few situations can one see a convergence of the diplomat and the correspondent – he sometimes comments on the same satirical drawing, book or exhibition. Secondly, in the face of anti-American propaganda, he does his best not to present those attacked by the press in an uncomplimentary manner. This applies above all to President Truman, who is referred to in sharp words in the reports – the mildest of his descriptions in the reports is “[a man of] fairly modest intellectual qualifications,”<sup>264</sup> while in the series he tries to show his virtues as a political player and advocate of social reform. He tones down the Polish discussion about racism, does not reveal critical judgments about the Polish diaspora. In other words, with issues which he considers to be in need of a more circumspect treatment, he is more diplomatic. This choice of attitude was dictated by the conviction that, despite tense political relations, nations can and must be brought closer together through cooperation on the cultural level. Although many times the correspondent allows himself free reign in his diatribes on American topics, they all share a common goal – that of demythologizing the New World, which in the collective consciousness tends to take on an idealized form. Thirdly, the political analyses of the reports are shortened and simplified in the series, deprived of their most important and most interesting observations, indeed, sometimes their very directions diverge. This happens in his assessment of the position of communists and the political role of trade unions – if the author of the reports harbors no illusions about the future of communism in America, Wallace’s career or the outcome of the disputes between trade unions, the correspondent provides the information as if he were unaware of it all. The analyses in the series are structured in such a way that they seem to be written spontaneously, without sufficient discernment – while they have reliable counterparts in the reports.

The matter of authorship is a separate issue. Miłosz claimed that the consulate tried to put him in the role of a figurehead, and his job was to read and summarize the press:

(...) To you, sir, I can explain what my role was when I was in America. This was the role of a correspondent of the Polish press, masked, well, not so much masked, as sitting there ostensibly as a diplomat. (...) In fact I felt obliged to act as a correspondent. And indeed, what can be said now is that my real role was that I sat there, reading the American press eagerly and... in Warsaw they did not care for any ‘polite’ reports, ones that were sort of combed flat. They just did not have any information about what was going on in America. (...) And they were actually satisfied

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**264** *Raport sytuacyjny o nastrojach na terenie działalności Konsulatu Generalnego w New Yorku za okres 1 IX – 30 IX 1946 r.* [Situational Report on the Moods in the Area of Operations of the New York Consulate for the Period from Sept. 1 to Sept. 30, 1946]. AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 87, f. 1182.



when I wrote without any censorship, without beating around the bush, all that could be inferred from the American press. This is what my role was (*Autoportret przekorny*, 113–115).

The poet saw himself as someone who should build bridges between Poland and America. He particularly liked his position as a press correspondent. In his memoirs, not only does Miłosz not talk about the series, but he claims “Under normal circumstances, my articles would appear on the front page of the paper. And these were reports that only went to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs” (*Autoportret przekorny*, 116). Meanwhile, two episodes of the series did appear on the front page of the magazine, and several others on the second or third. Miłosz’s activity significantly exceeded the scope of his duties, but the sources of his knowledge were mainly reading and conversations. It is easy to understand the motivations of the correspondent who, using other people’s analyses, passes them on under a pseudonym. Sometimes he refers to specific press and book titles, and names of eminent analysts or journalists. These are, for example, reports from special committees of the Congress, Senator George Meader’s report on the stationing of American troops in Germany, *The Nation* journalist Fritz Sternberg’s book *The Coming Crisis*,<sup>265</sup> polls and ranking lists of *Fortune*, comments from *PM*’s Ralph Ingersoll’s and *Commentary*’s Dorothy Thompson, and statistical reports from the international magazine *United Nations World*. In most cases, Miłosz synthesizes and compiles analyses and evaluations from many sources which he does not disclose, so the problem of authorship could be signaled here. On the one hand, it all seems obvious: Miłosz called the work into being, devised it and executed it. On the other hand, he constantly used such statements as: “the American press has revealed,” “as the press claims,” “the American press devotes a good deal of space,” “the majority of the press says,” “it is said,” “from the local press you may find out” etc., stressing that his role is a secondary one. He justifies it in issue 7 of *Odrodzenie*:

European journalists coming to the United States are unanimous in their agreement that to gain at least some understanding of the country’s intricate economic and political structure, even those who speak fluent English would need one to two years. A short stay usually provides nothing; one’s first impressions are wrong, plus or minus, because the journalist who comes for a short time is at the mercy of his interlocutors, or lack thereof, more or less as an American journalist coming to one of the European countries.<sup>266</sup>

Apart from the desire to conceal his real competences, Miłosz may have had another motivation – potential criticism of some aspects of life in the United States could not be attributed to the author, because in most cases it was a quotation of opinions circulating in American public opinion. This question could be important for Miłosz.

<sup>265</sup> See Sternberg, Fritz: “Prosperity – How Long Will It Last?,” *The Nation* 1947, issue 13, pp. 307–308.

<sup>266</sup> Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA*, *Odrodzenie*, 1947, issue 7, p. 9.

Since he could not avoid being critical or touching on delicate issues, he put himself in the role of someone who quotes, paraphrases and summarizes the opinions of others. From the perspective of his later work, it can be concluded that *Życie w USA* is a *silva rerum* of sorts. In its hybrid genre and style, clear measures are taken to make the forms of subsequent episodes attractive to the reader: anecdotes are used, along with quotations, satirical descriptions, tables with statistical information, quantitative comparisons, a quasi-letter, and a text *in memoriam*. The author builds a plane of understanding based on conversational phrases and humorous punch lines. In view of its choice of subjects, their arrangement in threads, and their style, the series should be recognized as part of Miłosz's work, which does not invalidate the questions about the degree to which he identified with the views he reported.

Letters from Kuryluk and the comments on them in *Zaraz po wojnie* indicate that the interested parties had agreed on the issue of discussing politics. Already in 1947, the poet clearly separated matters of politics and culture. If in the letter attached to the translations of *Negro spirituals* he concludes perhaps not entirely convincingly, "I believe that the culture of a nation should not be mixed up with politics. If it were, the Russians, for example, would not have published the entire work of Whitman or Hemingway in their country."<sup>267</sup> In another letter, he encourages the editor, "Do not worry too much about the political situation and keep your cool in writing, if I may advise you. Spreading panic and propaganda against both sides is a disservice to humanity."<sup>268</sup> The editor did not put any pressure on the poet – he asked for articles about American literature and culture. At any rate, there was no occasion for this – Miłosz complains almost in every letter about problems with contacting Kuryluk, the sluggishness of the postal service, and he expresses impatience over not receiving any confirmation that his correspondence had reached the addressee.<sup>269</sup>

Another issue is the possibility that changes were made in the series. In the second half of the 1940s, the Central Censorship Office for the Press, Publications, and Performances [Główny Urząd Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji i Widowisk] subordinated all areas of public life to itself, acting according to the tried and tested Soviet models:

In addition to controlling texts at many stages, the Office also supervised the administrative side of the operation of printing houses. Registration of machines, printing devices, and published works, unification of the register of orders, full decision-making regarding press concessions – all these activities were the domain of the growing institution.

The work of censorship (...) was divided into four stages: initial, factual, subsequent, and secondary control. Licensed periodicals were exempt from the first phase. The second stage,

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<sup>267</sup> Letter of Czesław Miłosz to Karol Kuryluk, not dated, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>268</sup> Letter of Czesław Miłosz to Karol Kuryluk of 25 November 1947, *op. cit.*, 10.

<sup>269</sup> Letter of Czesław Miłosz to Karol Kuryluk of October 27 1947, *op. cit.*, p. 9. In the *Desiderata of the Cultural Attaché* Miłosz intervened about the functioning of the postal service which adversely affected cooperation between publishers and institutions of science.

finalized with a permission for printing, concerned all copies checked with the entire circulation to be distributed. During the secondary control, it was the work of the censors themselves that was under scrutiny, subject to ideological assessment, and instructional conclusions were formulated for the future.<sup>270</sup>

Kuryluk's magazine was subject to the same procedures. Nevertheless, *Odrodzenie* was not an agitational magazine. Researchers of varying attitudes to the Polish People's Republic stress the moderation and restraint that the editorial board was able to maintain in political matters. This was probably why Miłosz sent his correspondence to the magazine. As he recalls:

The postwar Kuryluk did not enjoy a good opinion among hardcore Communists, as can be seen from the way he was mentioned in Putrament's letters. It was thought that he was not sufficiently combative, too cultured. As an editor, he tried to be self-reliant and independent in his judgments. The Krakow times of *Odrodzenie* were prosperous for him. He found valued collaborators and allies there, including Kazimierz Wyka.<sup>271</sup> The transfer of the editorial office to Warsaw in 1947 meant daily interference from Borejsza, which finally led to clashes with him, when Kuryluk did not surrender, and resigned (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 569–570).

The poet took great care about the form of the publication – he gave detailed instructions on the font, number of columns, neighborhood of other texts, and placement of the photographs. Also in correspondence with Kuryluk, he gives similar directions, especially in relation to his poems and translations. The letter attached to the article on the conference at Bread Loaf shows that Miłosz sent photographs to *Odrodzenie*, which he wanted to illustrate his essays – they were portraits of John Steinbeck and William Faulkner. He tried to avoid exerting any propaganda influence by printing his texts alongside other articles. In the correspondence, one also finds a request to delete from the essay a passage which after some time the author deemed unnecessary. It is clear that he was aware of the interference of censorship in his texts – in a letter of December 1, 1947, he draws attention to the exaggerated reworking of an article by his associate from Harvard into the Polish Galician dialect. So protective was the poet of his independence that when *Odrodzenie* was moved to Warsaw, and Jerzy Borejsza<sup>272</sup> became its editor-in-chief, in his letter to Ryszard Matuszewski he presents an ultimatum concerning one of his essays: “Miłosz asks that it either be printed intact, or to not printed at all, if the former proves impossible, and he will

<sup>270</sup> Gajda, Krzysztof: *Cenzura*. [Censorship]. In *Słownik realizmu socjalistycznego* [Dictionary of Socialist Realism], *op. cit.*, pp. 32–33.

<sup>271</sup> Kazimierz Wyka (1910–1975) a distinguished literary historian, literary critic and professor at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow.

<sup>272</sup> Jerzy Borejsza (1905–1952) born Benjamin Goldberg, writer and communist propagandist; founder of publishing house Czytelnik, one of the largest and most influential presses in communist Poland.

not be too distressed if, for censorship reasons, the article cannot be published in *Odrodzenie*" (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 404).

It would be best to reconstruct the sources based on which Miłosz formulated his judgments about America and to examine the very process of the formation – in the intellectual and literary sense – of this vision. The diplomat read many periodicals on a daily basis and could compile his opinions based on various sources.<sup>273</sup> He did not need to read all the papers. It can be assumed that he used the press reports that were distributed at the embassy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the Polish Research and Information Service, a special unit established for this very purpose. According to diplomatic correspondence, there were not enough officials in Washington to analyze the press. It seems that the poet understood well the rules of the new reality and did not put himself or Kuryluk in danger by expressing opinions that might be too unsettling in the eyes of the censors.

Miłosz repeatedly praised the diversity and overall level of American journalism. What is most easily reconstructed in the series is the corpus of the most frequently quoted magazines. In several cases, one can identify the source from which he drew his information and arguments: this applies to the sections devoted entirely to books by Fritz Sternberg and David Davidson, the review of the film *The Best Years of Our Lives*, the arms race, and the employment of German scholars, and when the author refers to personal experiences: traveling to Vermont and Virginia, reading H. G. Wells, or the lecture by Thomas Mann. Reviews of political information are most often a synthesis of articles from *The New Republic* and *The Nation*. He does occasionally happen to express thoughts suggesting that he read *politics* and *Partisan Review* – they are mostly generalizations and questions about the possibility of building a new transatlantic civilization.

A matter of utmost importance was selecting the press material for his reports and for the needs of the series. As mentioned, wanting to remain incognito, the correspondent selected his sources for *Odrodzenie* in such a way that they did not coincide with the sources used in his official analyses. In the latter, he readily used *The New York Times*, *New York Herald Tribune*, and *Saturday Review* entirely omitted in the series, which in turn referred to titles that were almost unused in the reports.

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**273** The following newspapers were at the disposal of the employees of the Attaché's Office: *The New York Times*, *New York Herald Tribune*, *New York Post*, *Daily Worker*, *The Washington Post*, *The Times Herald*, *Washington Daily News*, *Evening Star*, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, *St. Louis Dispatch*, *Gazette and Daily*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Baltimore Sun*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Times of London*, *Nowy Świat*, and *Dziennik dla Wszystkich*. In addition, the following magazines were available: *Time*, *The New Yorker*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Harper's*, *United Nations World*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy Reports*, *Foreign Policy Bulletin*, *American Perspective*, *World News Letter*, *Report on World Affairs*, *In Fact*, *Marshall Plan Letters*, and *Głos Ludowy*.

This game, played with his superiors in Poland, was not, as one may imagine, viable in the long run...

One of the titles he mentions most frequently is *The New Republic* – Miłosz describes it as “democratic”<sup>274</sup> and uses it, which is otherwise rare, both as a diplomat, and as a journalist. Its editor from December 1946 was Henry A. Wallace, a leading politician of the progressive faction of the Democratic Party – precisely when the publication of the series was begun. Despite his initial sympathy for the revolution in Russia, skeptical attitudes towards the USSR deepened during the Cold War in the magazine’s editorial office. Wallace, dismissed by President Truman as secretary of commerce, used his position in the paper to attack the administration’s foreign policy. He considered the announcement of the so-called Truman Doctrine as the beginning of the century of fear. Negative assessments of Soviet communism in *The New Republic* appeared only after Wallace’s departure in 1948. His resignation was dictated by his decision to run for office in the presidential election on behalf of the Progressive Party. *Życie w USA* contains many traces of *The New Republic*, from interest in the formation of the Progressive Party and the situation of trade unions to the evaluation of the policy of the Truman administration.

Another paper that Miłosz referred to was *P.M.* – in the reports he calls it a leftist magazine. This New York daily featured texts by journalists with radical views, including members of the Communist Party (CPUSA), which led to it being accused of propagating communism, especially since the paper openly argued with the official left-wing *Daily Worker*. *P.M.* was distinguished by a relatively large number of photographs, satirical drawings and cartoons for a newspaper at the time. The correspondent describes political cartoons – their source may have been *P.M.* or *The New Republic*. Miłosz also shared with the readers his reading of *Foreign Affairs*. Its leading journalist in the 1940s was Dorothy Thompson, whose name he mentioned when discussing the election reports in Poland. This magazine played an important role in the first years of the Cold War, especially after the publication of George Kennan’s “Long Telegram.”

The correspondent made occasional references to *The Nation*, which in the 1940s was more left-leaning than *The New Republic*, and also to *Fortune*. He read the sensationalist tabloid *Daily Mirror*, and at the same time also *The Christian Science Monitor*. Sometimes he reached for *United Nations World*, *Science and Society*, *Saturday Review of Literature*, *New Foundations*, *Political Affairs* and *Mainstream and Masses*. In his memoirs, Miłosz returns to his familiarity with the circle of *politics*. From reports we know that he also met journalists of *The New York Times*, as well as Gertrude Samuels of the *New York Times Magazine*. Such a selection of newspapers, magazines, and acquaintances can be considered consistent – among the magazines read by the poet before the war, one of the most important ones was the leftist monthly

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274 Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA*, *Odrodzenie* 1946, issue 51/52, p. 10.

titled *Miesięcznik Literacki*. The poet's friends, among them Robert Lowell and Randall Jarrell, also read these magazines and published poems and reviews there.

To determine whether any changes related to censorship were made in the series, it would be best to compare the published texts with the manuscripts – many of them, however, are missing or are located in places that are not easy to find. We are dealing here with the problem of a postcolonial archive, i.e. one that is scattered and incomplete, and cannot be reconstructed, ordered or merged. It is also worth pointing out other problems in attempts to reproduce Miłosz's views on the matters he described. One cannot and need not marginalize his comments on American politics just for the reason that the subject of power always fascinated him. It should be stressed once again that there are discrepancies between the statements made by the correspondent, the diplomat, and the convictions of the poet.

Miłosz's special position as the author of the series deserves particular attention. On the one hand, he has the characteristics of an intellectual immigrant from Central Europe. This provides for a very beneficial, but also very risky, cognitive situation – an observer from outside the system often notices in it what its creators fail to see, although he may also create nonexistent connections between the phenomena in it. On the other hand, using the arguments of journalists, politicians and economists, Miłosz presents an internal view on the country's current affairs. As he playfully commented: "It was not American diplomats, but a 'Red,' who disseminated in his correspondence information on intellectual America, otherwise so little known to Europe at the time" (*Native Realm*, 296). Combining both attitudes, he turned them into an attractive way of presenting knowledge to an audience interested both in an emigrant's impressions and in factual knowledge. It might seem that Miłosz's main intention was to fill gaps in the reader's knowledge of American culture and society. He focuses on observable phenomena; he is interested in short-term processes that may be encapsulated in simple models. He assumes that the relationships between facts and phenomena that he describes exist, since others write about them. He does not address political and cultural processes in longer cycles. Calling himself a correspondent, Miłosz tries to be one in the full sense of the word. Not only does he play the role, but also makes it his subject. He points out, for example, the difficulties associated with it. In April 1947, he observes, "The US is a country in constant motion, a month sometimes means more than whole decades in static and unchanging civilizations. This is worth remembering, lest one fall into the traps set by amateurs of generalization, who try to 'define' America with a witty adage."<sup>275</sup> This was meant as a means of endowing the identity of Jan M. Nowak with more credibility, and removing any suspicions as to whether the correspondent and diplomat might be the same person.

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275 Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 10, p. 6.

The title of the series ensures an optimum level of generality, so that it may contain wide-ranging observations. Whose life is described here? An emigrant's, or a country's seen through the prism of individual fates, the situation of ethnic, racial and social groups? The author tries to reconcile the personal perspective here – that of a resident, observer, reader, traveler, viewer, listener, and one who attends cultural events, with the viewpoints taken from authors, journalists, politicians and other interlocutors. This attitude is also connected with his belief in the possibility of a comprehensive and at the same time non-amateurish understanding:

In times when description of countries and civilizations was not demarcated by a multitude of prohibitions resulting from the division of knowledge into separate drawers, authors, usually travelers did not underestimate the time that froze solid in the slope of a roof, in the curve of a plow's handle, in the gesture, and in the proverb. The reporter, the sociologist, and the historian could coexist then in one person, before they all separated, to everyone's detriment (*Native Realm*, 165).

## In the Sphere of Politics and Economics

Shaped as he was by the realities of interwar Poland, Miłosz initially perceives the living conditions and policy of the United States through the prism of those back at home. Much of how he assessed social and economic reality before 1939 is found in his occupation essays. *Życie w USA* owes a great deal to the *Legends of Modernity*, in which he interpreted literature as a commentary to the situation in Europe at the turn of the twentieth century. He treats it as a source of knowledge about the world that is not inferior to academic studies. What connects it to the article series is his desire to find links between the individual and the collective, fluctuations between the private and public, to study the instincts and passions that push the individual and the masses to action. Political, social and economic processes are to him the surface of much deeper processes, an emanation of the *heart of darkness*. If he says about Balzac that he took pleasure in describing insanity, he himself goes from the level of current news to considerations about the demon shaping history.<sup>276</sup> On the other hand, his thinking has much in common with the reasoning of intellectuals in Western Europe who – like Emmanuel Mounier – wrote about “white violence” affecting the victims of capitalism.<sup>277</sup>

In the very first installment, Miłosz says: “In America there is a theory of self-regulation of the market, and all deficiencies have been attributed to *artificial* control,

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<sup>276</sup> Numerous mentions of Balzac continue Miłosz's pre-war fascinations, which may have been intensified thanks to the writer's biography published in the United States. See Zweig, Stefan: *Balzac*. Translated by William and Dorothy Rose, Viking Press 1946.

<sup>277</sup> After Judt, Tony: *Postwar*, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

and hence to the remnants of the New Deal. At the moment, all dams have broken, and the industry has free rein (...).<sup>278</sup> This policy model may, in his opinion, lead to economic meltdown. Reports for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also contain skeptical comments about the limitation of competences and the ultimate elimination of the OAS. The memory of the crisis of the 1930s arouses his fear of making the market the only form of economic control. Knowing the model of state management of the economy, Miłosz considers the apparatus of power to be a necessary guardian of balance, hence in his mind an opposition arises between the principles of free market economics and social justice. Every so often, the newcomer from Europe foresees a crisis, a collapse of the market that is going to ruin those countries economically dependent on America:

America's economic moves are closely watched in the UK. Abolition of price control in the US when the rest of the world is starving, killing the U.N.R.R.A. and US opposition to the creation of an International Food Fund have been raising concerns in a large part of the Labour Party. At the same time, the following is being underscored:

(...) 2) That the US is sliding into depression, and linking the economy and politics of Great Britain with the economy and policy of the US may drag Britain into big trouble, because in the United States there are no people who would understand to what dangers the sort of economic policy that the United States has pursued after the first war may lead.

3) That, with the depression and fall in prices in the United States, English imports to the US will be prevented, while the American business will push the English away from foreign markets. These fears, therefore, seem to be more than justified.<sup>279</sup>

The fears, too, correspond with the attitudes of European builders of welfare states, who opposed post-war capitalism using post-war planned economy. As Tony Judt writes:

(...) planning was quite distinctly *not* associated with the discredited politics of the inter-war years, a point widely held in its favour. What planning was really about was faith in the state (...)

There was a great faith in the ability (and not just the duty) of government to solve large-scale problems by mobilizing and directing people and resources to collectively useful ends. Obviously this way of seeing things was particularly attractive to socialists; but the idea that a well-planned economy meant a richer, fairer and better-regulated society was taken up by a very broad constituency, including the Christian Democratic parties then rising to prominence all over Western Europe. The English historian A. J. P. Taylor told BBC listeners in November 1945 that '[n]obody in Europe believes in the American way of life—that is, private enterprise; or,

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<sup>278</sup> Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA*, *Odrodzenie* 1946, issue 51–52, pp. 10–11.

<sup>279</sup> Nowak J. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA*, *Odrodzenie* 1946, issue 51–52, pp. 10–11. The fears Miłosz expressed were related to Britain's attempts to secure a loan in the amount of USD 3.75 billion that were covered by the press. The US Congress granted the loan in 1947 in view of the necessity to protect Greece and Turkey from Soviet influence.



rather, those who believe in it are a defeated party which seems to have no more future than the Jacobites in England after 1688.<sup>280</sup>

In the later installments of the series, Miłosz will combine political and economic forecasts, saying that “only in the analysis of economic phenomena can one look for data to predict the future.”<sup>281</sup> America in the first descriptions takes the form of a consummate player, who will leave even its traditional allies without any help in order to protect its own interests – these fears were shared by the British, who tried to keep US troops in Europe as long as possible. In a similar vein, Miłosz speaks about the United States’s accession to the war. He believes that due to isolationism:

The United States did not enter the League of Nations, thus condemning it in advance to failure, and while Europe bred in itself ominous fascist dictatorships, the United States was indulging in illusions of peace. When Europe was bleeding in the Second World War, the fiercest supporters of leaving a free hand to the Germans emerged from the womb of the Republican party. These people fought against Roosevelt both for the New Deal and for leading the United States to participate in the war. What the results of the Republican victory will be, only time will tell, but it can be concluded that there are two kinds of isolation: open and covert, and that it is a delusion to believe that the demonic power of the United States can be used for purposes other than the most direct defense of its own possessions and interests.<sup>282</sup>

One would be hard-pressed to sound more critical. It shows not only deep Eurocentrism, but also regret about the situation of Poland, which resulted in some Polish-Americans casting their votes for the Republican Party.

Miłosz also educates his readers on the ABC’s of local politics and economy. He proposes a sort of behaviorism: in the center of his analysis are the observable behaviors of groups and individuals. The measure of their importance is the reaction they receive. Thus, the author eagerly reaches for statistics, surveys, and measurable forms of description. The education proceeds quickly: in the first installment, the vocabulary from the handy Marxist dictionary is dominant, but later Miłosz tends to make use of American concepts.<sup>283</sup> Despite numerous reservations, he declares his sympathy for the Democrats for their attitude toward participation in the war and their relations with the left:

The Democratic Party is also an old party, but its history abounds in splits, mainly boiling down to differences between the Southern and Northern Democrats. These splits had already become apparent during the Civil War, and the present moment has given them a new political focus. To

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**280** Judt, Tony: *Postwar*, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

**281** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 8, p. 3.

**282** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie* 1946, issue 51–52, p. 10. Miłosz was familiar with the internal criticism of US isolationism in the realities of the Second World War.

**283** In the reports, Miłosz uses the notions of the “left” and “right,” which he does not do in the article series.

say that the Republican Party is reactionary and the Democratic Party is progressive would be somewhat inaccurate, because in many Southern states there is only one list that traditionally goes to the elections – the Democratic one, and often very conservative-minded candidates are elected from it.<sup>284</sup>

The heterogeneity of the Democratic Party's character was particularly pronounced in the last pre-election campaign. The lack of a convincing leader, such as Roosevelt, led to the formation of two groups: moderate Democrats and radical wings with Wallace, Pepper and the CIO Political Action Committee. As a result, neither the moderate nor the radical voters on whose votes the party could count were convinced, and the danger was that many of them would listlessly stay at home on Election Day. (...)

The Democratic Party enjoyed greatest successes during the New Deal; its contribution was also the participation of the United States in the war.<sup>285</sup>

Miłosz also describes the political environment that does not fit very well to the two-party system. He makes the American left the object of his interest, both as a correspondent and sympathizer. He discusses the activities aimed at establishing the Progressive Party on the foundations of trade unions and the most radical factions of the Democrats.<sup>286</sup> From this account, however, there emerges a superficial image of the leftist world – its true diversification is hard to grasp solely on the basis of very diverse attitudes to Soviet Russia. It would be far more interesting to capture the tensions resulting from the various degrees of internalization and understanding of communism. It is not enough to stress, however, that the correspondent was interested in presenting the atmosphere of American public life, signaling its most distinct phenomena. Neither the character of the series, nor the pace of observation, nor his intentions allowed more serious reflection on the complications of the political scene across the Atlantic.

## Around the Foreign Policy of President Truman

Miłosz's first visit to the US took place during the presidency of Harry S. Truman. His order to drop the atom bomb is commemorated in the funeral poem "Trzy chóry z nienapisanego dramatu *Hiroszima*" [Three Choruses from the Unwritten Drama *Hiroshima*]<sup>287</sup> In 1945, the United States had a monopoly on nuclear weapons, which had not yet changed their relations with the USSR. Truman continued Roosevelt's policy: against Churchill's advice, he ordered the withdrawal of Anglo-American

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**284** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie* 1946, issue 51–52, p. 10.

**285** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie* 1946, issue 51–52, p. 10.

**286** On this, see Westerfield, Holt Bradford: *Foreign Policy and Party Politics: Pearl Harbor to Korea*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955, pp. 311–316.

**287** Miłosz was familiar with John Hersey's book *Hiroshima*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1946, and the discussions around it in *politics*. More on this in Chapter Five.

troops from the zone of Germany previously reserved for the USSR. In June 1945, America recognized the Polish communist government, and in December also the governments of Bulgaria and Romania. It was only toward the Soviet intervention in Iran that Truman's foreign policy became more firm. Its new course became clearer in February 1946, after the visit of Winston Churchill, who, in the Fulton speech,<sup>288</sup> used the term *the iron curtain*,<sup>289</sup> and after Kennan sent his "Long Telegram" from Moscow, warning against a new confrontation.<sup>290</sup> 1946 is the last year when Truman's policy towards the USSR was unsteady. When Miłosz began writing his series, a new strategy was being developed in the American-Soviet relations. In the second installment, he tones down speculations about the possibility of another war breaking out:

American correspondents from Poland report with a great deal of astonishment that a significant number of Poles anticipate the imminent outbreak of war between the United States and Russia. The correspondents attribute this mindset to a lack of information about international politics, and they blame the Polish press for it, which, in their opinion, tends to portray events in world politics in a biased manner and to exaggerate disputes between the great powers.<sup>291</sup>

Despite this, Miłosz deals with the issue of American military policy, anticipating both a revolution in this field and a global arms race.<sup>292</sup> Nowhere, however, does he mention the progress of work on nuclear weapons, nor the USSR's rivalry with the US in this field, which he extensively covers in his diplomatic reports. He only emphasizes how rich the Americans have become, developing the armaments industry during the war. To illustrate America's wealth in 1946, he provides numerical indicators in various industrial sectors – in subsequent episodes, he also eagerly reaches for numbers in his descriptions. Mathematical description is meant to give the readers an idea of how the economic situation dictates political decisions. Anticipating that the United States will invest in armaments, the author reports on work on a "mysterious camera,

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**288** According to his biographer, Truman very deftly used the fact that the criticism in the US of the USSR's policy was voiced not by him, but by Prime Minister Churchill. In David Horowitz's opinion, the tone of Churchill's speech surprised the Kremlin and the Americans alike, and the president was later forced to explain himself before the nation for his alleged unfamiliarity with the main points of the Fulton speech. See Horowitz, David: *The Free World Colossus. A Critique of American Foreign Policy in the Cold War*, Hill&Wang 1965, p. 64.

**289** Miłosz does not use this term in the series. He used it once in the episode that he withdrew upon reflection, and in the article "Książki i pisma w Stanach Zjednoczonych" [Books and Journals in the United States] signed as Żagarysta. In contrast, his reports discuss the significance of the Fulton speech for the changing course of the US foreign policy.

**290** See Judt, Tony: *Postwar*, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

**291** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 1, p. 7.

**292** Miłosz discusses the possibility of the outbreak of World War III in his *Raport sytuacyjny o nastrojach na terenie działalności Konsulatu Generalnego w New Yorku za okres 1 IX – 30 IX 1946* [Situational Report on the Moods in the Area of Operations of the New York Consulate for the Period from Sept. 1 to Sept. 30, 1946]. AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 87, f. 1182.

with which one will soon be able to see from America what is happening on the streets of Warsaw or Shanghai.”<sup>293</sup> Another, more far-sighted statement reads: “In this new period, the greatest value is brought by a weapon that is very delicate, but also most effective: the human brain.”<sup>294</sup> The correspondent reports the headhunting policy aimed at German scientists who, in return for citizenship, saved the United States millions of dollars and years of scientific research. He appreciates the new direction of immigration policy, which was aimed at attracting top researchers.<sup>295</sup>

Miłosz discusses the problems of the US Army in its zone of influence in Germany – for the first time comparing the Americans to the Romans.<sup>296</sup> He uses the report by Senator George Meader,<sup>297</sup> who visited Germany on behalf of the committee examining the national defense program. Although the Democrats tried to keep the report secret, it was leaked to the press and provoked a heated debate, which was important for Truman’s plans regarding defense policy. When, upon demobilization, he created the modern Department of Defense for the unification of the armed forces and advocated universal military service, public opinion demanded “bringing the boys back home.” Thus, the President’s intentions failed – even though Miłosz had full knowledge of this subject, he only cited press reports on the demoralization of the Army in Germany. He discussed the failure of Truman’s plans with regard to mobilization and military service in his reports for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – he said in them that the United States was effective in denazifying its own zone, but it was failing on the part of the Soviet Union because – unlike Soviet functionaries – the Americans do not make use of former Nazis.<sup>298</sup> The diplomat was aware of Stalin’s plans for expansion in Germany and his determination to unite the state under Soviet influence, but this knowledge did not seep into the article.<sup>299</sup> He supported the American policy of economic unification of Germany, which he does not mention there either.

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**293** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 1, p. 7.

**294** *Ibidem*.

**295** Cf. Nagan, Seymour: “Top Secret: Nazis at Work,” *The New Republic* 1947, issue 6, pp. 24–26.

**296** Arnold J. Toynbee shared similar reflections in a series of lectures delivered in the USA in 1960, when he warned about making dangerous analogies between the American and Roman foreign policies. He collected them later in the book *America and the World Revolution*, London–New York: Oxford University Press, 1962.

**297** This is Meader, George: *Confidential Report to the Special Senate Committee Investigating the National Defense Program on the Preliminary Investigation of Military Government in the Occupied Areas of Europe*, November 22, 1946.

**298** The US strategy of denazification is discussed by Judt in *Postwar*, *op. cit.*, pp. 74–75; he also covers many aspects of Soviet cooperation with the Nazis. *Ibidem*, pp. 79–81.

**299** In later years, the press used this issue for propaganda purposes. In *Nowa Kultura* 1950, issue 28, p. 8 a satirical cartoon was published with the caption “The USA, England and France want to coopt German Fascists as the fourth partner of for their aggressive purposes.”

Since 1947, the Truman administration had been working on a strategy for Europe, especially the USSR, called – after Walter Lippmann – a “cold war.”<sup>300</sup> Miłosz emphasizes this phrase:

In America, an opinion that left much to be desired was born, that Russia is a difficult partner and that Roosevelt’s concessions to her have not succeeded. The Republican program, in which there was no room for Wallace-Byrnes-type discrepancies, seemed more consistent. It must be mentioned that the Republicans were happy to accept Wallace’s speech against Byrnes.<sup>301</sup>

Very early on, Miłosz draws attention to Wallace, who first as vice-president and then as Secretary of Commerce failed to notice the danger in the relations between the US and the USSR – the first episode was even accompanied by a photo of the rival of the president in office.<sup>302</sup> He reports on the attitude toward Soviet Russia in the circles of Progressive Citizens of America and the Union for Democratic Action, from which a progressive party could emerge:

The rather friendly attitude toward the Soviet Union of a significant number of progressives [supporters of the New Deal policy and Roosevelt’s line – E. K.], including Wallace, gives their opponents arguments that are forceful, as they appeal to national passions. It should be mentioned that most of the press writes about Russia at least sarcastically, and that most of the books on the Soviet Union present it in unflattering terms, and that the soldiers returning from Europe and the Far East are animated by feelings that are hard to call love for the Soviets, and they become propagators of anti-Russian propaganda. Under these circumstances, accusations of pro-Soviet sympathies and of cooperation with American communists can derail even the most logical of arguments.

(...) the progressives themselves are not a homogeneous group. Among their ranks one may include people with different beliefs, held to varying degrees of extremism. There are two radical wings among them: one extremely pro-Soviet and one emphatically anti-Soviet, while the rest must maneuver, at times siding with one, at times with the other group.<sup>303</sup>

Miłosz draws attention to the career of the main political players once the “containment policy”<sup>304</sup> option had prevailed in Truman’s administration. Both Wallace<sup>305</sup> and

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**300** See Gaddis, John Lewis: *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War 1941–1947*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1972; Miscamble, Wilson D. C.S.C.: *From Roosevelt to Truman. Potsdam, Hiroshima, and the Cold War*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

**301** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie* 1946, issue 51–52, p. 10.

**302** A broader, more nuanced characterization of this figure, taking note of various complications in his activities, can be found in the diplomatic reports. Also very interesting are the poet’s later comments about Wallace, *Inne abecadło* [Further ABC’s], p. 206.

**303** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 5, p. 9.

**304** In Horowitz’s opinion the term “containment” was not the name of the strategy taken up by the Truman administration, but was coined by the press upon Byrnes’s return from Moscow, just before his dismissal as Secretary of State. See *idem: The Free World Colossus, op. cit.*, p. 61.

**305** See Stone, Isidor Frank: “Wallace Won’t Quit – Unless Asked To,” *P.M.* 1946, September 16, p. 3; Donovan, Robert J.: *Conflict and Crisis, op. cit.*, pp. 218–228.

Secretary of State James Francis Byrnes,<sup>306</sup> a supporter of influence in Europe, were dismissed, and the position of the latter was filled by General George C. Marshall. But when the events in Greece and Turkey in the spring of 1947 brought about the fiasco of the policy of “containment,” Miłosz’s correspondence focuses on issues of racism, misconceptions of Poles about America, or the work of Wells.<sup>307</sup> It was not until April that the author returned to reporting on foreign policy, including the principles of “get tough on communists” and “get tough on Russia.”<sup>308</sup> In the President’s speech, which includes an interpretation of his doctrine, he notes the echoes of the Fulton speech. He claims that this firm tone was meant to support Marshall visiting Moscow.<sup>309</sup> He mocks the famous action of removing communists from the government’s ranks:

The government has begun a great hunt for communists, throwing them out of government positions, etc. It is a hunt for a witch who has one bad side in the eyes of an observer. It is possible that some witches are responsible for the fact that the cows are not giving milk, and they might go to a secluded mountain every Saturday, where they are welcomed by a beautiful and gloomy Satan who, having heard all the neighborhood gossip from their mouths, offers them certain pleasures. But how does one distinguish a witch from a non-witch? Only some of them have an imprint of the Devil’s paw on the buttock. What remains is dunking, but one can have some doubts as to its scientific basis. The atmosphere is thick, at times hysterical and not too distant from the atmosphere twenty years ago, when Sacco and Vanzetti, accused of anarchism, were executed. (...) In any case, for now the government has convinced the public that in this area it can even act alone, without the help of the Republicans.

Truman’s turnaround in foreign policy was greeted by Republican politicians with a grimace of rage. They felt robbed. Their program envisaged a policy based on strength; they

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**306** In his reports, Miłosz writes about the rivalry between Byrnes and Wallace. He also takes note of the significance of Byrnes’s speech encouraging tightening the course of US policy toward the USSR. Discussing this issue, he refers to the analyses made by Anne O’Hare McCormick, the *New York Times* foreign correspondent. See *Raport o nastrojach na terenie działalności Konsulatu Generalnego w New Yorku za czas 1 IX – 30 IX 1946 r.* [Report on the Moods in the Area of Operations of the New York Consulate for the Period from Sept. 1 to Sept. 30, 1946] AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 87, f. 1182. On the circumstances of Byrnes’s dismissal, see Westerfield, Holt Bradford: *Foreign Policy and Party Politics*, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

**307** Miłosz begins to cover the developments in the policy of the “cold war” in more detail only in August 1947. The rivalry between the USA and the USSR he calls a conflict of “impermeable and monolithic blocs.” See *Raport o nastrojach na terenie działalności Konsulatu Generalnego w New Yorku za okres 1 VIII – 1 IX 1946.* [Report on the Moods in the Area of Operations of the New York Consulate for the Period from Aug. 1 to Sept. 1, 1946] AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 87, f. 1182.

**308** In the report, Miłosz covers the foreign policy in the Balkans as an element in the strategy of stopping the USSR. He also summarizes here the articles, very relevant in his opinion written by Walter Lippman of the *New York Herald Tribune* and by Anne O’Hare McCormick on the policy of the USA in relation to Europe and the USSR. See *Raport o nastrojach na terenie działalności Konsulatu Generalnego w New Yorku za okres 1 IX – 30 IX 1946r.* [Report on the Moods in the Area of Operations of the New York Consulate for the Period from Sept. 1 to Sept. 30, 1946] AMSZ, c. 21, b. 87, f. 1182.

**309** Cf. Westerfield, Holt Bradford: *Foreign Policy and Party Politics*, *op. cit.*, pp. 220–223.

considered it one of the best tricks of election propaganda. They ground their ax lovingly, and it suddenly found itself in the hands of someone else.<sup>310</sup>

Miłosz also notes the political significance of Truman's speech regarding Greece and Turkey. When the British ceased helping the Greeks to defeat the communist uprising, and in view of the threat to the sovereignty of the policies of Greece and Turkey on the part of the USSR, the president made the axis of his doctrine support to all "free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."<sup>311</sup> America was expecting that in view of its monopoly on nuclear weapons, the Soviets would undertake expansive activities in Europe to strengthen their influence in the Mediterranean – Greece was thus a test of defense capabilities.<sup>312</sup>

Thus, as Anne O'Hare McCormick commented, by implementing the Truman Doctrine, the Americans were dragged into a new kind of war. In May 1947, the United States Congress passed a law on military and financial assistance for Greece and Turkey. Relying on the press, the correspondent presented a calculation of this policy. He suggested a mismatch between the publicly expressed intentions of aid and the expected profits related to America's involvement in European affairs. To David Horowitz as well, a later critic of the Cold War strategy, American involvement in Greek affairs and the implementation of the Truman doctrine were forms of marginalizing the UN's role in international politics. Similarly, Miłosz assesses the decision of the British as an attempt to protect the shaky empire:

Turkey? Greece? No one in America has any illusions about the Greek government. From the local press you can find out about its exceptional ineptitude and a desperate economy (an interesting fact: at the end of the war, rich Greeks took away capital from their country in the amount of 50 million dollars; no one has illusions about Turkey, which almost found itself on Germany's side. The British Empire, however, is retreating, in a very planned manner, to its new positions: to Africa, which presents unlimited possibilities, to Australia, with its large experimental fields for

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**310** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 19, p. 2. American historians assessed this phase of Truman's presidency with similar skepticism. Cf. Cauter, David: *The Great Fear. The Anti-Communist Purge under Truman and Eisenhower*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979.

**311** On this, see Westerfield, Holt Bradford: *Foreign Policy and Party Politics*, *op. cit.*, pp. 221–224; Donovan, Robert J.: *Conflict and Crisis*, *op. cit.*, pp. 251, 274–278 and 285.

**312** Howard Jones comments on this as follows: "Failure to defend Greece, the White House believed, would demoralize other nations and force them either to accept communism or to buy peace by making concessions to totalitarianism. American strategy entailed not only displaying its military strength in Greece but also proving to other nations that it possessed the will to help. The United States had to demonstrate an endurance capable of convincing democracy's enemies that they could not win. In an article in *The New York Times* entitled "Greece Is a Test of Staying Power" McCormick declared that Greece provided a 'preview of the frontless, almost faceless, war of tomorrow – a war of Trojan horses pointing the way for machine guns. The battle-line is everywhere and nowhere,' for the Kremlin's central directive was 'rule or ruin.'" In *idem: A New Kind of War. America's Global Strategy and the Truman Doctrine in Greece*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 4–5. The attitude of the USSR to Truman's doctrine is analyzed by Judt, Tony: *Postwar*, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

missiles, and someone has to take over the inheritance. A certain journalist, whose nationality your correspondent will not even try to identify (if someone is a French woman born in Odessa, an American citizen and a wife of an Indian from South Africa, this is indeed difficult) said about the English almost crying, “They will set us up.”<sup>313</sup>

This opinion coincides with later assessments made by historians. Howard Jones – aside from the defense of the sovereignty of Greece and Turkey – points to the global goal of Truman’s policy in the Balkans, stemming from the fears of the White House about the possibility of the USSR including Turkey in its defense system, taking control over Greece and then the Middle East, which would allow the Soviets to flank the West in the Mediterranean and secure access to oil in the Middle East.<sup>314</sup>

Miłosz does not cover the Truman Doctrine – in its simplified assessment. Rather than that, he uses *bons mots*, in effect discrediting it.<sup>315</sup> He characterizes the president and his career path:

It is already said that there are two doctrines of US foreign policy: the Monroe Doctrine and the Truman Doctrine, being an extension of the first to the size corresponding to the present strength of the United States. As someone joked, the first doctrine forbade Europeans to interfere in American affairs, the other forbids Europeans to interfere in European affairs. The owner of a men’s clothing store in a provincial town will probably go down in history as his mother dreamed, believing that he would yet become a great man when he sold ties. There is a particular kind of pathos in this, plus the lesson that the spirit of history flows through whoever it wants, and the lesson that playing political poker is usually a game with the Invisible Demon.<sup>316</sup>

This assessment is a synthesis of statements from *The New Republic*, where Truman’s shopkeeper’s past and his origin<sup>317</sup> were readily recalled. Even then, in politics and

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**313** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 19, p. 2. A voice complementing Miłosz’s comments on the civil war in Greece can be heard in the poem “Przypomnienie” [A Reminder]. His criticism resonates with the diagnoses put forward by Horowitz: “Then, in the last days of January 1947, the worst snowstorm since 1894 descended on Britain and paralyzed her. Within four months, it was demonstrated to the world that where once the seat of mighty empire had stood, only a gaping power vacuum remained, so financially ruined as to be incapable of supporting army or navy, the necessary instruments of her will. As a result, India, Burma, Palestine were cast loose from British rule (Palestine to United Nations administration); South Africa, Guatemala, Argentina, Iraq and Egypt challenged the shell of English power in one way or another without suffering reprisal.” In Horowitz, David: *The Free World Colossus*, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

**314** See Jones, Howard: *A New Kind of War*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

**315** On the Truman doctrine, see Macdonald, Dwight “Notes on the Truman Doctrine,” *politics* 1947, issue 3, pp. 85–87; Macdonald, Dwight “USA v. USSR,” *politics* 1948, issue 5, pp. 75–77; Freeland, Richard M.: “The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism.” In *Foreign Policy, Domestic Politics, and Internal Security 1946–1948*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972.

**316** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 19, p. 2.

**317** This is discussed in detail by McCullough, David: *Truman*, New York: Simon&Schuster, 1992, pp. 145–151.



history, Miłosz sees mainly the territory of a clash of dark forces. He summarizes this belief in his correspondence published in the 10th issue of *Odrodzenie*:

Political poker is governed by rules independent of the will of the players. The rules work together along with coincidence, so important in America. In a word, something like statistical probability, based on a series of cases. There is, however, someone who shuffles the cards invisibly. The outline of his face, which sometimes appears, we call the (*post factum*) the necessity of historical processes.<sup>318</sup>

For counterbalance, Miłosz does not conceal his growing recognition of the tactics adopted by Truman, who in his presidential campaign in the space of several months managed to improve his poll ratings, mainly due to the co-opting of some of his opponents' program, and thanks to skillful cooperation with the opposition in Congress.<sup>319</sup> He calls the former tie merchant "a man of a strong hands; a bold, determined, great man of a country intoxicated with its new power."<sup>320</sup> Based on the example of cooperation between the Democratic and the Republican caucuses in Congress, he describes patterns of interaction between the powers in the United States. However, he does not make in-depth comments. He sums this up more interestingly in his letters:

Making divisions according to European models completely fails and every writer should take this into account, because they can be in for a nasty surprise. Folk traditions are incomparably stronger in America than in Europe, which has gone through centuries of feudalism. In Europe, the source of every symptom of the continuity of this tradition tends to be attributed to very specific political views of the authors, which in most cases is an error. There is the tradition of Lincoln, of Roosevelt, the Wallace movement, but let us realize that they cannot be translated into the language of Europe. Incidentally, this is also the source of America's misunderstanding of Europe and the inability of Americans to think in terms of the differences clearly outlined in Europe (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 499–500).

Although Miłosz presents Congress as a territory of constantly heated disputes, a place where deals are made, and games are played, his knowledge of how people model the apparatus of power seems limited, hence the impression that he describes government institutions from the inside. We see not so much the political scene in the process of its formation, but detached scenes of a performance in which the actors appear on stage, fight out their battles and disappear. We can observe the external

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**318** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 10, p. 6.

**319** In one of the reports, Miłosz gives an account of the forecasts of *The New York Times* concerning the primary elections, foretelling a defeat of the liberals suspected of communist sympathies, as well as conservatives and isolationists. See *Raport sytuacyjny o nastrojach na terenie działalności Konsulatu w Nowym Jorku za okres 1 VI – 15 VII 1946 r.* [Situational Report on the Moods in the Area of Operations of the Consulate New York for the Period from June 1 to July 15, 1946] AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 87, f. 1182.

**320** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 19, p. 2.

features of American democracy, while its formation remains a secret process. This sort of reductionism was necessary because of the size of each installment, and understandable if one remembers the aims of the series.

Miłosz omits the plan of economic aid for Europe<sup>321</sup> announced by Secretary of State George C. Marshall in June 1947.<sup>322</sup> He does not mention its benefits for Europe. The series also contains no mention of Kennan's famous article "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" (1947) published in *Foreign Affairs* nor the polemics with him published in the well-known article series by Lippmann titled "The Cold War" from 1947 – the text by Kennan, elaborating on the report of his stay in the Soviet Union, became the basis of Truman's policy towards the USSR. If Miłosz mentions General Marshall at all in the series, it is only in the context of his mission in China. Citing press reports, although without providing any titles or names, he comments as follows:

By appointing Marshall as secretary of state, President Truman has strengthened his own position. First of all, he is a very popular person in the United States and enjoys the sympathy of all camps. Secondly, Marshall, whose mission in China was to be planned in advance as a prelude to entrusting him with a higher position (it is emphasized that he was unsuccessful through no fault of his own) refers to Truman with special respect, which was not always possible to say about Byrnes who (as is rumored) often did not deign to inform Truman about his moves. There is also a rumor that Byrnes's resignation in a strange way coincides with the moment of London cooling its relations with the United States, and with attempts at a rapprochement with Moscow.

Marshall's first moves seem to foretell a certain discrepancy between his intentions and the Republicans' intentions. The decision to withdraw American troops from China was not welcomed with enthusiasm by the Republicans, and friction between Marshall and Vandenberg can be predicted, as the anti-Republican press supposes.<sup>323</sup>

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**321** See the series of reports "Let's Face It, Mr. Marshall," *The New Republic* 1947, issue 6, pp. 16–19; Walton, William: "Men Around Marshall," *The New Republic* 1947, issue 12, pp. 15–19; "Marshall Co-Authors Truman Doctrine," *P.M.* 1947, April 22, p. 1; "Most of Eastern Europe Favoring Marshall Plan," *P.M.* 1947, June, 26, p. 6; Kuh, Federick: "Save Europe Meet Opens To Decide: 1 World or 2?," *P.M.* 1947, June, 26, p. 6; Moler, Murray: "Marshall: Aid Europe or Lose It To Russia," *P.M.* 1947, July, 13, p. 3. The Polish press wrote about it in a critical tone. See Kruczkowski, Andrzej: "Plan Marshalla w dawnych latach" [The Marshall Plan in the Old Days], *Kuźnica* 1947, issue 45, pp. 8–9 and issue 46, p. 4.

**322** Representatives of the Polish emigration at meetings attended by diplomats clashed most often over the reasons for Poland's refusal to participate in the Marshall plan. See *Raporty propagandowe [Sprawozdania (półroczne) z działalności informacyjnej i kulturalnej na terenie Stanów Zjednoczonych za I i II-gie półrocze 1950r. – Korespondencja]* [Opracowała Ambasada R.P. w Waszyngtonie] 1950–1951 [[Propaganda Reports [(Semi-annual) Reports of the on the Informational and Cultural Activities in the United States for the first and second half of the year 1950] [Prepared by the Polish Embassy in Washington]. AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 87, f. 1175. On the perturbations related to the development and implementation of the Marshall plan, see Westerfield, Holt Bradford: *Foreign Policy and Party Politics*, *op. cit.*, pp. 274–296; Judt, Tony: *Postwar*, *op. cit.*, p. 115–126.

**323** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 9, p. 4. The relevance of Miłosz's remarks is confirmed by Donovan, Robert J.: *Conflict and Crisis*, *op. cit.*, pp. 150–151.

In addition to the mention of Marshall's mission, Miłosz shows in a cursory manner – in comparison with the reports – Truman's policy in Southeast Asia after the defeat of Japan.<sup>324</sup> The United States took a stand early in the conflict between the Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek and the Communists led by Mao Zedong. The president prolonged helping the government and tried to prevent the resumption of the Chinese Civil War.<sup>325</sup> The correspondent reports on the relationship of, as he puts it, “progressive circles” to this policy:

American intellectual circles do not count themselves among Chiang-Kai-shek's friends. Books on China talk about him mostly critically, more favorably assessing his enemies, the Chinese Communists. Recently, the Chinese Interior Ministry in Shanghai banned the sale of the book *Thunder out of China* by two authors – Theodore H. White and Annalee Jacoby.<sup>326</sup>

In China, also the educated spheres (according to the European or American system) sympathize with the Communists openly or secretly, because a right-wing dictatorship seems hopeless to them. Your correspondent has had the opportunity to talk with a young Chinese journalist who spent the war under the Japanese occupation: “Chiang-Kai-shek was a legend for us. We lived his name and we cried with joy as his troops approached. However, when we tasted the wild banditry of his army and the corruption of its officials, flags, lanterns and tears of elation gave way to depression.” She did not say much, but I could deduce that the heart of this journalist, working for the Kuomintang dailies, was on the other side.

Reportedly, the situation in the territory under Communist rule (currently 140 million people) is also far from delightful, but educated Chinese see there some central idea, which Chiang Kai-shek lacks – something that is also shown well in his book.<sup>327</sup>

American historians wrote later of corruption, demoralization and desertions in the army of the Nationalist government. In the events in Asia, Miłosz sees laws similar to those acting in Europe: “We live in the period of dismantling of wartime legends and the Chinese are not alone in having to take recourse in their critical mind, against their habits.”<sup>328</sup> However, he hedges against the suspicion of propagandizing:

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**324** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 10, p. 6.

**325** On this, see Fairbank, John King, Goldman, Merle: *China. A New History. Second Enlarged Edition*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006, pp. 329–330; Cohen, Warren I.: *America's Response to China. A History of Sino-American Relations*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

**326** A review of this book penned by Lawrence R. Rosinger was published in *The New Republic* 1946, issue 20, pp. 666–667, while Agnes Smedley – *The Nation* 1946, issue 22, no page number.

**327** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 10, p. 6. In the report Miłosz formulates a not too distant position – he says that Americans are hoping for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. It is also close to the address of General Evans F. Carlson, who demanded a withdrawal of US troops from China, since the society supported the Communists. See *Raport sytuacyjny o nastrojach na terenie działalności Konsulatu w Nowym Jorku za okres 1 VIII – 1 IX 1946 r.* [Situational Report on the Moods in the Area of Operations of the New York Consulate for the Period from Aug. 1 to Sept. 1, 1946] AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 87, f. 1182.

**328** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 10, p. 6.

If I were to be accused of being biased when speaking about China, I must note that I am simply repeating the sounds of the Chinese cause, as one can hear them in America, and refrain from commenting on supplying Chiang Kai-shek with weapons, and from describing American business in Shanghai.<sup>329</sup>

The correspondent does not trust the assurances of the United States that it is involved in China solely for the cause of liberty. Under the guise of ridding China of the Communists, he sees concern for their own zone of political and economic influence (i.e. limiting the USSR's influence in Southeast Asia under the Roosevelt-Stalin agreements) as well as economic influence (his report for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs mentions the sale of surplus military equipment to China for the sum of 175 million dollars).<sup>330</sup>

President Truman's foreign policy is referenced only selectively in the series.<sup>331</sup> More specifically, Miłosz discusses the president's internal policy, his cooperation with Congress, legislation and the election campaign. A recurring subject is the activity of trade unions and labor strikes and their importance for the economic policy.

## Around the Internal Policy of the Truman Administration

Truman entered the Oval Office under the difficult conditions of shifting the economy to functioning in the realities of peace. In his 1945 program, he presented a project to introduce benefits for workers and farmers, to expand the welfare state and establish a permanent commission for workers' affairs. Before proceeding with its implementation, he had to deal with a wave of labor strikes and a boycott of price controls. Miłosz outlines the context of these events in order to report on the president's further decisions:

The administration, in the hands of Democrats, tried with great difficulty to carry out a program of returning (reconversion) of the economy to peacetime conditions, maintaining price controls through the Office of Price Administration (OPA). It had to fight the ever-growing pressure from industry, which – despising all forms of control – tried to oppose it by fair means or foul. Industry had a powerful weapon: not providing the goods that were under control to the market. A paradoxical situation arose, where a country of abundance ran out of clothes, butter, sugar and meat in the stores. Several months before the election, meat disappeared completely from the market and appeared only when Truman had to eat crow and cancel the control of meat prices. When there were no goods in the stores, the public blamed not the producers, but the Democratic administration. (...)

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**329** *Ibidem*.

**330** See *Raport sytuacyjny o nastrojach na terenie działalności Konsulatu w New Yorku za okres 1 VIII – 1 IX 1946 r.* [Situational Report on the Moods in the Area of Operations of the New York Consulate for the Period from Aug. 1 to Sept. 1, 1946] AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 87, f. 1182.

**331** On this, see *The Truman Presidency*. Edited by Michael J. Lacey, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Cambridge University Press, 1989.

So strong was the pressure from industry that the OPA was similar to a player trying to bounce a dozen balls at once. Since the end of the war, the price curve has continued to rise. In this way, industry tried to prevent the loss of its income resulting from a significant increase in workers' wages during the war, and it reduced the real value of employee wages. The consequence of this was the struggle of workers' unions to maintain the workers' standard of living, as well as a wave of strikes, which were generally successful. Workers increased their earnings, but industry did not give up and prices rose. The public blamed the administration for the strikes, and it became a scapegoat.<sup>332</sup>

This is a synthesis of events from before the beginning of the series. In February 1946, after demobilization,<sup>333</sup> Truman signed a new law, fearing a crisis, to maximize employment and production, and to try to link prices with earnings. It caused dissatisfaction, mainly among businessmen, protests in the form of shortages in supply and stoppages at work, followed by mass strikes. In July 1946, there was an increase in prices and wages and a relaxation of economic control.

Truman vetoed the law extending price controls and withdrew from economic interventionism. In October 1946, before the congressional elections, he also abolished control over the distribution of meat. The victory of the Republicans, as a result of which the president was forced to cooperate with the opposition Congress, was considered an opportunity to withdraw from state control of the economy and move to the model of free market capitalism. Although initially regarded as a proponent of liberalism and a proponent of the New Deal in the field of economics and social policy, Truman used the slogan "Fair Deal" to emphasize the need to protect the weakest. When Miłosz arrived in the United States, he witnessed both the release of the economy from the influence of the state and the reactions to this process.

Truman announced favorable tax reform for the public, increased spending on housing and prevention of price increases. The correspondent scrupulously notes moves to stabilize the relationship between the cost of living and the earnings of the lowest-paid Americans. He quotes a fragment of his own statement: "If prices and wages do not find themselves in the right proportion, and quickly enough, there is a danger that the customer will stop purchasing, orders for industry will decrease, production will slump and unemployment will be created."<sup>334</sup> He emphasizes that he is carrying out a clever information policy, disseminating in the media proposals for reforms beneficial for the majority of society that the opposition would like to reject. He praises the negotiating abilities of the president, who does not buckle under the pressure of Congress or entrepreneurs. He speaks with admiration about the "Fair Deal" policy, whereby Truman wanted to:

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332 Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie* 1946, issue 51–52, p. 10.

333 See Donovan, Robert J.: *Conflict and Crisis*, op. cit., p. 128 and 136.

334 Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 9, p. 4.

1) lower the prices; 2) increase the purchasing power of the labor masses by improving social security, health services, cheap housing, combat racial discrimination, etc.; 3) regarding anti-strike legislation that the Republicans are preparing, he declared that he would only agree to issue a law against the most drastic categories of strikes (the so-called “jurisdictional strikes”).<sup>335</sup>

Miłosz particularly appreciates the success achieved in housing: prevention of rent increases and maintaining rents at a relatively low level, which permitted migration to cities and resulted in increased employment. In spite of the Truman administration’s efforts to maintain a balance between the costs of living and wages, in the absence of state price controls, in early spring of 1947 economists noted a price increase, which caused public concern and social dissatisfaction.

Looking at the political scene, the author treats it as an experimental field, which can be studied using tools almost like those from a naturalist’s toolkit. Discussing the strikes, the results of voting, and the activities of various pressure groups, he wonders how a given stimulus affects the functioning of the organism of state administration. This tendency is evident especially in his discussions of the trade union environment – the quickest reactions are the easiest to notice here. Miłosz is particularly interested in the activity of trade unions because of the influence they exert on employers and legislators, the participation of workers in public life and their involvement in trade union activities. Based on observation of the methods by which the unions forced entrepreneurs and politicians to make concessions, and these were above all persistent strikes, he formed a view of democracy, and the degree of empowerment and maturity of the local workers. Aware of the dependence of the pace of European reconstruction on supplies from the United States, he is curious how the games between the unions, the employers and Congress will affect the development of the Old Continent. Already in the first episode of the series, he characterizes the most important trade union organizations: the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). He points out that they are not only involved in the defense of workers’ rights, but take a stand on matters of internal and international policy, mainly towards the Soviet Union.

They proved their strength at the beginning of Truman’s presidency when, after a wave of miners’ strikes initiated by John Lewis, they secured wage increases. Miłosz’s accounts show that the trade union environment was the seedbed of American communism: while the AFL demanded a tightening of the policy towards the USSR, the ranks of the new splinter-group the CIO consisted of no less than twenty percent communists. Although it officially renounced communism, the CIO did support left-wing tendencies among Democrats – Wallace, to whom the poet devoted so much interest, sympathized with these circles.<sup>336</sup> Interestingly – as Judt says – the American trade unions in turn were kind to the European left and:

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335 *Ibidem*.

336 More details and more interesting interpretations of the struggles between the AFL and the CIO

The AFL-CIO, the US intelligence services, and the State Department saw moderate, trade union-based social democratic and labor parties as the best barrier to Communist advance in France and Belgium especially (in Italy, where the political configuration was different, they vested their hopes and the bulk of their funds in Christian Democracy).<sup>337</sup>

The author also describes John L. Lewis, who was the leader of the United Mine Workers of America, a mining association belonging to the American Federation of Labor. He carefully observes the leftist movement with which the trade union movement had close ties. Lewis, despite his Republican beliefs, was initially a close associate of Roosevelt and supported his candidacy in the elections. In the 1940s, he played a negative role, first trying to prevent the United States from joining the war and then encouraging strikes when production intensified due to the rearmament campaign. According to the correspondent, Lewis's call for strike action, along with the improvement of the workers' situation (wage increases, shortening of the workweek while maintaining wages at the same level) in the period before the election, was aimed at settling the scores with his opponents before the new Republican Congress began introducing laws hindering strike actions:

Lewis's goal is to deal with rivals in the workers' movement. The CIO does not like Lewis very much. He was one of the founders of the CIO, which then he left with a bang. Currently, United Mine Workers belong to the American Federation of Labor. Leading this strike, Lewis defends the CIO, which, whether it wants to or not, must support this great workers' strike out of decency. In this way, the leaders of the CIO, constantly accusing the American Federation of Labor of procrastination, are outbid. It must be added that the CIO and AFL are not humble, little associations. They unite millions of members and their influence on American life is not less than that of the influence of industry barons.<sup>338</sup>

In the wake of price increases and trade union claims in the spring of 1947, a wave of anti-union protests swept through the country, and the Republicans began working on a new law on trade unions. In the 6th issue of *Odrodzenie*, Miłosz covers the

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can be found in the reports. Miłosz writes about the speech delivered by William Green, president of the AFL, containing warnings about communists. This resulted in two unions affiliated with the CIO going over to the anti-Russian AFL. He also talks about ostracism faced by sympathizers of socialism in labor union circles. He underscores that labor unions are more absorbed here with defending employee rights than with politics. The only exception in this regard would be the CIO, in which communists tried to play a certain role. Miłosz emphatically states that “[the role of] communists in the US is non-existent,” the communists who do not know the realities of life in the USSR he calls “idyllic communists.” He also notes that in the US fascists are put on a par with communists, and both groups are thought of in terms of a fifth column. See *Raport sytuacyjny o nastrojach na terenie działalności Konsulatu w New Yorku za okres 1 VIII – 1 IX 1946 r.* [Situational Report on the Moods in the Area of Operations of the New York Consulate for the Period from Aug. 1 to Sept. 1, 1946]. AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 87, f. 1182.

<sup>337</sup> Judt, Tony: *Postwar*, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

<sup>338</sup> Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA*, *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 2, p. 10.

discussion on draft laws restricting workers' rights, at the same time noting the very moderate position of the president, who wanted to minimize the restrictions imposed on workers. Truman believed that one of the achievements of the New Deal was implementing the principles of protection of employee rights and he believed that, with the help of existing legal provisions, it was possible to deal with unjustified strikes and overly politicized trade unionists. The most important point of the discussion was the so-called 'closed shop' – the principle that workers in the factory belong to one union and no outside workers can be employed there, while the employees must be remunerated in accordance with the rates agreed with the union. This idea met with the resistance of employers and subsequent states introduced their own laws prohibiting the use of 'closed shops' – Miłosz raises this issue in the 10th issue of *Odrodzenie*. Congress decided to tighten this law and extend it to the entire country. As we read in Miłosz, the Lewis-led strike as a result of the firm stance of the president ended in a loss, the imposition of a high fine on the union and the personal failure of the leader of the United Mine Workers.<sup>339</sup> The correspondent repeats the opinion that after the fiasco of the miners' strike, "the Republicans have one more advantage in their attacks on the world of labor and, as presented in a certain caricature, Lewis's coal is giving momentum to the Republican locomotive."<sup>340</sup>

In June 1947, despite the President's veto,<sup>341</sup> the Republicans voted for the law remembered as the Taft-Hartley Labor Management Relations Act, commonly called the 'slave-labor bill.' It regulated the conduct of employers during a strike, banned the practice of 'closed shops,' introduced control over trade union assets, forbade unions from participating in political campaigns and financing them, created a requirement for union leaders to document that they were not communists, and gave the government a periodic right to ban strikes (for up to 80 days). Before it was announced, trade unions warned against the global acceptance of this law and the rise of communist sympathies, also in Europe and South America.

These threats did nothing to affect the shape of the Taft-Hartley Act nor the attitude of Congress. Miłosz is critical both of it and of the team of the president's advisors:

No one can guess that the danger approaching the serene rural pastimes and Old Robinson's taverns is coming not from the outside, not from the remnants of the New Deal or communists. This danger is coming from the inside, it has the sleazy smirk of Taft [i.e. the co-author of the act limiting the activities of trade unions – E.K.], Dewey's mustache, fat belly of the senators.

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**339** More on this is written by Donovan, Robert J.: *Conflict and Crisis*, *op. cit.*, pp. 208–218 and 238–242.

**340** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA*, *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 5, p. 9.

**341** In Truman's biographer's assessment, his veto in this matter had only a political dimension and was intended to gain the sympathy of workers. Donovan believes the Taft-Hartley Act to be one of the best laws passed during his presidency, despite the wave of protests that is sparked in the union circles. See Donovan, Robert J.: *Conflict and Crisis*, *op. cit.*, pp. 298–304.



Enter Hoover, the one whose name has been mentioned so far with a curse, and today Hoover is already included among Truman's advisors – Hoover – the one who in times of great crisis assured that “prosperity is just around the corner,” and who used to call the unemployed lazy people who were not willing to work. Just as now, when the prices were released once again they shot up over the past month like a missile. Taft has a simple recipe: “you should eat less.” And those who are already eating less – what are they supposed to do?

How can a resident of a small provincial settlement, to whom Taft is appealing in the name of “good old Americanism,” understand that workers' unions are right in declaring Taft to be enemy number one?<sup>342</sup>

Commenting on the strikes, Miłosz unintentionally becomes part of the national trend of criticizing American capitalism. Paradoxically, however, he gives testimony to democracy in which strikes and the activities of free labor unions were simply possible. Whenever the journalist touches on the affairs of farmers and laborers, his leftist ethos becomes visible:

I wish well to the people with whom I sat at a table in this remote corner of America: the worker from Brooklyn named Jack Wróbel who, as a sailor, took part in the invasion of Anzio and whose wife we chose as “the queen of oaks” at some picnic. The shopkeeper from Brooklyn whose ancestors lived in Sicily. The pair of funny, witty underground railway drivers from Boston with their wives. Old Mr. Henry, who never left his hometown and the surrounding area. The employee of a great New York store and her brother, who came back from the war a bit stricken. I wish them well and I see the dangers threatening them. Nowhere else have I realized so clearly how powerful is the inertia of a quiet province, over which politicians pursue their deals, leaving an illusion, but only an illusion, of their impact on the course of events.<sup>343</sup>

The member of intelligentsia of Wilno quickly finds out that the American worker sometimes speaks quite loudly about his affairs. His claims result from a sense of purchasing power, which has no relation to the aspirations of a Polish worker. Since the rate of economic growth depends on the level of consumption, the mass of buyers should be handled with skill. The correspondent draws attention to this already in February 1947, when the president tried to implement the provisions of the Fair Deal at the lowest possible social cost:

Presenting a budget of \$ 37,300,000,000, which introduces significant reductions in spending (with the exception of military spending and funds for veterans), Truman was in favor of maintaining taxes at the current level. As you know, he is an advocate of lowering taxes for those who have low incomes. In this way, the purchasing power of the wide masses would increase, which would be an important factor between supply and demand. (...)

Truman appealed to industry to maintain, or rather lower prices, and to workers for moderation in their demands for wage increases. The current state of the American economy is excellent. National production, amounting in 1946 to the sum of 205 billion dollars, is 50

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342 Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 46, p. 4.

343 Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 46, p. 4.

percent higher than pre-war records, and the rate of employment is at a maximum. The point is maintaining this situation. In 1946, due to the price increases, the purchasing power of the workers' masses decreased significantly. The most logical route, recommended by labor unions, would be to increase earnings and control the prices of industrial products.<sup>344</sup>

The condition of the economy becomes a key issue the closer a presidential campaign approaches. Miłosz notes that it begins long before the actual campaign of winning votes and that the main topic of discussion is the manner in which the candidate intends to maintain the rate of economic growth and secure the financial interests of citizens. In the spring of 1947, he estimates that support for the Republicans is diminishing precisely because the public blames Congress for the sudden increase in the prices. The correspondent is involved in the observation of measures aimed at winning over voters. In April 1947, he comments:

President Truman is similar to a tightrope walker on a slippery rope. He wants to please this and that one. He forgot that he would fight overly restrictive anti-strike laws, but he is flirting with the other side as well, making concessions to manufacturers. He now has no weapon to fight the danger of depression. Several days ago he appealed to big industry for a voluntary reduction in prices, warning that if this does not happen, the demands of the workers' unions will need to be accepted. He also announced that in the event of an agreement between large enterprises to reduce the prices by themselves, the anti-trust law prohibiting similar agreements regarding imposing prices to the free market would not be applied.<sup>345</sup>

Direct quotations of the president's statements were possible because the president used the media, including the newly-developing television, to communicate with the public. Historians have drawn attention to his ability to shape public opinion, which gave him an advantage over the opposition and rivals in the election campaign, and that he strengthened in America the tradition of the president communicating with the nation. The correspondent mentions that the head of state was shown in newsreels before film screenings.<sup>346</sup> As Truman was able to make statements which preempted his opponents' moves, in the spring of 1947 his ratings were higher than those of his rivals.

Miłosz does not take up various US domestic policy issues related to the aspirations to equality of various racial, ethnic and social groups.<sup>347</sup> He abandons

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**344** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 9, p. 4. Cf.

**345** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 19, p. 2.

**346** See Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 30, p. 5. In the report, Miłosz discusses reactions of the public to propaganda newsreels shown before film screenings – this would imply that the highest popularity at the time was enjoyed by the military and James Francis Byrnes, while the president's approval ratings were lower than those of Winston Churchill. See *Raport sytuacyjny o nastrojach na terenie działalności Konsulatu w Nowym Jorku za okres 1 IX – 30 IX 1946 r.* [Situational Report on the Moods in the Area of Operations of the New York Consulate for the Period from Sept. 1 to Sept. 30, 1946] AMSZ, DPI, c. 21, b. 87, f. 1182.

**347** See Borstemann, Thomas: "Jim Crow's Coming Out." In *idem: The Cold War and The Color Line. American Race Relations in the Global Arena*, Harvard University Press, 2001, pp. 45–84.

discussions of politics in favor of other issues after about three months of sending in the episodes. Possibly the reason was his conviction, expressed in the 10th issue of *Odrodzenie* that “predictions in American politics are similar to the *perfect roulette system*,”<sup>348</sup> or perhaps it was due to fatigue. Perhaps he wanted to finally separate the roles of the author of reports and correspondent. Certainly, he shifts his attention to the circle of *politics*, which provides him with a wider horizon of thinking. In the series, Miłosz presents the tip of the political iceberg in America. He seems to rely on other people’s associations of facts and interpretations and assumes an equals sign between what exists and what others have observed. Therefore, after becoming independent (buying a car, more and more frequent trips to Reheboth, Boston, Detroit, Chicago, Vermont, Maine and Virginia), he found it more valuable to share other insights and observations.

## On the Agora of the Media and Publishing

The American agora initially aroused negative reactions in Miłosz. As with many others, the United States reminded him of Rome, with Europe economically and politically dependent, but culturally superior – akin to what Greece was to Rome. He expressed these remarks mostly in his letters and poetry, particularly in “Przypomnienie” [A Reminder].<sup>349</sup> Incidentally, Wittlin wrote in a similar vein at the news of the Nazis bombarding Greece.<sup>350</sup> Sometimes the thought of America as the fourth Rome refers to its policy of expansion. Sometimes, as in this case, the memory of Europe-Greece is the source of a critical, at times paternalistic attitude towards the United States. When anger and bitterness pass, the poet is forced to discover in the tumult of the agora the laws that govern it. Seeing the extent to which they are conditioned by economic factors, over time – though not without opposition – he begins to describe it as a market for an economic exchange of ideas.<sup>351</sup>

In this area, he uses a twofold method: as before, he collects information from the press, uses statistics and figures, but now he adds personal commentary to them

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**348** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 19, p. 2.

**349** It is possible that the source of “Przypomnienie” [A Reminder] may have been Miłosz’s thorough reading of W.H. Auden’s poetry, including his poem “September 1, 1939”. Auden bemoans the fate of Europe, recalling the *History of the Peloponnesian War* by Tucydides, in which Pericles delivers a funeral oration on the eve of the fall of Athenian democracy.

**350** See Wittlin, Józef: “Żałoba po Helladzie” [Mourning for Hellas]. In *idem: Orfeusz w piekle XX wieku* [Orpheus in the Underworld of the Twentieth Century]. Afterword by Jan Zieliński, Krakow, 2000, pp. 144–146.

**351** He was not alone in taking this stance. Mieczysław Wionczek, the New York correspondent at the time wrote “O chorobie dziecięcia pieniądza” [On the Disease of the Child of Money], *Kuźnica* 1948, issue 13–14, p. 10 and 18.

more often. When describing publishing, the book market, media policy, information culture, and the cycles of fashions in popular culture, he feels more at ease, and he spreads his wings more as a correspondent. This is where his tendency to watch society in motion, which he so admired in Balzac, comes into its own.

Here, too, Miłosz separates the roles of the correspondent and the poet, publishing either under his own name or as Żagarysta. In the series, he writes about literature, cinema and new media, but entirely omits theater, music, art or photography. The roles of the correspondent and the diplomat are also separated. The most evident manifestation of this practice is his report from the Polish book exhibition in New York – the attaché reports on its preparation in his diplomatic reports. In the 25th issue of *Odrodzenie* there is no mention of it having been visited by around 20,000 people nor its promotion in the editorial office of *P.M.* He sticks to the role of a visitor who enjoys the popularity of Polish literature in exile.

Miłosz's correspondence on culture takes into account the existence of many ways in which it circulates, touching on issues of popular culture as well. The texts are adapted to the needs of the national intelligentsia. In his literary essays, Miłosz presents analyses of high culture phenomena, while in the series he reveals the commercial mechanisms of middlebrow culture. He sometimes shifts from summary to commentary, as in the case of David Davidson's best-selling book *The Steeper Cliff*<sup>352</sup> or William Wyler's film *The Best Years of Our Lives*.<sup>353</sup> Mostly, he does not stop at mere reporting, but tries to reveal the rules of the cultural market.

He draws attention to the phenomenon of book sales ranking and analyzes the current best seller lists.<sup>354</sup> He notes that the first places are taken by nonfiction books: analyses from the borderlands of political science and sociology (e.g. devoted to Roosevelt's politics), biographies, documentary prose, historical books and guidebooks. In his press recommendations Miłosz makes a selection which illustrates well his interests and beliefs. For example, he devotes an entire episode to Sternberg's book, *The Coming Crisis*,<sup>355</sup> and omits political studies that, unlike it, have withstood the test of time. He does not mention Lippmann, who in his study titled "Cold War" engaged in a polemic with Kennan, and whose journalism in *The New Herald Tribune* Miłosz highly appreciated. He devotes a mere note to the important book *Underground to Palestine* by Isidor F. Stone, about the situation of Jewish refugees who attempted to cross the British blockade trying to get into Palestine. It was written on the basis of articles published in *P.M.*, where Stone was one of the leading journalists. For this series *P.M.* was honored with prestigious awards, while Stone was considered to be

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352 See Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA*, *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 47, p. 3.

353 See Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA*, *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 30, p. 5.

354 Various best seller lists were published by *The New Republic*, *The Nation* and *Partisan Review*.

355 See Sternberg, Fritz: *The Coming Crisis*. Translated by Edward Fitzgerald, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1947.

one of the authorities of investigative journalism – the author of the series does not boast of his acquaintance with this group, although he did write about exchanging contacts with them in his diplomatic reports.

Above all, Miłosz wants to give his readers an idea of how the book market worked in America. The poet is struck by its cosmopolitan diversity. The local bookstore appears to him – like the stock book in *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* – the world in miniature. The wealth of publishing in the USA awakens a pedagogical passion in him – he appeals to expand the Polish book market with foreign publications, not only the latest, which require the acquisition of costly copyrights, but the classics that have not yet had good translations. Among English-language authors he recommends Swift, Dickens, Defoe, Jane Austin, George Eliot and Henry Fielding. He argues that post-war moral changes allow bolder translations of texts that have thus far either been censored, bowdlerized or omitted. He sees the greatest backlog in translations of Shakespeare.

In February 1947, Miłosz devotes the entire installment to the dynamics of the publishing market. He discovers the other, economic side of the world of books: professional marketing, aimed at increasing sales, but also promoting readership. In his descriptions of the cultural machine, he wants to be as useful as possible: he smuggles ideas and suggests proposals to be transplanted to Poland. He covers the principles of operation of the “portable library,” referring to the *Portable Library* series launched during the war by Viking Press. He appreciates the merits of the Penguin Books and the Modern Library series, and emphasizes the importance of subscriptions and book clubs in popularizing readership. The most interesting observation transcends the realities of publishing:

Incidentally, this lack of a center in particular fields is a novelty to foreigners coming [to] the States, with which they cannot get used to it for a long time. The threads do not converge anywhere, or at least you cannot trace them. Searching for the center here is the same as searching for the center of a forest. What would be simpler than, for example, an institution with which foreign booksellers and publishers could communicate? But even this the United States shook off, like a dog coming out of the water: there was apparently something in it of the atmosphere of Roosevelt’s New Deal.<sup>356</sup>

It is not known whether this intuition was Miłosz’s original insight or a remark he heard in the circle of *politics*. As we know, Daniel Bell will develop the issue of the absence of a center in America in much later work, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*.<sup>357</sup> Even though the poet fails to find a center of the book market, he does identify other centers of American reality. As a newcomer from a small country, where

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<sup>356</sup> Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 10, p. 6.

<sup>357</sup> See Bell, Daniel, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, 1978, New York: Basic Books, and “The Coming Tragedy of American Labor,” *politics* 1944, March, pp. 37–42.

artistic life was concentrated in several major cities, he seeks the authorities who set the tone of thinking and action for the lesser circles. Hence his observation of the market as a supposed center of events.

Miłosz quickly realizes that the cultural bond across the Atlantic exists not only in keeping with the center-and-periphery model. By repeating the idea that America is a province, he also has in mind the concepts of regionalism and locality that are defined and valued differently from the way they are seen in Europe. He utters the words about the absence of a center in the context of dissolution of the United States International Book Association (USIBA), whose aim had been to facilitate communication between publishers and exchange books with Europe.

Another installment is an analysis of the media market. Miłosz asks: “What does freedom of the press look like in the United States? This question is asked repeatedly, and usually two answers are given: there is no freedom of the press in the United States; there is absolute freedom of the press.”<sup>358</sup> The basis of his analysis is *A free and responsible press* – a report prepared between 1943 and 1947 by an independent expert committee affiliated at the University of Chicago.<sup>359</sup> The author draws from it the most important information which, fresh as it may have sounded in Poland in the 1940s, from today’s perspective seems to be a testimony to the very typical transformations of the media under the influence of technological progress, concentration of capital, monopolization of the press market and the infosphere. Miłosz treats these phenomena as restrictions on freedom. Predating Marshall McLuhan’s remarks somewhat, he points out that the medium is itself the message.<sup>360</sup> When more and more people choose the radio and television as a source of knowledge instead of the press, the maintenance costs of the latter increase. A remedial measure is consolidation, which leads to the formation of corporations and unification of information. Following the experts, the author lists how many periodicals disappeared between 1909 and the 1940s, without mentioning the circumstances of the Great Depression or wars. He connects their downfall with the monopolization of the market. He also touches on the sources of information themselves:

Only part of the material published in the press is penned by editorial teams. The provincial press receives ready editorials, illustrations, stories, etc. from special press syndicates and agencies. 95% of daily newspapers use the services of one of the three news agencies: International News Service (controlled by Hearst), United Press (controlled by the Scripps-Howards chain), and Associated Press (owned by a group of publishers).

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**358** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 21, p. 5.

**359** This is the edition of the Commission on Freedom of the Press, *A Free and Responsible Press*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1947. An extensive analysis of this report was presented by Reed, William K., Jr.: “Free Press in a Free World,” *The Nation* 1946, issue 23, pp. 684–686.

**360** McLuhan was a reader of *politics* – in the issue of September 1946, p. 279 he took part in a discussion on feminism and coeducation.

Photographs, editorials, and so-called “comics” are sent to the papers by about 170 syndicates competing with one another. The largest (and therefore able to provide the desired material cheapest) are the owned by corporations which possess both a large number of papers as well as the agencies.<sup>361</sup>

Miłosz draws attention to a similar situation with the radio. He is irritated by the interruption of radio and television broadcasts by commercials, and too many paid advertisements in newspapers.

Miłosz neither defines nor poses the problem of the concept of freedom. If he claims that freedom of the press in the United States is threatened, he may refer to a threefold situation: violation of the freedom of work of individual journalists and the autonomy of editorial teams, the use of coercion, such as controlling or regulating the means of obtaining and disseminating information, establishing and running newspapers, radio and television stations, and exerting pressure on the distribution of information: depriving people of their freedom of expression, or access to news from a variety of sources.

Restrictions on freedom of the media are traditionally connected with the operation of the power apparatus, the use of preventive censorship, licensing of the press, etc. There is no mention of such phenomena here. In turn, concentration and commercialization of the media are in turn inevitable processes in the modern economy, and they were easiest to observe in the United States, where the media industry was developing most dynamically. On the other hand, the correspondent does not address the issue of racial segregation, a significant problem of radio and television – in the 1940s, non-white employees had no influence on the choice and form of information, educational and entertainment programs. The supposed recipient of these media was a white American, and this perspective did not arouse reflection in the European at the time. The media are discussed more comprehensively and more interestingly in the article “Książki i pisma w Stanach Zjednoczonych” [Books and Journals in the United States]:

At the outset, let us state that the United States is a land of a huge publishing movement. Let us also state that any analogies with the European continent fail, and that, as in other areas of American life, judging on the basis of a comparison is a path leading to error. Let us try to draw the most cursory map of the phenomena, starting with magazines. For this purpose, would the reader please follow me, for example, to the corner of Broadway and 72nd Street. Here, at the subway station we find are large newsstands, not the largest in New York, merely average in capacity. At the beginning, of course, we will come across enormous piles of newspapers and *The New York Times*, containing as much paper as a book of several hundred pages – a newspaper that is esteemed, and considered by many of its readers, to be the best and best-informed journal in the world. Next to it is the *New York Herald Tribune*, its rival. Having purchased one, I check it to see if it contains an article by Walter Lippmann on foreign policy today. On Sunday, if I buy these two papers, I bend under their combined weight: *The New York Times* has a literary

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361 Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 21, p. 5.

supplement *The New York Times Book Review*, another supplement devoted to photographs and longer articles: *The New York Times Magazine*, an overview of political events of the past week, a financial review, a sports review, and an overview of film and theater, and performance arts. Similar supplements, slightly slimmer, are offered with the *New York Herald Tribune*. Of course, advertisements occupy the majority of the space in these magazines. It is not me, a passer-by who gets this stack of recycled paper almost for free, that pays for the army of writers, correspondents, printers, and distributors whose work contributes to the making of a newspaper. The advertisers pay for it. Ads did not use to appear in *P.M.* notices, a small-format journal, ideological and representing the policy of the left wing of the Democratic Party and the Political Action Committee of the CIO, but it has also succumbed to the trend and to economics. These three papers satisfy my thirst for information. This is also true of several hundred thousand New Yorkers. The *New York Post* has its regular readers, the communist paper *Daily Worker* also has some, but millions of residents of Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens prefer different reading matter – the *Daily Mirror*.<sup>362</sup>

In the further stages of the walk, Miłosz discusses the popular press and weekly magazines – among them *Time*, *Newsweek* and political weeklies: *The New Republic*, *The Nation*, *The Protestant* and *New Masses*. He does not forget weekly magazines and specialist monthly magazines, including the *Saturday Review of Literature*. He concludes with a discussion of the literary magazines:

This is the geography of papers that can be bought on the street. There is something missing here, is there not? I know what: probably the literary weeklies, such as the *Nouvelles Littéraires*, our pre-war *Wiadomości Literackie* or *Odrodzenie*, or literary notebooks that Paris is covered with. Tough, they are not here and that's that. Yes, there does exist something similar. But these are high places where it is difficult to breathe and I am afraid that the conditions there are similar to boredom. If we go to the 42nd street, by the Public Library building, we will get the bimonthly *Partisan Review* in the kiosks there, English in its language, French in its spirit and, as usual for such hybrids, raising certain doubts, although they do publish the best English, French, American names. There, we will also get *Art News* and *Theater News*, very conventional papers at that. One more step, and we are already in the land of specialists, among a multitude of professional journals from various fields, issued by universities, or among “reviews” which have their subscribers and appear in public only in the reading rooms of libraries. Such critical literary journals as *Kenyon Review*, *Sewanee Review*, *Yale Review* are not to be had at the newsstand – no willing buyers.<sup>363</sup>

Miłosz shows considerable orientation in matters related to circulation of information in the United States, although he passes over many issues, such as the level of given title or rivalries between various papers (in the 1940s in New York, the *Times* was competing with the *Herald Tribune*, the liberal *Post* and the somewhat less sophisticated *World Telegram*). Nor does he discuss the racial and ethnic diversity

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362 Miłosz, Czesław: “Książki i pisma w Stanach Zjednoczonych” [Books and Journals in the United States], *op. cit.*, p. 1.

363 *Ibidem*, p. 2.



of the media market (represented even by the African-American *Pittsburgh Courier*, *Negro Digest* and *The Chicago Defender*) or the dynamically developing sector of the women's press, in which the leftist *Ladies Home Journal* played a vital role. Miłosz also does not mention the other processes that shaped the information market. Marek Gołębiowski comments on this as follows:

Complicated were the relations of the press and television, as the latter, taking over a lion's share of nationwide advertising, undercut the basis of existence of the former voluminous magazines. Instead, their more expensive, and thinner counterparts appeared, usually as monthlies, as did the weekly information magazines *Time*, *Newsweek* and *U.S. News and World Report*. In addition to revenue from advertising, television also deprived the press of the time that the audience had previously spent on reading. Soon, the publishers realized that it was no longer possible to beat TV in the field of absorbing the viewer's entire attention – and so they began to focus on informing the reader in a way that was unavailable to television, because the newspaper is a physical medium that can be returned to at any moment, regardless of the programming schedule. The local character of newspapers allowed them to focus on the interests of the community; in addition, they could provide information that only a few readers were interested in, without boring all the others. Newspapers focused more on giving details of events and their deeper context, obtaining material that was uninteresting to television, which, for instance, never waged any crusade.<sup>364</sup>

This episode in the series foreshadows Miłosz's reflection on mass culture,<sup>365</sup> and at the same time a culmination of the thread woven in since the beginning of the series, when the author complained about the how anodyne radio and television programs and the cinema were, and how tawdry popular entertainment was in general.<sup>366</sup> Here, he rather provides an insight into the economic mechanisms shaping the local information culture. However, what emerges from the article is an incomplete picture. The reader may get the impression that the world of mass media is ruled only by impersonal institutions against which mere individuals are powerless. In the light of the series, if one wanted to answer the question which was the motor of change – individuals or institutions, a strong personality or its environment, one would need to reply that incorporeal beings ruled here, eliminating each other in an almost Darwinian manner, and establishing their successive laws. The history of the press from the period preceding Miłosz's stay in the United States saw charismatic journalists who introduced new working principles, and new rules for acquiring and presenting material – figures such as Joseph Pulitzer or Ida M. Tarbell in the area

<sup>364</sup> Gołębiowski, Marek: *Kultura Stanów Zjednoczonych*, [Culture of the United States] Warsaw, 2006, pp. 437–438.

<sup>365</sup> Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 21, p. 5. Miłosz already knew Dwight Macdonald's essay, "A Theory of Popular Culture", *politics* February, 1944, pp. 20–23, that was included in the anthology *Mass Culture*. Judt mentions a similar aversion to American popular culture in left-leaning European emigré circles, *Postwar*, *op. cit.*, pp. 265–266.

<sup>366</sup> See Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 1, 7, 31, 43.

of investigative journalism. What brought on the words of the article? Perhaps Józef Wittlin shows it best:

We usually expect more of America than of our own selves. In recent decades, a large part of the European population has lived in such unhealthy conditions that America seemed to be the highest moral arbiter on the planet. To European enthusiasts of the fiction that is called justice on Earth, the symbols of this justice were often presidents of the United States. Whenever anything bad happened on the old continent, when oppression gained the sanction of law, many victims turned to the Statue of Liberty on Bedloe Island and said, "What will America say to this?" America was also the distant higher instance, under whose gaze the people responsible for the conscience of their societies felt ashamed. (...) And that is why everything that leaves something to be desired in this country strikes us with far greater strength than in Europe, where pessimism was often a valid philosophy of life, and disbelief a foundation of faith.<sup>367</sup>

Miłosz also draws attention to the phenomenon of hegemony described by theorists of popular culture in *politics*. He becomes familiar with the methods of the local propaganda, which will allow him to build parallels between manipulation strategies in the US and in the USSR. One of the forms of building, as Leszek Kołakowski would say, the culture of analgesics, is to popularize here a fairy-tale version of reality:

Going deeper into dreamland, a land of dream and fantasy, shedding tears over the fate of heroes in the company of an audience consisting of saleswomen from large stores (the painted and polished lowest proletariat in America), stepping out of the cinema with the stagger of drunks or people who had been taking drugs for 3 hours is an almost charming activity. Yes, American cinema is a 'factory of dreams.' These are, however, let us admit it, generally poor dreams, where elements of known everyday reality are endlessly reshuffled. (...) There is an interesting story related to all this pretense. The partner with whom Joe had been running the gas station – he turns out to be millionaire in disguise. Then the girl suddenly discovers talent and becomes a great actress. Then again a friend unexpectedly makes a big career and kidnaps a whole bunch of his Brooklyn buddies into a world of indescribable joy. One of the basics of America is the myth of Cinderella, of a sudden happy resolution.<sup>368</sup>

The author soberly evaluates these practices and sheds light on their European, folk pedigree:

A drug. Yes, but let us think for a moment. Humanity has been using large doses of fairy tales for many thousands of years. The only thing that changes is the center of power. In Greece, you met a foreigner on the road, you offered wine, and later he turned out to be one of the gods. In folk tales an old beggar, clothed and fed, was sometimes God the Father himself, or a saint. In Shakespearean theater the same role was played by a disguised king or prince. It has already been pointed out that Balzac's Paris had all the features of a city from a fairy tale: a meeting of

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367 Wittlin, Józef: "Mój pierwszy rok w Ameryce" [My First Year in America]. In *idem: Orfeusz w piekle XX wieku* [Orpheus in the Underworld of the Twentieth Century], *op. cit.*, p. 317.

368 Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 30, p. 5.

the right person at the right moment took on the power of a magical spell there; from the very bottom it would lift one straight to the top.<sup>369</sup>

For Miłosz, popular culture is located inside the American cinema. As a resident of the East Coast, he does not record the development of jazz, swing, bebop, blue grass or the musical, including the *black musical*. He does not follow the careers of Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, Charlie Parker, Thelonius Monk, Ella Fitzgerald or Billie Holiday; in New York he is not attracted by the growing international fame of Leonard Bernstein.

Regarding censorship in the cinema, he emphasizes that popular culture is sometimes a form of creating behavioral patterns in contrast to European propaganda. He does not, however, touch on the absorbing subject of the House Un-American Activities Committee, which initiated proceedings against communist influences in Hollywood, or the effects of the Paramount Decree. He seeks to explain the paradox of society shaping people to be inventors, and at the same time preserving their state of mental lethargy. He is tired of the conviction held by Americans of their own superiority when evaluating the international situation. He shows this in his reports: he is struck by the insignificant role played by intellectuals in public life, and by how weakly their activity reverberates in society.<sup>370</sup> Moving in New York's intellectual circles, Miłosz observes many-sided isolation within the local educational system, whereby any circulation of ideas is limited in scope. In *Życie w USA*, he praises the American school, which uses the latest achievements of psychology, but then observes how the ability of critical thinking is suppressed in confrontation with the taboo, compliance with which is a prerequisite for being part of the elites. In the report of the conference at Bread Loaf, he describes this process as "sterilization,"<sup>371</sup> in other places he expresses the notion of sterility of American academia.

## On Several Anticipations

In four installments, Miłosz moves away from reporting the phenomena of publishing and changes in the world of media in favor of comments that occupy a more prominent place in his intellectual biography. Two installments are indirectly devoted to Wells and Mann, and reveal one of his most important questions.

<sup>369</sup> Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 30, p. 5.

<sup>370</sup> Cf. Wright Mills, Ch.: "The Powerless People. The Role of the Intellectual in Society," *politics* 1944, April, pp. 68–72.

<sup>371</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: *Raport z pobytu na Konferencji Pisarzy w Bread Loaf, Vermont w czasie od 13.VIII do 28.VIII.1947*. [A Report from the Stay at the Writers' Conference in Bread Loaf, Vermont, from Aug. 13, to Aug. 28, 1947] AMSZ, c. 221, b. 89, f. 1171, p. 2.

In the installment on Wells, from March 1947,<sup>372</sup> a pretext for reflection is the posthumously published book *Mind at the End of its Tether*,<sup>373</sup> which is a sort of testament and assessment of life. By introducing the reader to the sphere of its issues, with sympathy toward Wells, Miłosz touched on issues that had been bothering him since childhood. The center of his attention was occupied by the relationship between reason, seeking liberation from the influence of culture and religion, and the experiences of life, which reason, or consciousness, cannot remedy or handle. Miłosz's Wells is someone who absorbed the ideas of the era, and then drew his own conclusions from them, trying to project its achievements as far as possible into the future. A disciple of Darwin, an unwavering evolutionist, a proponent of scientific cognition who rejects metaphysics remained powerless in the face of history, as did those who did not follow reason as far as he did. Miłosz argued here that no matter how much the war discredited the path of progress and pure reason, Wells would have remained a sardonic pessimist in any case. The poet read Wells through the prism of Shakespeare, showing the continuity of a certain logic of capturing reality, which, although based on variable foundations, was built in England over several centuries. The object of his partial reflection is pessimism, as an intellectual attitude, in conjunction with the heroism of taking action, which combination of features was close to him throughout the entire decade.

Wells's philosophy summarized in the booklet in question is Miłosz's vehicle for returning to the Darwinism and scientism of his Gymnasium days. The experience of war makes him face the necessity of a renewed confrontation with this worldview, and raises the question of whether or not Wells' death marked the end of his era. Miłosz sees similarly the extent of defeat of the liberated reason in the individual and social dimension, posing questions in the intellectual climate of Freud and Einstein. However, some shifts of emphasis are notable here. Deprived of his illusions, Wells leaves with the reflection:

In an anthill there are immense and undecided masses, whose leaders, incapable of realizing what is happening, resort to the worst and most harmful magic spells to reverse the desperate fate looming over us all. An accusation that mixes past superstitions with new cruelty is thriving. The unfortunate ant, tangled in these moving masses, tries to maintain his faith in those to whom he entrusted himself. Thus he will probably follow his path all the way to the end. He may feel uncertain and uncomfortable at times, but, as will his companions, he will usually maintain the atmosphere of heroic emptiness, convincing himself and others that now the old game will be started anew, and its current downsides will dissipate like a dream. And before he becomes conscious enough to relate the dream of his renewed world, he will forget all about it and enter nothingness forever.<sup>374</sup>

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372 Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 11, p. 6.

373 Wells, H. G.: *Mind at the End of its Tether and the Happy Turning. A Dream of Life*, New York: Didier, 1946.

374 Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 11, p. 6.

These words caught the attention of the poet, who wrote poems about helpless clusters of human insects several years before. What could the hypothetical end of Wells' era mean to him? In the situation, diagnosed so accurately by Wells, of the powerlessness of liberated reason, metaphysical and religious arguments do not gain in importance. Quite the reverse: the poet observes the progressive secularization of the West. It manifests itself differently in the environment of the elites (he provides the example of Einstein here) and differently in wider social circles, as evidenced by emptying temples or nurturing of religious rituals as social traditions. In the circumstances outlined in this way, Miłosz dares – though not directly – to ask about the metaphysical reasons for existence, looking into the relationship between science and religion, which he will undertake again in *The Land of Ulro*. At that time, the defeat, as he defines it, takes on a form different from the way Wells understood it. He makes the following comment on this:

I think Wells' attitude is shared by more people than one might surmise from the timid and reluctant attitudes towards these issues. Far be it from me to disrespect the statements of modern physicists or such symptoms of literature as existentialism. Man vis-a-vis the world, deprived of his *raison d'être* – this is the issue that comes to take the place of religion that is flowing away. What is more, we are beginning to deal with a sociological phenomenon here. (...) At any rate, Wells is an extension of the Renaissance, and the current mental crisis reiterates that crisis in a much harsher form, since we have behind us a century of unprecedented development of unrestrained research – a century ending with burning of books.<sup>375</sup>

Miłosz can see what is taking the place of religious and intellectual authority in America. It is puzzling whether and to what extent reading Wells inspired him to consider new forms of captivating the mind as a remedy for emptiness, and in the long run led him to the path of post-secular reflection.

Some of the continuation of his comments on Wells can be found in his account of Mann's lecture on Nietzsche,<sup>376</sup> which Miłosz attended at the Library of Congress on April 29, 1947 – he writes about it in the 22nd issue of *Odrodzenie*. A decade before the release of *Native Realm*, Miłosz asks:

Many university students arrived at Mann's reading, as well as fat ladies in hats decorated with artificial flowers, sleeping sweetly through the entire speech, waking up just for the sake of saying that they do not understand anything and falling asleep again.

Someone, however, whose youth passed under the sign of Thomas Mann, had reason to listen carefully. Was it not the derailed descendants of Buddenbrooks who gave the world a

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<sup>375</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>376</sup> The talk was published by the Library of Congress in the volume Mann, Thomas: *Nietzsche's Philosophy in the Light of Contemporary Events*, Washington: Library of Congress, 1947 and Mann, Thomas: *Addresses*. Delivered at the Library of Congress 1942–1949, Washington: Library of Congress, 1963.

bloodbath? Was the dispute between Naphta and Settembrini from *The Magic Mountain* not the central dispute of our times?<sup>377</sup>

In the collection of essays of 1958, Miłosz will put Father Chomski in place of Naphta, and Adolf Rożek in place of Settembrini. This is a way of consistently illustrating to which participant in the dispute Miłosz credited with more strength and attractiveness. In his characterization of the Vilnius adversaries, however, the accents are arranged differently than it would appear from the American confessions. The author admits:

Here I repent: as for many of my contemporaries, the truly fascinating figure was the diabolical Naphta, a cynic and an ironist, a skeptic and a Jesuit, a supporter of fanaticism and violence. Settembrini merely aroused condescending sympathy. He was a liberal, declaiming on the victory of reason and faith in man. I do not think that this dispute is over. Naphta still has the power to attract the attention of supporters, both right-wing and left, while the good-natured liberal Settembrini scattered his ashes in the fields of concentration camps.<sup>378</sup>

Settembrini-Rożek, as well as Naphta-Chomski, are clearly distinct from the figures visible in the post-war landscape, and their dispute – jocular from the point of view of a Gymnasium graduate – in *Native Realm* is a conflict of arguments fundamentally different from what Miłosz meant in *Odrodzenie*. The fact that he was able to give a humorous tone to the Vilnius animosities shows how far he had traveled from Europe to America over the past ten years. In his account of the lecture, the values represented by Settembrini are described in terms of a tragic catastrophe, a defeat of reason different from that of Wells'. Wells' thought, projecting the laws of nature onto the world of civilization, bore no illusions regarding Settembrini's positive anthropology. The burial of Mann's liberal values affects Miłosz no less than his renunciation of religious and metaphysical justifications:

I repent for the second time. His words did not find any response in his contemporaries. In 1935, I listened to the deliberations of the Congress of Anti-Fascist Writers in Paris. Mann was one of the organizers. Günther, a young Nazi poet, was sitting next to me.<sup>379</sup> And although I did not like to listen to Günther's remarks, spoken in poor French, in which sentimentality mixed with cruelty, I will admit with sadness that there was something that connected us: contempt for Settembrinis, contempt for the weakness of people discussing human rights without recommending any decisive and violent means to defend them. I never met Günther after that. Once I wrote him a card with a cynical joke. He was insulted, and this insult illustrates the division of people into two camps: some despised Settembrini with despair, others, like Günther, with triumph.<sup>380</sup>

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377 Nowak, J. M., [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA*, *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 22, p. 5.

378 *Ibidem*.

379 Eten, Günther (1905–1942). German poet. On his contacts with Eten, Miłosz writes in more detail in *Native Realm*.

380 *Ibidem*. These dilemmas were shared by other European intellectuals with whom Miłosz could discuss these issues, for example Nicola Chiaromonte, who wrote: "Nihilism is the most conspicuous trait of contemporary life. Nihilism is sacrificing oneself for a cause one does not believe in, while

At Mann's lecture, Miłosz found himself in a trap: he had a Settembrini in front of him, but one who took a risk, and who, upon losing all hope, settles his scores with those responsible for this state of things. The poet avoided Settembrini's choices not only out of fear of contempt, but because of the pragmatic conviction that they would lead him to self-destruction. Choosing life did not mean choosing to exist – the reader of Hegel and the addressee of letters from Kroński is once more reminded of this by Mann's lecture. In the series, Miłosz makes it clear that Settembrini's arguments are also his own. The means and the circumstances with which he might make them real, however, still seem to be out of his reach, which again leaves him no choice. Jarzębski subtly comments:

There is undoubtedly a manifestation of cynicism in "Dziecię Europy," which has been repeatedly pointed out, but there is also a hidden, quite desperate, fear of the pain carried by the thoughtless and futile affirmation of traditional values. One needs to renounce them and, of course out of cold calculation, but also because it seems unbearable to stand by them.<sup>381</sup>

For Miłosz, Settembrini's opponent is not Naphta then, but Joseph Conrad with his conviction that civilization is a fragile shell around the heart of darkness. Admitting his mental affinity with the writer, he shares the bitterness of his experience of emigration:

Yes, Mann may be accused of being a liberal, less naïve perhaps than his protagonist, whom he, as it often happens, provided with inferior arguments to his own, because Settembrini was closer to him. Mann always believed in the ultimate victory of reason and justice. He always spoke in a calm voice, not caring that the storm would drown out his words. If the word *humanist* is not an empty sound, then it is presumably so in relation to Mann. (...) Mann told in his letter the bitter truth about the emigrant's fate. He admitted that there were days when he envied the poorest people in Germany only because they could live in their own country.<sup>382</sup>

Under these circumstances, Miłosz listens with more appreciation to the arguments put forward by Mann, who, in his lecture on Nietzsche, presents the philosopher as the epitome of the fall of the German burgher culture, an unprecedented case of genius, whom mental illness deprived of the ability to self-reflect. At the same time, Mann clearly separated the views proclaimed by the philosopher from their Nazi

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pretending to believe in it. Nihilism is the conviction that there is really nothing behind any faith or doctrine, and that therefore success alone matters. Nihilism is the identification of the good, the just and the true with one's personal interests. But where there is no shared spiritual order, the foundations of social living are absent; the life of society then becomes a question of force, politics a savage contest." In *idem*: "Nihilism," *politics* 1945, May, pp. 138–139.

**381** Jarzębski, Jerzy: "Obrazy Ameryki w *Świetle dziennym* Miłosza" [Images of America in Miłosz's *Daylight*], *op. cit.*, p. 297.

**382** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 22, p. 5.

reception, denying also his alleged hostility to Judeo-Christianity. In his lecture, the author concentrates on the most moving issue: if Settembrini's voice seems too weak, Wells' self-knowledge leads to stoic pessimism, and traditional humanists are condemned to emigration, or at least internal emigration, on what foundations shall we rebuild the authority of reason? How to prevent the nesting of further insanities in the emptiness created after it is rejected? Miłosz, again, does not have much hope that Mann's criticism of the philosophy of life, his matter-of-fact analysis of Nietzschean philosophy in the context of the experience of war will find the right response. The time and place of the lecture is not without significance. The auditorium at the Library of Congress was filled with new encyclopedists, whose lack of experience made mutual understanding impossible:

These brave and intelligent youths applauded with enthusiasm all declarations on the rule of reason, and on the rational thought of the eighteenth century. These were close to them, because they have been reared in this tradition in schools. After all, all American struggles for liberation and the entire political philosophy derive from this. Yes, but these young people are the Settembrinis of 1910. Good-natured, naïve and noble, unable even to reverse what is now happening in the Senate, a mere few steps from the library where the lecture is being delivered. The embittered and experienced Settembrini of 1947 speaking *ex cathedra* is something different – something else entirely. But at the same time he is dissimilar to the fanatical and cruel Naphta.<sup>383</sup>

Miłosz's account of the lecture should be considered in the broader context of the dialogue between Europe and America, questions about the common New World co-created on both sides of the Atlantic. Here one can perhaps see with most clarity what Miłosz means in his letters, when he mentions America's immaturity, and no sense of history in its people. On the one hand, he expresses aversion to the mercantile way of capturing reality. *Życie w USA* shows a picture of the Americans as guided by the principle of optimizing profit. The American, deprived of individual features, whose typological portrait can be built from elements scattered throughout the many episodes, is a *homo oeconomicus*.<sup>384</sup> Even then, Miłosz poses questions about the ethical dimension of his activity,<sup>385</sup> and this issue coincides with his reflection on

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**383** *Ibidem*.

**384** This is addressed among others by Smith, Adam: *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1776 and by Becker, G. S.: *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978; MacIntyre, Alasdair: *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1996.

**385** There was a discussion in the USA in which the American and European perspectives were treated equally. See Weber, Max: „Class, Status, Party”. Translated and edited by Hans H. Gerth and Charles Wright Mills, *politics* 1944, September, p. 271–278; Weil, Simone: „Factory Work”. Translated by Felix Giovanelli, *politics* 1946, November, pp. 369–375.



the meaning of *Gulliver's Travels*.<sup>386</sup> The author learns with difficulty that the local foundations of social ties in America are different than those in Europe. This is the reason why to him America seems to be calculated in almost every sphere of life. On the other hand, as is also evident in the series, and in the articles published under his own name, that Miłosz is moved by disinterested gestures and acts of kindness of Americans, which he attributes to their idealism. He speaks most directly about this in his last correspondence, which creates the impression of a summary. The two final episodes are as much the culmination of the series as a confession of the difficulties with its continuation. They are separated – which seems significant – by articles published under the pen name *Żagarysta* and under Miłosz's own name. They concern Faulkner's work, celebrations of Independence Day, and the conference at Bread Loaf.

### Miłosz's Contradictions of American Capitalism

In the last installment of the series, the author admits:

Driving through Harper's Ferry, where John Brown used to live, through Charles Town, where he was tried and convicted for treason, climbing the road through the wooded mountains, from where the expansive panorama of the Shenandoah River spreads out – I think that I have not written the truth about America so far, because it is a very difficult thing to do. I am thinking about how one would go about writing the chapters, separating the epithets.<sup>387</sup>

In an earlier issue, he admits under his own name: “For a long time I have been trying to discover the internal mechanism of the Americans and I am still failing at it.”<sup>388</sup> The last episode of *Życie w USA* is formulated with rhetorical prowess. After the introduction, which is an account of a trip to the state of Virginia, the author proceeds to generalizations, in order to reveal the difficulties in formulating certain and unambiguous judgments about America. Each subsequent paragraph of this part begins with the words “a country,” and it is worth keeping in mind “Moja piosnka II” [My Song II] by Cyprian Kamil Norwid as the negative context for this anaphoric series of statements. Why does the term ‘nation’ not appear here instead of ‘country?’ Did the author recall the Wilno lectures of Florian Znanięcki, and gave up using the European dictionary for describing reality that escaped its denotations? If so, did he know and follow the course of post-war discussions on American identity

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**386** Laurenz Volkmann also analyzes the critique of capitalism and lavish lifestyle in *Gulliver's Travels* in relation to Thomas More's *Utopia* and the category of *homo oeconomicus*. See *Neoklassizistische Positionen gegen den homo oeconomicus*. By the same author in: *Homo oeconomicus. Studien zur Modellierung eines neuen Menschenbilds in der englischen Literatur vom Mittelalter bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*, Universitätsverlag WINTER Heidelberg, 2003, pp. 608–644.

**387** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA*, *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 48, p. 1.

**388** Miłosz, Czesław: “Zabawy i spory” [Games and Arguments], *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 44, p. 4.

in academic and journalistic circles? It seems so. More than once, Miłosz critically discussed the Americans' self-portrait, a portrait in which they themselves later saw an excessive tendency to attribute uniqueness to themselves.<sup>389</sup> The word 'country,' with its geographical connotations, offers more advantages to him than the political terms such as 'nation' or 'state.' It presupposes diversity, variability, coexistence of opposites, and is also close to his own spatial imagination. One may also presume, although the author diplomatically omits this issue, that as a witness of discrimination and racial segregation, the difficult situation of Native Americans and the new immigration, he does not see the Americans as a community fused by historical and cultural experience (the state of Virginia, where the correspondence originated, was traditionally seen as the boundary of the so-called Black Belt). In the post-war years, movements for the equality of various groups in the United States were only in their incipient phase, and so it is easier to understand why the correspondent abandons altogether the notion of 'nation' in his description.<sup>390</sup>

At the foundation of his text lies a combination of anti-institutional and dialectical thinking. Miłosz consistently rejects in America the sphere of public actions as the source of alienation and unification:

A country of enormous mental apathy, mental sleep. Living machines, laughing, working, reproducing, living dolls with a completely mythologized brain; indeed a tribe of the machine age. (...)

A country with an amazingly smooth operation of the social machine, with a uniform upbringing of the average citizen. (...)

A country of myths and taboos, a country of thoughts in pincers. A wise man in a private conversation changes when he takes the stand at the university lectern. Insignificant water of generalities, boredom resulting from a fear of involvement and insulting the commonly accepted taboos – that is all. (...)

A country of hard struggle for existence for the individual, completely indifferent to those who slide down, one that values only the successful, ruddy and smiling, and shows contempt to those who believe they have higher qualifications than the job they do. (...)

A country with a great deal of religion and a multitude of temples, but quite pagan, because religion is only a ritual of social communion, something to participate in, like going to football games. (...) Religion as charity work, the church as a meeting place for neighbors, an institution as lasting as the institution of gathering for a game of bridge or a dram of whiskey. Not even the fiercest of American atheists would be able to accomplish such a complete destruction of metaphysics. (...)

A country with the agility of a bear in foreign policy. (...)

A country with a backbone broken by a technical revolution. (...)<sup>391</sup>

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**389** On this, see *Globalizing American Studies*. Edited by Brian T. Edwards and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010.

**390** Homi K. Bhabha talked about this in the lecture *Living Side by Side. On Culture and Security*. Inaugural Global Thought Lecture, Columbia University, April 29, 2013. <https://vimeo.com/67419752>  
Date of access: June 8, 2018.

**391** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 48, p. 1.

Miłosz formulates even more critical remarks, at the same time referring to American attempts to specify the country's own identity:

There is nothing left of the old America, nothing of the feelings, nothing of the beliefs, nothing of the morals. Production of cinematic myths about the history of the United States will not help here. Everyone knows that these are only legends, because in fact there is no tradition, only absolute emptiness. Hence the desperate clinging to myths and taboos, the constant desire to be American, all the greater since no-one knows what it really means.<sup>392</sup>

Aware that he will find arguments against his reasoning, he provides them himself:

A country of excellent efficiency, ability to work, and flexibility, boasting of being able to adapt to any conditions and accomplish in several years that for which other nations need a century.<sup>393</sup>

The correspondent situates himself on the outskirts of the mainstream of American values, and displays the positives that appear most valuable to him. Against the destructive principles of collective life, he sets the features and forms of mentality appropriate to individual people, and to single and peripheral activities. He continues in the same anaphoric convention:

A country with an enormous number of deeply kind people who find a vent for their religious longings in their actions for the benefit of others, are ready to go to distant countries, in the most difficult of conditions, to help, cure, teach with only one thing for payment – a sense that they are useful to others. These people of good will deserve the highest homage, for they are the salt of America.<sup>394</sup>

The opposite pole of his criticism is compassion – Whitmanesque solidarity. It dictates bitter conclusions about the consequences of the American organization of life:

A country with ever-growing numbers of insane people. I think the reason here is a lack of intellectual and emotional pressure in the atmosphere. Can man live in emptiness? Do deep-water fish thrown onto the surface not die? A soft car, a soft neat and tidy interior, a monotonous life – money, wife, children, nothing for the mind, nothing for the feelings – until one day one slits one's arteries, demolishes the neat and tidy interior, and a straitjacket is slapped on one very promptly.<sup>395</sup>

Miłosz presents America as a place where democracy only apparently ensures the free functioning of alternative and competing cultural values. He argues that society is shaped according to the principle of power adopted here, regulating all aspects of

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392 *Ibidem.*

393 *Ibidem.*

394 *Ibidem.*

395 *Ibidem.*

public life. He describes a certain type of man who has a chance to succeed and deserve recognition, if he renounces all desires contrary to the collective ideals. If, as Bell would write later, modern society is an amalgam of three realities, i.e. the social structure, or more precisely techno-economic order, politics, and culture, Miłosz observes to which values they are distilled, and what kind of man they produce, when the distinctly American *ratio* becomes the driving force of his actions. He precedes Bell's intuitions, taking note of a lack of metaphysical and religious legitimacy for human efforts and aspirations, and over-emphasis put on collective life in comparison to individual aspirations. In lieu of the former transcendental sanctions, a void appears that is best not thought about – hence, he believes, the common aversion to independent, critical thinking and all the numerous ways of filling that void. Miłosz comments: “In America – said an American intellectual – the principle that religion is opium for the people loses all relevance. Here the cinema is opium for the people.”<sup>396</sup> The distressing experience of emptiness as a result of the triumph of the *ratio* that ultimately leads to nihilism is, in his opinion, the immediate cause of insanity, and to prevent it is necessary to produce new myths and legends of compensatory significance.

The author situates American society between the poles of cultural taboos and myths. Most interesting seems to be his observation regarding the taboo on critical thinking – the claim that it is reserved for a tightly knit group of specialists is in line with earlier remarks made by Georg Simmel, who characterized the directions of development of a modern metropolis. Miłosz dissects the image of America that Poles harbor, with its myths of equality, freedom and economic liberalism. In particular, it seems interesting that the recent criticism of the free market, abolition of price control and the OPA, whoever predicts the collapse of the economy drifting in an unpredictable direction, also gives up the conviction that the American economic model is based on liberal principles. This illustrates how Miłosz's image of America had clarified, and how many observations he needed to retract before he discovered the real contour of the reality there. He deepens his recognition of the oligarchic democracy, a big-city regime, a command center for which he tries to find a counterbalance in the peripheries – the true provinces where he travels and which he portrays colorfully in several episodes. Only they have positive connotations in his dictionary – very much unlike metropolises:

America is a province. A ruddy, milky, jovial province. All of its big cities, except New York, are also provincial. A province with skyscrapers is also possible – for example Chicago. A well-built, and even over-nourished breed of provincials, benefiting from the achievements of technology, populates this continent. A provincially mechanized breed.<sup>397</sup>

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**396** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 48, p. 1.

**397** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 46, p. 4.

Earlier, he writes, “America is primarily thousands of small provincial cities.”<sup>398</sup> In the series, Miłosz uses the term “province” in its territorial and metaphorical sense. Geographical provinces attract him as they did in his student days, in the land of forests and lakes. He is fascinated by the exoticism and exuberance of nature. Interestingly, it is his articles rather than poems from that period, that contain more images of local landscapes. However, these images always have utility value – they may serve as an introduction, an outline of the background and context, or an attractive segue into anthropological and sociological arguments.

His sense of enchantment with the landscape is exhausted upon encountering the residents of the provinces. On the one hand, the author sympathizes with their plight, and manifests all forms of sympathy for their morals, culture and customs. Sometimes he shares in their entertainments. The poet sitting at the table in the American countryside is not very different from the winner of the Nobel Prize winner, feasting in his homeland.

At the same time, Miłosz sees the residents of the provinces as victims of the manipulation of power exercised from command centers, ostensible democratic participants deprived of real causative power, people living beside the course of history, whose consciousness is immersed in a dream. He considers the idyllic nature of the village and the small town manifestations of American internal isolationism all the more dangerous, since they are based on trust in power and in moral and civilizational superiority over the rest of the world. He deconstructs the idea of the American power structure in one of the final episodes of the series, which differs from all the other episodes due to its epistolary form. It is a letter addressed to a girl named Zosia, and one may wonder whether this choice of name is accidental, or whether it refers to the tradition of Polish Romanticism which, after all, had a particular affection for it. In the episode, Miłosz lays out his theory of center and periphery as a system regulating life in America. Taking Rome and the Roman Empire as reference, he presents the virulent characteristics of the center:

These well-dressed children going to school are brought up in the belief that their country is the best, the happiest, and one must infinitely regret those who have not attained the honor of becoming its citizens. The center has priceless libraries, art galleries, and kind-hearted humanitarians who, with the use of learned arguments, prove what the humanity has gained by creating such a nation. The essence of the center is a clear conscience and a certain mutual kindness of all those who belong there.<sup>399</sup>

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**398** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 1, p. 7. It is worth mentioning that at that time *The Nation* published series of articles in the section titled *Small Town America*.

**399** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 31, p. 1.

The ironic backdrop of these statements is American exceptionalism that Miłosz negated, regarding it as the main source of the mind's deceptions and enslavements.<sup>400</sup> Opposite the center outlined in this way, the dirty provinces are placed. They already start in the poor districts of big cities. In this interpretation, the awareness of a representative of the center is somewhat reminiscent of the mind of Rodion Raskolnikov, striding through the streets of St. Petersburg – he commits the similar error of identifying aesthetics with moral purity. The opposition of cleanliness and dirt was chosen very aptly. Between the lines, Miłosz says that the opposition of center and periphery, shown as the relation between cleanliness and dirt, also captures the relationship between white and non-white America. In this context, it is easy to predict that the relations described here between the center and periphery include discriminatory practices, domination, and exploitation. The author knows how difficult it will be for him to persuade the reader: “The myth of America – moving on – seems to consist in the fact that one speaks of its center, forgetting its periphery. It is a very large center.”<sup>401</sup> He examines the subject of subjugation using examples of social structures and attitudes towards people of races other than white. In presenting the social hierarchy in the United States, from the patrician families educated at Harvard and living in New England, or – as he calls them – the “brahmins,” to the “bumpkins,” farming the land in the South, he draws attention to the fact that one's position in society here results mainly from one's material status, but also from belonging to the “center,” which entails sharing the values created by the dominant social stratum. Belonging to the “center” is made possible through the education system, which grants one passage into public life, just as it imposes the view of reality typical of the privileged class of citizens:

As for the peasants, it is necessary to distinguish the South, where there are significant numbers of poor and primitive tenant farmers, but in most parts of the country the predominant type of farmer, who differs from the traditional “bumpkin” in that he belongs to the center and not to the periphery. Universal education (perhaps not so much education, as raising a uniform type of citizen at the same moral level) pushes the periphery further away. There are horrifying slum districts, there is misery. Well, whatever else... But most white Americans form the center and this is probably the source of the attractiveness of America. Of white people.<sup>402</sup>

Unwilling to join the national discussions on racism in the United States, Miłosz makes the following reservations:

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**400** A very interesting critique of *American exceptionalism*, close to Miłosz's own position, is presented by Pease, Donald E. in “American Studies after American Exceptionism? Toward a Comparative Analysis of Imperial State Exceptionalisms.” In *Globalizing American Studies*. Edited by Brian T. Edwards and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010, pp. 47–83.

**401** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 31, p. 1.

**402** *Ibidem*.

Do not suspect me of a special tenderness towards the Negroes. I have seen so much human suffering, sometimes it would seem impossible to bear, that my heart has hardened – because I must always compare. I have already written in my correspondence that talking about hundreds or thousands of lynchings a year makes no sense.<sup>403</sup>

The point, in fact, is different entirely: Miłosz poses and considers the issue of quasi-colonialism in America.<sup>404</sup> He recognizes the social nuances that divide people into us and *them*. This division, he notes, is subtler and runs deeper than would be evident from observing of ethnic and racial minority districts in metropolises; it has a larger territorial range and runs along the lines of diversified values in many regions. The divide also affects the neighboring countries, toward which, as Miłosz points out, the United States has been pursuing an imperial policy:

Yes, the center of America is huge, strong and alluring. Let us not forget, however, that the periphery is not only the Negroes and not only the South, which has not yet risen from Reconstruction, or wild exploitation by the North's Capital after the Civil War. The periphery of the United States is all of Central and South America, the entire landmass. Today, when so much is being said about the "Western Hemisphere" and American unity, one should not disregard it, because the US has the entire land in its hands (except maybe for Perón) which it reigns supreme. The domain of the barefoot and uneducated peasant begins already in the nominal US properties, such as Puerto Rico, not to mention Mexico, Nicaragua, or Brazil. Using my method of judging a state not by the theory taught to a boy in the center, but according to what is the "heart of darkness" of his country, of which no one will tell him – this is worth thinking about seriously.<sup>405</sup>

Paradoxically, thanks to these observations and readings of American literature, Miłosz finds his own place on the mental map of the United States – he is among those who have chosen the perspective of the periphery, and from this position they attempt a peculiar decentralization of America:

The strength of the American center is that it contains the righteous, who harass his lethargic conscience. Among the righteous, the writers have the first place. Writers, as you know, can be divided into good ones and bad ones. Without going into the subtleties of aesthetics, I will communicate to you the observation that bad writers are those who are stuck in the center, without leaning their noses out into the periphery. They provide people in the center with the blissful belief that everything is developing brilliantly. Good writers are those who have the courage to talk about the periphery – and it is interesting that the best American writers are simply peripheral – both in their origins and in their range of topics. In fact, the center should build a great gallows and hang such a Caldwell or Faulkner, or lock them up in the hole – let them rot, damned bastards, for dragging such matters out into the light. I'm surprised

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403 *Ibidem*.

404 Cf. Bhabha, Homi K.: *Side by Side*, *op. cit.*

405 Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA*, *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 31, p. 1.

they have not done this and instead sell Caldwell's chilling stories at 25 cents apiece at every newsstand.<sup>406</sup>

By design, that the final episodes of *Życie w USA* are adjacent to Miłosz's essay on Faulkner, with flattering statements about Caldwell – under their influence and following their example Miłosz assumes the peripheral perspective as the future author of *The Issa Valley* and *Native Realm*. His irony in the comment about the freedom of American critics of the center has a clear Polish political subtext. Reflection on American colonialism gives him the opportunity to reflect on the centralization and monopolization of power in general. Through his generalizations, which he rhetorically endows with playfulness, or characteristics of a work in progress, he smuggles in his criticism of a totalitarian system that does not refer to the realities across the ocean. Here he uses the metaphor of an avalanche, so as to depict the influence of the individual on history. He reveals his solidarity with the human being who suffers harm from cruel policies. Here, to put it plainly, springs the source of *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals], which Miłosz was finishing as the last episodes of *Życie w USA* were printed in *Odrodzenie*:

You see, Zosia, before the war I lived for many years in the Polish province. Ministers, lofty dignitaries and poets drinking with them were inaccessible social heights for me. Then I learned that a small person from the periphery means much more than a voivode or minister. The fact that this little man means nothing is only an illusion. Please note how delicate this mechanism is. The one who cannot raise his voice in his defense has been wronged. Ten, a hundred, a thousand, one hundred thousand, a million such people have been wronged. This cannot be hidden (it never succeeds) and awareness of these facts permeates into the center, which, as you know, likes to have a clear conscience, or at least be in harmony with logic. What happens then? A multiplication of center theories, slogans and actions meant to conceal or decorate these facts. Theories only half a degree away from reality, slogans that are dangerous, actions that are slightly contradictory to common sense. Social life, however, is governed by the law of avalanche. This is how the center's aberration slowly develops, and it will, believe me, one day express itself in some insanity, inconceivable to the people standing outside and not subjected to center's pathogens. Were not the little people from the periphery, the residents of Warsaw during the war, astonished by the insane moves of the Third Reich? They must have been amazed because they were unfamiliar with the temperature at which the German center was living.<sup>407</sup>

What are we talking about? After all, not about America and not about Nazi Germany... This statement, or perhaps even the entire final episode of the series, is a gloss to *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals]. The idea expressed here about the inevitable aberration of the center – and not just the American center – is the point here. It is a good illustration of the place where the poet had found himself intellectually and

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**406** *Ibidem*. John Steinbeck wrote about English-language writers in a similar vein. In *idem: A Russian Journal*. With Pictures by Robert Capa, New York: The Viking Press, 1948, p. 164.

**407** Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA*, *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 31, p. 1.



spiritually. It helps to understand why he decided against continuing the series in his ambiguous role of a correspondent writing under a pseudonym. This is his first symbolic transition from a position within the center, symbolized also by holding a post in the diplomatic service, to a peripheral position. This is the moment when perhaps the poet found a makeshift settlement of the dispute between Naphta and Settembrini – in a way somewhat akin to Castorp. Miłosz rejected Naphta’s cynicism, whose self-irony lined the poem “Dziecię Europy” [Child of Europe]. Nor was he attracted by Settembrini’s idealism, in Mann’s version or America’s, epitomized by young humanitarians from the “center” who profess their faith in their own uniqueness. In his own way, he set himself free from the trap of ideas that cannot stand up to reality. He had several guides through the maze of contradictions. Undoubtedly, they included the peripheral writers, with Faulkner in the lead, and the arbitrator in the dispute between Mann’s adversaries for him was Joseph Conrad, one of the patrons of *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals].

## Reception of the Series *Życie w USA*

*Życie w USA* was read on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>408</sup> The national literary community quickly realized who was hiding under the pseudonym Jan M. Nowak. The series was not without its critics, among whom only Stefan Kisielewski came out officially. As Jacek Natanson recalls:

*Odrodzenie* was not really neutral; throughout the Krakow period there were ongoing polemics with *Tygodnik Powszechny*, especially in almost every press review attacking this bastion of Catholicism.<sup>409</sup> The chief polemicist in *Tygodnik Powszechny* was Kisielewski, who missed no opportunity to attack the collaborators of *Odrodzenie*.<sup>410</sup>

Kisielewski criticized Miłosz’s departure from the country in a column titled “Nie bądźcie szczurami” [Do not be like rats]. He did place Miłosz among other emigrants, nonetheless he appealed:

The poet Czesław Miłosz, columnist Mieczysław Wionczek, and composer Tadeusz Kassern are in New York – each of them performs some function there, related to the propagation of Polish culture. The writer Ksawery Pruszyński is in Washington. The poet Jerzy Putrament is an envoy to Switzerland. Irena Krzywicka is in Paris, the poet Zbigniew Bieńkowski and critic Artur Sandauer went to Paris. Jerzy Zagórski, a publicist, is going away to Belgium, France and Italy

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**408** Manfred Kridl’s archive contains press clippings of articles signed with the poet’s name and his pen-names. Among them there are also installments of *Życie w USA*. See Manfred Kridl Collection, Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Box 20, Folder 3.

**409** Natanson, Jacek: *op. cit.*, p. 117.

**410** *Ibidem*, p. 119.

for a long time. Edmund Osmańczyk is constantly in Germany. And so on and so forth. People are continually leaving on more or less important missions, everyone is constantly 'driven' to go abroad. Away they run like cats with blisters or bells at their tails. *Cui bono?*

I am also constantly being nagged by friends: Are you leaving? Would you leave? Do you want to leave? Well, I will reply to everyone: no, no, no! I am not leaving, I do not want to leave, I have no intention of leaving, I do not think that one should leave. In Poland it is much more interesting than abroad; Poland today is the liveliest, most interesting country in Europe, a country where the problems and conflicts bothering the world manifest themselves the most. The internal front in the country, the front of labor and reconstruction requires people, and at same time these need to be creative, intelligent, pioneering and courageous people. It is necessary to rebuild the culture destroyed by the occupier, threatened in its existence – in the first place, we need artists, writers, and politicians – we need brains. Let us also remember about the outflow of blood that we suffered through permanent 'London' emigration – as part of it, many eminent writers and scholars whom we would love to see with us in the country remained abroad. Miłosz, Kassern & Co went to promote Polish culture abroad – but to promote something, first you need to have it. Before the war, there was the Academy of Literature in Poland, consisting of beautiful figures. And try to create an Academy today with writers staying in the country! What cucumber salad it would be! (with vinegar and sour cream, to be sure, but no pepper). We have almost nothing – everything has to be made anew. However, this is not hopeless effort – quite the contrary, I think it is very rewarding. Poland will be the way we create it, it is all up to us. We believe in it, let us get rid of the inferiority complex, as dangerous as national megalomania, let us get rid of morbid pessimism, as poisonous as naïve optimism. Let us look on the progress we have made over the past year – how many things have changed for the better. The atmosphere in the country depends on us. Progress is possible, that much is certain, but we must really want it, we must believe in it, we must fight for it – we must believe in Poland and its vital forces. And above all – we need to refocus our strengths – not scatter them about in unnecessary voyages. I understand that Zagórski's trip had a purpose – this astute, keen journalist will bring us from the West more than one valuable synthesis, more than one creative, imposing look at the postwar reality of Europe. I understand that Bieńkowski or Sandauer went to Paris for several months to confront the Polish poetic laboratory with the achievements of new poetry in the dethroned "capital of the world." But whatever is Czesław Miłosz staying in New York for? He has lost touch with Polish reality – this is evident in his clichéd, narrow-minded, biased article in *Przekrój*, wholly unworthy of the intellect of his measure, ("Polska z Nowego Jorku" [Poland from New York City] – No. 66). We have five or six poets of a higher caliber – we cannot afford the luxury of losing even one of them. Gentlemen – do come back to the country! Do not become pessimists, or rats! The Polish ship is sailing on, Polish politics has many achievements – although it may look different to the poet from the perspective of New York. The Polish ship will keep sailing steadier and steadier, in an ever brighter direction – this depends only on us – believe me, there is a great deal to do. But for this you need people, people with brains, authority and courage. So do not leave the country – and whoever has left, let them come back. We cannot afford to scatter!<sup>411</sup>

Kisielewski's column appeared before *Odrodzenie* began to print *Życie w USA*. Miłosz formulated an answer to the allegations and sent it to Kuryluk with a request that it be published. It was an abridgement of a very elaborate and emotional response.<sup>412</sup> Upon

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411 Kisielewski, Stefan: "Nie bądźcie szczurami" [Do Not Be Like Rats], *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1946, issue 71, p. 8.

412 See Miłosz, Czesław: "Do Kisiela" [To Kisiel], Beinecke Library, Box 113, Folder 1609.

reflection, the poet withdrew the text. It contains a harsh criticism of the intellectual atmosphere of the national elite, as well as some intuitions developed later in the famous *No*.

Kisielewski read *Życie w USA* and in the columns he referred to the arguments made by Jan M. Nowak. He never revealed if he had guessed who was hiding under the pseudonym. In the commentary to the last episode, he wrote:

*Odrodzenie* has for some time now been publishing correspondence from the United States, written by a Mr. Jan M. Nowak – correspondence which, both in its rich information content and objectivity, and in its refined literary form, is far from the various demagogic pseudo-reportages, such as those fabricated “upon request” by Mieczysław Wionczek. In his latest correspondence, Mr. Nowak said that the vast majority of white US citizens live in prosperity, and that this happens at the expense of the work of Negroes and South American nations, with the sole exception of Argentina. Latin American nations, says Mr. Nowak, are in economic captivity to the United States, which does not allow them to expand their own industry, but forces them to buy products “made in the USA,” thus extracting their living juices from them.<sup>413</sup>

Speculations about the possible collapse of the totalitarian center did not capture the columnist’s attention. He included Miłosz’s voice in the national discussions about the collapse of colonial powers and the abolition of global economic slavery. This in turn raises the question to what extent the readers of the series were able to read the intentions of the author hidden in generalized formulations, working hypotheses, and jocular associations.

Kisielewski did occasionally respond to Miłosz’s impertinent remarks, and Miłosz himself did not avoid personal comments either. After he provoked the authors from the circle of *Tygodnik Powszechny*,<sup>414</sup> Kisiel gave the following acerbic reply:

In the same issue of *Odrodzenie*, Mr. Jan M. Nowak in correspondence with America warns us against the barren, boring American emptiness; he claims that if I were to be sent to America, I would start writing oratorios in honor of Gomułka. Mr. Nowak is wrong – not about the oratorios – it’s not out of the question – but about my alleged illusions concerning America. I do not doubt that the psychic climate of this country, only just building up its tradition and culture, does not suit me – that is why I would not stay there. But the fact that I can imagine the American boredom perfectly well does not prove that I have to close my eyes to the boredom of home. I see the tragedy of Europe in its desperate defense against the offensive of multiple, total boredom. The paroxysms of France, the hardships of England – these are the convulsions of the culture of the old continent threatened by boredom. Neither Americanism nor Marxism will help here – it must find a cure in itself, in its spiritual attitude built over centuries.<sup>415</sup>

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413 Kisielewski, Stefan: “Pod włos...” [Against the Grain], *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1947, issue 127, p. 8.

414 See Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA*, *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 48, p. 1.

415 Kisielewski, Stefan: “Pod włos...” [Against the Grain], *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1947, issue 43, p. 8.

The polemics between Kisielewski and Jan M. Nowak are the only trace of the official reception of *Życie w USA*. This is symptomatic both from the perspective of Miłosz's work and the history of the literature of Polish People's Republic. The poet does not return to it in his memoirs or in extended interviews. He neither reprinted the series nor did he include it in any of his later books.

## Chapter 4: From Mediation to Meditation: Miłosz's Articles of the Years 1946–1950

In 1980, Miłosz told Anna Frajlich:

For thirty years now, I have worked with the Literary Institute in Paris, headed by Jerzy Giedroyc, and a contributor to the monthly *Kultura*, published by this Institute. Almost all my books appeared there, and this is something that, of course, allows me to speak with some authority about the activities of this entire Institute and publishing house. On the other hand, I have never written for Radio Free Europe during these thirty years. I am an American citizen, I pay taxes, this is an institution funded from my taxes, very useful as a source of information. If it were up to me, I would definitely increase its funding loans, but I thought there was a certain hierarchy that needed to be maintained. That is, I have never had a great desire to be a journalist. (*Rozmowy polskie 1999–2004* [Polish Discussions 1999–2004], 270–271)

The poet practiced this craft before the war, and from 1945 he was a reporter and reviewer for *Przekrój*, a columnist for *Dziennik Polski* and a theater reviewer for *Odrodzenie*. Across the ocean, his journalist's toolkit kept developing. In *Życie w USA* [Life in the USA], Miłosz intertwines the basic press genres related to the reception of information, such as a note, summary, report, chronicle of accidents, and interview with other forms of writing – letters, stories, talks, caricatures, pictures, and essays, thus forming original collages. The remaining journalism often has the character of intermedia reports, when Miłosz comments on films, sculptures, paintings, photographs, satirical drawings, concerts and radio programs, comparing their value with Polish art. He combines narrative character with directness, presenting at the same time a very strong awareness of dialogue and the need for transcultural mediation. It directs him towards – as Daniel-Henri Pageaux calls it – “‘meditation’ literature,” whose representative genres, as comparative literature will have it, are letters, reportages, travel literature, interviews, critical texts, and particularly essays.”<sup>416</sup>

In the years 1946–1950, Miłosz's articles were written regularly, diverse, and abundant, and he himself urged editors to print his articles on an ongoing basis, because – as he explained to Karol Kuryluk – “Please understand that I have a journalistic temperament in a sense and I cannot force myself to write things that will not be published very soon.”<sup>417</sup> This role provided him at least partly with the privileges of the fourth estate. Miłosz used it for expressing his temperament, as

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<sup>416</sup> After: Hejmej, Andrzej; *Komparatystyka. Studia literackie – studia kulturowe* [Comparative Studies. Literary Studies – Cultural Studies], Krakow, 2013, p. 206.

<sup>417</sup> Letter by Czesław Miłosz to Karol Kuryluk from 25 November 1947, *Nowa Dekada Krakowska* 2013, issue 1/2, p. 10.

he called it, or involvement in current public affairs.<sup>418</sup> Even more important in the context of his stay in the United States is the fact that the work of a journalist, and being a foreigner by definition, coincided with his existential situation. He skillfully used his status in the process of his self-education and in shaping the reader.

On the other hand, the poet was aware of the volatile and incidental nature of this type of writing, its temporary and relative significance, which determined its impermanent place on the horizon of his own oeuvre and of literature in general. In 1950, the translation of Cassius Marcellus Clay's memoirs entitled "Zawód dziennikarza czyli 'prawdziwy Amerykanin' w r. 1845" [The Profession of a Journalist or "True American" in 1845], placed in the collection "Małe wypisy historyczne" [A Small Historical Reader], indirectly explained Miłosz's gradual withdrawal from the role of a journalist:

I chose a brick building for my office, with a door covered with sheet metal, so that it would be impossible to burn. I bought two brass 4-pound guns in Cincinnati and put them on the table, ready to fire; while one of the doors, provided with a chain, was so designed that at any moment I could open it to the crowd and start firing the guns. I also equipped my office with Mexican lances and several shotguns. I had six or eight associates ready to defend me. In the event of a defeat, we could escape through the door in the roof. Under the building I placed a powder keg with a fuse that I could light and blow up the editorial staff and all my attackers. If worse came to worst, I was ready to do it.

From the diary of a man named Clay, editor of the paper *Real American*. This was an abolitionist paper, i.e. fighting for the liberation of Blacks. Clay's assistant was a Pole, T. Lewiński, as reported by Mieczysław Haiman in *History of Poles' participation in the American Civil War*, Chicago 1928.<sup>419</sup>

While in the 1940s, the confrontations and polemics correspond to the poet's disposition, the need for mediation gives way to the desire for meditation, and this phrase is illustrated by the essay "Obyczaje" [Customs] from 1950.

## Transoceanic Observations

Miłosz's correspondence in *Przekrój*<sup>420</sup> is predominantly concerned with reporting and mainly covers Poland's position in the world: the first text reports on a meeting

**418** This trait of Miłosz is discussed by Nycz, Ryszard: "Poeta XX wieku w poszukiwaniu formuły "nowego doświadczenia:" przypadek Czesława Miłosza" [A Twentieth Century Poet in Search of a Formula for "New Experience:" the Case of Czesław Miłosz], *op. cit.*, pp. 261–290.

**419** "Małe wypisy historyczne albo czytanki na lato dla miłośników dawnych dobrych czasów" [A Small Historical Reader or Summer Readings for Lovers of the Good Old Days]. Selected and translated by Czesław Miłosz, *Nowa Kultura* 1950, issue 20, p. 3.

**420** "Anglicy o Polsce i Polak o Anglii" [The English on Poland, and a Pole on England], *op. cit.*, and "Polska z Nowego Jorku" [Poland from New York City], *Przekrój* 1946, issue 66, pp. 7–8.

of the English PEN-Club and brings closer the realities of life in England, the second presents the situation of Polish post-war emigration and American assessments of Poles' attitudes in the West. The account from London corresponded in part, although indirectly, to the national need for knowledge about Poland's standing in England and the possibilities of action on the European scene in the context of Stalin's political claims. The emotional speech of a member of the PEN-Club, to whom the author gives the floor, resonates with the mood of disappointed Poles:

Val Gielgud presented a picture of Warsaw to the audience, a precise and shocking picture. He spoke spasmodically, he was at times close to tears. I was in Coventry recently – he said – the city of Coventry is proud of its ruins. Forgive me, but I could not be moved by the ruins of Coventry, they left me utterly indifferent, because I had seen Warsaw.

People in Warsaw live without toilets, buses, taxis or telephones. Every day in Warsaw is a terrible fight with hardships, every day in Poland is a struggle with adversities that none of you has any idea about. Here he raised his voice almost to a shout. – And there are people in England who are taking pity on poor Germans who cry that they are not given enough help. This is the largest humbug imaginable. A disgrace. The Poles who suffer are our friends. The Germans were our enemies and our enemies. The warm response in the Auditorium to this cry from Gielgud, a cry that really came from the bottom of his heart, showed that the vast majority of writers shared the same opinion.<sup>421</sup>

It remains an open question to what extent Miłosz felt the emotional aura and the idealism of the writers' meeting, to what extent he projected the hope for aid and cooperation momentarily awakened by the artistic community onto the political class and the society. This question could not fail to arise, especially in the context of observing the information policy of Great Britain. The author admits that Poles do not have sufficient insight into the current situation of British people, so he does not expect the average knowledge about Poland to be more complete:

Caring for a human is the basic achievement of the human species. I will not discern whether it is good or bad, but the English do not allow audiences to be shown European atrocities. Films where there are ruins, executions, and roundups in England have slim chances. This does not mean that the English do not know what happened in Europe. *The Daily Express* has organized an exhibition of photos from Belsen (admission for adults only), and documentations of the acts perpetrated by the Germans are usually accurate. This reluctance to see the images of crime has its source not necessarily in a sentimental attitude towards the Germans, but rather in wanting to protect the citizens from watching sadistic scenes whose educational influence is doubtful.<sup>422</sup>

The account from London, not devoid of the author's intention to raise the readers' spirits, which was perhaps also something the future consular officer himself needed,

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<sup>421</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: "Anglicy o Polsce i Polak o Anglii" [The English on Poland, and a Pole on England], *op. cit.*

<sup>422</sup> *Ibidem.*

uncertain as he was of the situation. It was also meant to outline the English image of Poland and the Polish view of England. His undisclosed point is the desire to affirm in the public a fair judgment of Poland's situation, recognition of its wartime losses and its merits, and readiness to help in the reconstruction. The short stay in New York triggered a change of tone in the second text, which Miłosz notes in the introduction:

Several months after arriving abroad, I saw Polish affairs more clearly than in the country. Resentments, grudges, the atmosphere of rumors and perverse mockery, and this soreness that never leaves a Pole walking through the streets of Warsaw – all this obscured the real picture, shredded it into fragments of the many wrongs, errors and prejudices. I know very well this news whispered into my ear, fists clenched in anger, and the words scoundrel, criminal, scum repeated over vodka. I know the settling of scores, the blackmail, great fools and small scoundrels, great scoundrels and small fools, real sages and real people of action.

But from here, from New York, one looks at the country as a small part of the great world – and sees it through the merciless judgment of foreigners. One is responsible for the country: since one is a Pole, one cannot say it was not me, he was at fault. It's not me, it's this secretary, or that minister. Whether one wants to or not, one must carry that burden. There is no escape from this and if one thinks there are ways to remain indifferent, then one is wrong.<sup>423</sup>

The commentator spins many threads. One of them is the situation of the London émigré community, especially the soldiers of the Army of General Władysław Anders, whose post-war status and reluctance to return to Poland became increasingly problematic for England; the activities of Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski, including his visit to the United States, used by Republicans to gain support in the election; Prime Minister Stanisław Mikołajczyk's prospects, assessed as better by Poles than in the West. The second set of issues is related to Polish internal politics, mobilization of post-war guerrilla forces, pogroms and antisemitic speeches, the impossibility of a pragmatic political compromise. The third and overarching theme is the perception of Poland in the West, a foreign, “merciless,” perspective in the country's assessments, which Miłosz chooses in order to confront the viewer with the phenomena he himself faced on a daily basis. Accepting it is related to his older beliefs:

During the occupation, in conversations with one of my friends [probably Kroński – E.K.] we came to the conclusion that in the great historical change that is coming to Europe, nations will retain as much of their independence as their historical past is worth. If Albania and France went through a revolution, it will be in France, not in Albania, where the Montesquieus of the new era will be born. It will be the nation's age that will count – youth or seniority in the family of peoples – not just the tribute paid with blood: because the blood is paid by those who have nothing more to sacrifice. Blood is that last, desperate means of payment – and it comes cheap on the market of history. We did not believe in an angel who would descend to repair the wrongs of the Poles because they had suffered so much.<sup>424</sup>

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423 Miłosz, Czesław: “Polska z Nowego Jorku” [Poland from New York City], *op. cit.*

424 *Ibidem.*



Miłosz speaks from the position of someone belonging to many communities, and he considers their future: he puts humanity, as defined in the Enlightenment, to nationhood, understood romantically. For national communities he predicts alienation, and consequently failure, all the more severe the younger a community is. His position expressed during the occupation coincides with the political diagnoses discovered on the other side of the ocean, which does not become a source of satisfaction for him, but rather fury, leading him to level accusations against the national and émigré elites, stigmatize national vices and myths, and attack the press and propaganda. He refers only to comments critical of Poland, made when the Allies were in communication with Stalin regarding the division of power and influence in the world. These comments sought to legitimize the actions of the leaders of the United States and the United Kingdom at the expense of their recent allies – perhaps being aware that this political game was dictated by the acerbic opinions and bitter words of warning. It is possible that the context of his remarks was also his exclusion by the emigration. Regardless of the views expressed in this correspondence, for the first time Miłosz presents an outside perspective on Polish history and its role on the continent. If only for heuristic benefits, he becomes an alien to himself, which deepens the sense of strangeness with which he came to the West.

The essay “Massachusetts”, in turn, is an attempt to transcend the perspective of a European, a Pole who is mainly interested in viewing the Old World in the New. The composition of the article is very well thought out: the events described include two days, from morning to departure in the evening. Condensed time is accompanied by condensed space, which would explain the title of the article – the use of the universal quantifier is justified by his descriptions of New England's landscapes: the area of Mount Holyoke, the town of Northampton, the village of Hadley, the campuses of Smith College, Mount Holyoke College, and Amherst College, and the area between them. This spatial and temporal structure is put in the frame of a literary conceit, perhaps more important for the meaning of the essay – the awakening from a dream. The scene of awakening both opens and organizes the essay:

The dream is heavy. A group of young people is issuing false papers, and every so often someone sneaks out into the other room – there they whisper to each other that the people writing the documents are snitches and that it is madness to trust them. Slowly this nightmare goes out of focus and fills with birdsong. I wake up. Bright sunlight on the abundant, lush green trees in front of the window. A chatter of birds' voices. A summer morning, as joyous as in childhood – were it not for the dream that reminds me that going back in time is impossible. And the birds' voices, not the ones I knew in my childhood. I do not know these trills. A derisive, monotonous exhortation, repeated at different intervals, issued by a bird that I cannot name. I am in New England, in the state of Massachusetts, separated from my childhood by years of nightmares, full of dream faces, which, as I realize, were the faces of my companions of early youth. (...) Once quite bored with the silence of a provincial city, cutting shapes of hearts pierced by an arrow with a penknife on a wooden bench, today's residents of many roadside graves in Europe, Asia and

Africa, workers of Silesian industry, officials of British dominions, teachers in New Zealand have all come together in the Warsaw dream to disturb my peace.<sup>425</sup>

The motif of an awakening, as is known, has a rich cultural tradition, as does the motif of falling asleep – usually the beginning of a fantastic, journey filled with adventure. Miłosz makes a blend of both, and the awakening has an ambivalent character here. The narrator wakes up from a nightmare, but it is not certain whether the pastoral reality of waking is itself real, or if it is on the other side of the mirror, since there is no return to the wonderland of childhood: “Mrs. Pickett is pouring coffee. From the verandas, the trimmed lawns follow a gentle slope towards the town’s alleys. Foamy green forests of the Holyoke mountains opposite are bluish. Tropical heat is in the air.”<sup>426</sup> These words resemble Miłosz’s remarks about America’s childishness, but in the way it is used, this term is more akin to the word *childlike* than *childish*. The memory of Europe calls into question the reality of New England bathed in sunlight – the phrases referring to its fairy-tale origins are meant to emphasize this dissonance. The narrator’s uncertainty results not only from not knowing the language fully, shown here as his inability to name the local birds, but his inability to exchange experiences, which limits communication to the usual small talk.

Not without inspiration from American prose, in particular the social-critical novel of the 1930s, Miłosz asks about the value of the peaceful orderliness that life has imposed here, searching for cracks and dents on the surface of the overall order:

We drive through the campus. Oh the quietness of the groves of Academe! Oh! Buildings overgrown with wine and ivy! Oh large silent, bright, trimmed lawns, with shadows of old trees falling and where gray American squirrels are celebrating their gamboling! Are you really the best place to raise the young generation, who have libraries and laboratories here, and to study music rows of rooms, each of them with a grand piano inside? Marian Anderson and Kuszewitzki come here for concerts, guest lectures are delivered by famous scientists and scholars from all over the world. Or is it perhaps better to educate the young in the most infernal points of the globe, in full view of harm and injustice? I openly say: I do not know. I only know that here all matters are flooded by the current of physiological life, which for humanity is, perhaps, synonymous with happiness. The joy of a healthy body, love, marriage, a child, Mrs. Pickett’s house. Oh, how it spreads through the air here. If I stayed here for a while, I would fall into eroticism, curing myself of all my dreams in this way, driving away from the Erinyes. I’m already smacking and licking my lips as we pass gorgeous, handsome girls with color on their mouths.<sup>427</sup>

Miłosz’s story, structured in accordance with the traditional topology of the road, illustrates the process of validating space-time, which is also a verification of one’s imagination about it. He studies forms of organization and functions of urban

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425 Miłosz, Czesław: “Massachusetts”, *op. cit.*

426 *Ibidem.*

427 *Ibidem.*

space, searching for symbolic meanings and cultural archetypes. He observes the transformations which centers of secular and spiritual authority of European origin underwent in America:

There are two phenomena that stimulate reflection. These are the library and the church. Twenty houses along the road already have a building with the inscription: Library. Sometimes it is a tiny building, but it is there. In larger towns, it is usually one of the most magnificent buildings, and its contents are not inferior to a Public Library in pre-war Warsaw. And it must be added that they can be used free of charge. The importance of religion in the United States is generally not appreciated, although it is ostensibly known that escape from religious persecution in Europe was one of the main motors of colonization. I visited a college chapel. There is one for all Christian denominations. Presbyterians, Quakers, Lutherans and Congregationalists together sing psalms and listen to the teachings of preachers. Not infrequently, speeches in this chapel are given by rabbis. Over the last two centuries, religion in the United States has become a social institution, with the subduing of the dogmatic side. It became the earthly matter of organizing the community in the best way, and there is more talk in this chapel about the United Nations, helping Europe, and praying for peace than about the afterlife.<sup>428</sup>

Miłosz's remarks about American Catholicism seem particularly valuable. In a country where it was not favored, and John F. Kennedy was the first Catholic president, the church creates a religious-political enclave and strives, as it once did in Europe, for the supra-ethnic universalism with a shaky basis and dubious value:

Only Catholics stay away from the chapel of all faiths. Disciplined, representing growing influence, based on Americans of Irish, Polish, Italian and South German origin, they have their own policies, a state within a state. During Bór-Komorowski's tours, a certain Irish lawyer asked my friend who Bór was, because the parish instructed them to attend all demonstrations in his honor. The lawyer ordered his sons to get in a car and drive from town to town, listening to Polish speeches everywhere, of which they did not understand one word. He was told in the parish that Poland was important for Catholicism, because it had as many as four million inhabitants. This is the policy of Cardinal Spellman.<sup>429</sup>

The poet studies the rhythm of the local space – its rhythm he will consider so prominent that he will capture it much later in the poem about New England entitled “To jedno” [This One Thing]. Next, he goes on to analyze the functions of nature and the local ways of using it. His attention is drawn to a river and forest.

At this point, the earlier sense of alienation returns, underscored by the metaphor of the forest as stage decoration, but not only. For Miłosz, what seems far more important is that in a world where nature is treated as a passive background, a pleasing embellishment for civilization, a different human identity is formed. Furthermore, as Miłosz believes, a man with an identity so different from that of his

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428 *Ibidem.*

429 *Ibidem.*

native Europe will encounter the foreign world sooner than he may expect – he will share the fate of the figure from the bad dream, just as he and his peers from the provinces once did. This, in turn, tells us not to ignore the nuances, and to tenaciously keep comparing the incomparable. This entails, firstly, recognizing the status of the enchanted land as merely temporary, and secondly, it entails the need to carry on the dialogue between cultures despite the lack of space and in the face of multicultural alienation.<sup>430</sup> In the context of his own experience, Miłosz considers whether this is possible. The pessimism of his wording suggests that he kept his original intuitions: even as he travels back and forth to Northampton, he does not free himself from his atopia and distrust of the order of the New World. Or perhaps he does and he does not – unambiguous assessment is made impossible by the paradox of the local museum:

Northampton has a population of 25,000. With some skepticism, I take the steps toward the art gallery. It is as if one were going to visit the art gallery in the town of Jędrzejów, or Mińsk Mazowiecki, and I mean no disrespect to these towns. Oh, you foolish European! Do you know what (private gifts) you are going to find in this building? Let us list several positions: A self-portrait by Francisco Goya. A Poussin. A Cézanne. Four landscapes by Corot. Five paintings by Courbet, including the great canvas “Dressing the Dead Girl.” Two paintings by Degas. Three by Delacroix. Five by Gericault. A Claude Lorrain. A Renoir. A Monet. A Rousseau le Douanier. A Picasso, Rouault, Bonnard, Constable, Ruisdel. Byzantine mosaics. Greek sculptures. And a great deal of modern sculptures and modern American paintings, including the fresco by the great Mexican painter Diego Rivera. Enough? I think so, so I will say nothing of French and Italian medieval sculptures, or Chinese vases. “The Smith College Museum of Art is a small museum. Its collections are neither extensive, nor exhaustive,” says the introduction to the museum catalog.<sup>431</sup>

Thus, the collection of the modest New England museum casts into doubt Miłosz’s earlier remarks on the value of constructing even a semi-magical reality. This is where the narrator’s views are re-evaluated, which suspends the ironic attitude, noting how valuable the observed mixture of righteousness and naivety is:

I have to go to the flower shop to buy flowers for Mrs. Pickett, thanking her for the hospitality and wishing silently that the shadow of my dreams would not linger in the walls of her house. Let her look at the blue slopes of Mount Holyoke every day, let her make her jellies, and let her life run its normal course till the end, in the normality that so disturbs American writers. I hope that as a well-mannered person, I will not look into my suitcase, where the book I read on the way is, by a European author, about convulsions on the continent of Eurasia.<sup>432</sup>

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**430** It is worth adding that as early as 1941, Edward F. Haskell used the term ‘multicultural’ in the work *Lance: A Novel about Multicultural Men*, New York, 1941, and in 1947 in Pittsburgh the Foreign Service Institute was opened for teaching diplomats with considerations for intercultural reflection.

**431** Miłosz, Czesław: “Massachusetts”, *op. cit.*

**432** *Ibidem.*

## “Notatniki nowojorskie” [The New York Notebooks]

At the end of 1946 Miłosz published in *Przekrój* two articles titled “Notatnik nowojorski” [The New York Notebook]<sup>433</sup>. The practice of naming travel records with the word ‘notebook’ was more common at the time. On the one hand, this strategy reveals their author’s search for more open and *silva*-type forms, which expose “spontaneity” and the characteristics of an “unfinished rough copy.”<sup>434</sup> On the other hand, it is a harbinger of the essayistic and autobiographical turn in twentieth-century literature.

The term ‘notebook’ also suggests that a narrative about a city such as New York can hardly be captured by any literary genre, which is why it is ruled – as the metropolis itself – by the principle of collection, incessant ordering, and continuous accumulation. The non-linear character of the narrative corresponds to the non-linearity of cognition / writing in and about a city in which navigation, resulting from simultaneous absorption of stimuli from different sources, determines one’s mode of movement and perception.

The first of the notebooks contains eleven remarks of unequal length, with various types of facts, figures, and insights presented in a diversity of forms. The collage includes remarks on population figures, a literary sketch of West Point, a reflection on *The New Yorker*, a short account of a polo match, examples of racist attitudes towards African Americans, complaints about the climate, a description of a picnic and lunch with Christian Gauss. The mosaic-like, or perhaps kaleidoscopic composition, smooth transitions from description of detail to a sketch of a panorama, the fragmentary and multi-perspectival nature of the narrative are meant to illustrate the richness of experiences and forms, and the pace of life.<sup>435</sup> The alternately combined static and dynamic elements build a city which, in Miłosz’s narration, resembles a revolving stage on which he is at times an actor, a spectator, the narrator, or the director. The act of writing with the city – or more precisely, the act of writing with New York – has the character peculiar to this metropolis and, along with other attempts at portraying it, co-creates the history of its accounts, as unique as the metropolis itself. “Notatnik nowojorski” [The New York Notebook] in many ways – *toutes proportions*

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433 Miłosz, Czesław: “Notatnik nowojorski” [The New York Notebook], *Przekrój* 1946, issue 70, p. 11 and issue 79, p. 11.

434 See Nycz, Ryszard: *Sylwy współczesne*, [Modern-day Silvas] Krakow, 1996, p. 15.

435 Perhaps Miłosz was inspired by the book *Visiteaux Américains* by Jules Romains that he reviewed in the essay “Nowa Ameryka” [New America] for *Pion* in 1937. As he wrote at the time: “Gathering accurate data on the standard of living and lifestyle of New Yorkers, and conversion of these data into French conditions satisfies our hunger for concrete information, awakening at the same time melancholic and joyful observations on the insignificance of earnings in Poland and the unheard-of cheapness of basic necessities.” In Miłosz, Czesław: *Przygody młodego umysłu. Publicystyka i proza 1931–1939* [Adventures of a Young Mind. Journalism and Prose 1931–1939] Collected and edited by Agnieszka Stawiarska, Krakow, 2003, p. 178.

*gardées* – resembles *Manhattan Transfer*, whose essence is the pulsating rhythm of the metropolis. An important novelty is emphasizing the importance of one’s own body in relation to the city – Miłosz’s complaints about the climatic conditions of the sauna is an indirect discovery of the possibilities and importance of the body in the new situation. Miłosz realizes the extent to which his body limits and betrays him on the physical level and how it defines him culturally – he belongs to the community of the whites, opposite the black community:

Groups of laughing Negroes pass by. How do these elevator operators, chauffeurs, transporters and cleaners change when they are having fun! A big black girl in a pink dress is coming straight at us. The whites of her eyes are unconscious – is she drunk on the sun or on alcohol? She mumbles something – half-singing, and right then you can already see what can be called the negro spasm running through her entire body: her legs bend rhythmically in the knees, she moves in the rhythm of a violent dance, however barely marked. A moment more, and right there, under the American sun, Africa will appear. The white people looking at this clearly do not care for what they see.<sup>436</sup>

For Miłosz – not necessarily as for a proxemist – New York is also a system of new sensory worlds, in which he decodes the cultural meanings that residents attribute to the distances, smells, tactile sensations, and the feeling of warmth of someone else’s body. At the same time, he sees how the metropolis, i.e. the repertoire of roles and costumes that provide identity, classifies him, which he resists, at least on the level of ironic awareness.

It is also for the first time, looking at New York’s bridges, that Miłosz expresses his admiration for the beauty of technical civilization. However, New York becomes a historical document for him, whose grammar of construction would inspire one to explore its deep layers, or to consciously translate it into a grammar of description. This general reflection is supposed to lead one toward other issues. Miłosz’s New York has no history; it is a bundle of activities and events in whose rush one needs to find one’s own way, rhythm and tempo.

Another novelty in relation to the previous articles is the widening of the geographical horizon: thanks to the sketches of the Hudson and Delaware Rivers, the metropolis gains the backdrop of landscape. An analysis of the landscapes of the State of New York around the city would allow one to speak – after Hippolyte Taine – of a certain influence of the landscape on Miłosz’s style, and to distinguish zones of mental climates that the poet found for his own needs. It is on the banks of rivers that he undertakes the fundamental issue of the relationship between man, civilization and nature, including the characteristic American ways of communing with nature – after “Massachusetts”, “Notatnik nowojorski” [The New York Notebook] is another record of this reflection. Nature and the metropolis, as seen by a former resident of

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436 Miłosz, Czesław: “Notatnik nowojorski” [The New York Notebook], *Przekrój* 1946, issue 70, p. 11.

Wilno, although equally expansive, do not have equal chances – civilization seizes ever larger territories, but the vision of nature's victory makes one approach American triumphalism with irony:

If a cataclysm happened that swept away the people of the United States, the asphalt of the road on which we are standing would not last more than a few years. Take a look at the devilish power of this vegetation, driven upward by the moisture and heat of the tropical summer. On a road traversed by cars, it breaks through the surface, cracks the asphalt and spreads green leaves in the sun. It would make short work of these traces of human existence, covering everything with its mantle of lushness unknown in Europe. It would not spare the highways – great roads with three lanes in each direction. First, it would sneak in between the joints of the concrete slab, then it would push up the slabs and wrap around them from below.<sup>437</sup>

The background to this observation is the conviction that the principle of coexistence in the world of nature and culture is a struggle, and civilization imitates the laws of biology.

The poet's famous ambivalence in the perception of nature is manifested here, and at the same time his ecological awareness, developed during the Californian period, is born.

The cognitive perspective in the first “Notatnik nowojorski” [The New York Notebook] is also broadened by the fact that the phenomena of metropolitan life are reported and commented on – apart from the narrator – also by his discussion partners, or he tries to capture the views of its inhabitants. Going beyond the roles offered by the city, events on the borders and intersections interest him the most, which “Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook] shows when the narrator, driving through New York's ghetto neighborhoods directs his attention to the border zones. The city is a scene of events, most interesting of which are those that take place outside the script of social behaviors. In this sense, one can say that Miłosz is looking for his own New York, for the energy generated in it from the clash of antagonisms – in another place he will call these situations “clashes.”

Subsequent kaleidoscopic snapshots achieve a greater degree of objectivity, which deepens as the narrator's identity is enriched: he shares his new awareness of a white, a Pole, and a European that he owes to life in New York, capturing the city to some extent as a figure of (searching for) one's identity. This last self-description allows him to look into the relations between the Old and the New World and reflect on the history of colonization of the continent. Miłosz's observations of New York and the surrounding area are presented from a historical perspective, imagining the beginnings of life on the East Coast for those who came here by boat, observed in hiding by Indians – it seems that this simultaneous look through the lens of the present and the past is connected with Miłosz's work on his invention, which he will later call the “telescopic eye.” He combines the thought of colonization with his own

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<sup>437</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: “Notatnik nowojorski” [The New York Notebook], *Przekrój* 1946, issue 70, p. 11.

experience of maladjustment and distance, and develops it in the second “Notatnik nowojorski”:

When the first colonists traveled to America on the Mayflower, the American land was thousands of miles away from Europe, separated by a turbulent and dangerous ocean. By 1946 this distance had not diminished at all; in contrast, I would venture a claim that it had even increased. The years 1939-1945 contributed the most in this regard. A European, walking along the streets of New York, constantly catches himself feeling that it is a dream, that he has returned to the lifestyle and the problems of fifteen years ago.<sup>438</sup>

The author questions the then theory of exceptionalism.<sup>439</sup> The identity of a European, constructed and imposed on him in America, has no room for his Eastern and Central European experience:

During my stay in America I have already learned that I am a European and that whether I come from Poland, Hungary or the Netherlands is of no greater importance than it would be in Poland whether one came from the town of Płock or Lublin. In Warsaw or in Krakow, Europe is an abstraction. Here it is my homeland, divided into small county-states. When I admit that I am a European, it does not sound proud or snobbish here. Quite the contrary, it is an admission of something poor, grey and humiliated.

Just as a Greek who came to Rome in the Tiberian era had to admit to Greece, a small country that had lost its splendor.<sup>440</sup>

Even then, he considers this approach to be wrong and the use of large geographical and cultural quantifiers to be deceptive. However, when he learns how Slavic immigrants are perceived in America, Miłosz makes the European perspective a framework of speaking about Polish history, literature and customs. He does not so much protect himself in it, as he builds a vision and definition of Europeanness. Critical of American generalizations, he will make a similar mistake in 1946, firstly, by putting New York in the center of viewing American culture and, secondly, by considering the lifestyle and thinking of New Yorkers to be characteristic for Americans in general. This may come as a surprise, as in the review of the book *Visiteaux Américains* book he wrote:

The description of New York, very simple and clear, is characterized by a large plasticity. Delicate and accurate strokes bring out one fragment after another, but sort of in passing, and without effort. For example, the comparison of the walls of tall buildings to the view of some districts of

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**438** Miłosz, Czesław: “Notatnik nowojorski” [The New York Notebook], *Przekrój* 1946, issue 79, p. 11.

**439** See Bungert, Heike, Wendt, Simon: “Transnationalizing American Studies: Historian’s Perspectives.” In *American Studies. Shifting Gears*. Edited by Birte Christ, Christian Kloeckner, Elizabeth Schäfer-Wünsche, Michael Butter, Heidelberg 2010, pp. 89–116.

**440** Miłosz, Czesław: “Notatnik nowojorski” [The New York Notebook], *Przekrój* 1946, issue 79, p. 11. In “Notatnik nowojorski,” the author for the first time uses the popular framework of capturing the US-European relations as parallel to the relationship between ancient Rome and Greece.



Paris, or praising the vendor stalls in Times Square. Although the author stipulates that one must not judge the whole of North America on the basis of the “gate welcoming the newcomer from Europe,” the chapters on New York win the competition with the others.<sup>441</sup>

The author comments on bookshop best seller lists, a discussion on the control of atomic weapons, religiousness, the theater scene and the receptivity of the local audience. Interestingly, he does not explore the specific urban, or metropolitan character that New York creates, nor does he penetrate the process of urbanization of its inhabitants, or the anthropomorphization of the city, which the residents carry out in return. He does not trace the formation of both sides of this relationship. He outlines the mental climate of the metropolis, and on the other hand he abstracts away from observations, constructs ironic typologies and puts forward very general conclusions: “A country that is terrifyingly healthy, with no centuries of memories, which has drunk its fill of milk and Coca-Cola, a country that unquestionably has no sense for tragedy.”<sup>442</sup> After numerous journeys and not without inspiration from Faulkner’s prose, a year later he will say that “America is above all thousands of provincial small towns.”<sup>443</sup>

Miłosz searches for ways to overcome his sense of alienation in New York, for his own meaningful universe and for the language to describe his experience. Taming the metropolis is achieved – in succession – through books, magazines and people. The former resident of Wilno, like Lewis Mumford, examines its dimension of a *civitas*, and this turns out to be the expected form of mediation. Simultaneously, he negotiates the European and American meanings of common ideas, redefining them in the post-war realities of Western civilization. Not accepting the American vision of Europe, he criticizes the Eurocentric perception of America:

Let us finally air out our concepts a little. Europe is no longer Biarritz and Lido and Parisian opera. It is a poor organism that has lost its strength and, in addition, with the German boil festering in the middle, is yearning for unification in vain, while its arms and legs are, for the time being, pledged in the game. America is by no means a country of oddities and eccentricities, of which jokes are told, the good-natured uncle Sam across the great ocean. The globe, divided politically as never before, is technically a unity. If the duty to care for the future of the human species means something, then certain symptoms in America can be seen as a matter that is deadly serious.<sup>444</sup>

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441 Miłosz, Czesław: “Nowa Ameryka” [New America]. In *idem: Przygody młodego umysłu* [Adventures of a Young Mind], *op. cit.*, p. 178.

442 Miłosz, Czesław: “Notatnik nowojorski” [The New York Notebook], *Przekrój* 1946, issue 79, p. 11. Analogically, the poet shows no interest in the literature whose scenery is formed by the American metropolis and corporate culture – the beginnings of this prose date back to the beginning of the twentieth century, and the writing of Henry Blake Fuller.

443 Nowak J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA*, *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 1, p. 7.

444 Miłosz, Czesław: “Notatnik nowojorski” [The New York Notebook], *Przekrój* 1946, issue 79, p. 11.

For these negotiations he needs partners – in the second “New York Notebook” this role is played by the musician Sommers.<sup>445</sup> His introduction seems to be a maneuver necessary to explain what he thinks and why, what he does not agree with and for what reasons – to show the arguments of the discussant is a prerequisite for himself exposing his own. The non-linear narrative character of the ‘notebook’ is accompanied by the circulation of discourses, whose aim is to achieve the ideal of heteroglossy.

Social context creates meanings, which is why the author makes a discussion with Sommers, which turns in some places into a sharp polemic, the constructional principle of the article. This move is one of the compositional forms of “Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook], in which this method is one of the principal rules of organization. The dispute with Sommers permits objectivization, which Miłosz achieved in his poetry through dialogues, letter-poems, dedications and monologues addressed to many addressees.<sup>446</sup> The dispute shows how Miłosz defines the city. It is an agora, a marketplace of ideas, where literature plays the role, as Ryszard Nycz put it, “of the art of articulating public affairs and a medium and center for organizing intellectual life in the public sphere.”<sup>447</sup> In the dispute, he is a poet *par excellence*, finding his own place in New York through protest and negotiation. The metropolis does not resemble a mere decoration, as Miłosz wrote about New York 1946, but it is a stage of interaction, determined by factors from many spheres and sources. If he maintains and emphasizes the distance, it is the distance of a participant, which he became as part of his “private duties,” before he became a member of New York’s intellectual circles.

Miłosz’s journalism, seen as a process of getting to know America, leads with sensory perception, witness accounts in which the act of writing is closely connected with the act of movement, and then through mental movement in time and space, through transcending subjectivism, through inclusion of polemic voices, to the search for the keys to the symbolic culture in the world of word and image.

## Essays on Culture

In 1947, after the diplomat moved to Washington, he wrote three articles, probably unintentionally arranged into a miniature cycle of reflections on the cultural life in

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**445** No published works of Miłosz to date contain any mention of Sommers.

**446** Miłosz described this principle in the same year in “List półprywatny o poezji” [A Semi-Private Letter about Poetry], *Twórczość* 1946, issue 5.

**447** See Nycz, Ryszard, *Poeta XX wieku w poszukiwaniu formuły “nowego doświadczenia”: przypadek Czesława Miłosza*, [A Twentieth Century Poet in Search of a Formula for “New Experience:” the Case of Czesław Miłosz] *op. cit.*, p. 266. Perhaps this may be the explanation for Miłosz’s lack of interest in the dynamic transformations of New York’s architecture in the 1940s, related to the work of such eminent architects as Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius and Alexander Calder.

the United States. Both interesting and characteristic is the fact that he described it from the perspective of New York, where the poet was only travelling. In the articles, he deals successively with the culture of the printed word,<sup>448</sup> painting<sup>449</sup> and film.<sup>450</sup>

In the article about the press and book market, Miłosz outlines a map of media and literary circulations, stipulating that “this is only a map: no mountains or chasms can be seen in it.”<sup>451</sup> His panorama contains a great deal of observations, many of which have not lost their relevance. What does he talk about? The poet discovers the principle of *infotainment* – he resorts to it in *Życie w USA* and other works of journalism:

I am not one of the supporters of the very clear political line of *Time* magazine, and many Americans will agree with me that the image of events one gets from reading it is at least inaccurate. However, I do have a sincere appreciation for the excellent journalistic work. *Time* magazine will never report on a political event without an anecdote. It will note the facial expression of a statesman giving a speech, follow his gestures, capture the joke cracked backstage, coin an apt phrase. This interest in the detail used as a lens that reflects the general situation is characteristic of good American journalists, and the lack of this sense in many European countries is at times a source of many misunderstandings.<sup>452</sup>

Miłosz observes the development of the news market in the direction of intermedia – the initiatives of *Time* and *Life* of producing documentaries on social and educational issues. He maintains the story of the American press in the convention of a mountain walk and, when he reaches the literary magazines, describes them as a place where “the air becomes thin, and the number of readers decreases.”<sup>453</sup> – his tacit criteria of description are the socioeconomic coordinates, traditionally understood as a system of strata. He draws attention to the lack of cultural weeklies addressed to someone similar to a member of the European intelligentsia, such as the *Nouvelles-Littéraires* or *Wiadomości Literackie*, which makes him consider the borderlands of the sociology of culture. Applying geographical and socioeconomic categories, he notes that there are few places in New York where one can obtain magazines addressed to the most enduring amateurs of cultural rock climbing:

But these already are the kind of heights where it is difficult to breathe and I fear that the conditions there are somewhat close to boredom. If we go to 42nd Street by the Public Library, at the newsstands there we will get a copy of *Partisan Review*, a bimonthly, English in language,

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**448** In the article “Książki i pisma w Stanach Zjednoczonych” [Books and Journals in the United States].

**449** In the article “Abstrakcja i poszukiwania” [Abstraction and Searching].

**450** In the article “O kilku filmach” [On Several Films].

**451** Żagarysta [Miłosz, Czesław]: “Książki i pisma w Stanach Zjednoczonych” [Books and Journals in the United States], *op. cit.*, p. 3.

**452** *Ibidem*, p. 1.

**453** *Ibidem*, p. 2.

French in spirit and, as is usual for hybrids of this kind, raising some doubts, although they do publish the best English, French and American names there. We can also get a copy of *Art News* and *Theatre News*, very commercial magazines incidentally. Another step, and we are already in the land of specialists, among a multitude of professional journals in various disciplines, published by universities, or among “reviews,” which have their own subscribers and appear publicly only in the library reading room. Such critical literary monthlies such as *The Kenyon Review*, *Sewanee Review*, or *Yale Review* cannot be purchased at newsstands – no willing buyers.<sup>454</sup>

The last remark is interesting in that Miłosz does not mention anywhere else his knowledge of these magazines or the discussions taking place on their pages – so it is not known to what extent he assimilated and thought over the arguments of disputes conducted, for example, by supporters of the New Criticism and writers of the South.

Using the metaphor of a map, he describes cultural phenomena as closely related to places, which leads him to the conclusion how much literary life in the USA differs from European one.

This intuition leads him toward thinking in terms of the locality of literature, although it does not take into account racial, ethnic and linguistic diversity. Although Miłosz’s map is supposed to capture regional differences, distinguishing important geographical and cultural areas, it only outlines the continent of white, educated writers writing in English, familiar to Europeans. On the other hand, the economic criterion applied implicitly allows us to grasp the reasons why it is impossible to build organizations representing the creative community on the European model:

A writer who vegetates on 250 dollars a month, writing for inferior subordinate magazines, would probably come to meetings, because membership in an association would lift him socially. But Hemingway, who received more than \$200,000 just for the rights to filming *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, prefers to sail his yacht to Bermuda – and the same is repeated on a smaller scale in other comparisons.<sup>455</sup>

The close relationship between culture and economics is revealed in the discussions of the American specifics of “literary production:” the shortened impact of a book, whose life cycle has become no longer than that of a press article, the abolition of traditional thematic, formal and stylistic divisions, which blurred the difference between fiction and other genres of literature, and the consequences of understanding the success of a book in terms of sales. Miłosz subtly analyses the differences between the attempts at self-censorship of writers who want to break through, and the practices of dealing with the moral censorship imposed on many levels of the publishing process in order to protect the taboos of society. He devotes so much space to these issues in his conviction that on both sides of the Atlantic there is an awareness of the various

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454 *Ibidem*, p. 2.

455 *Ibidem*, p. 2.

mechanisms governing the Old World and the New World of culture. Ignorance of these issues, with the current division of Europe by the Iron Curtain (the essay is the only one in which he uses this term) affects future cooperation. This is where Miłosz's well-known tone of appeal for dialogue on cultural issues is heard, and it is accompanied by specific descriptions of the conditions to be met so that it may be fruitful:

America (...) is entering a period of international responsibility in a state of underdevelopment of its arms, which would be able to reach across borders and through walls with good will. (...) If one considers that we are living in a period when one may fly from Honolulu to Cairo over the North Pole without stopping, and the propeller plane is giving way to the jet plane – it is hard not to come to the conclusion that knowledge of the globe at the level from 200 years ago cannot suffice today. The US, by virtue of its power and importance, certainly has duties, although its structure, which yields good results when it comes to producing a new type of aircraft, electronic oven or electric sewing machine, is awkward when it comes to deeds that are impossible to classify as either actions taken for profit or for philanthropic and political reasons.<sup>456</sup>

Miłosz's presentiment of the globalization of culture was indeed extraordinary, and the historical conditions for sharing it, as was often the case, were unfavorable. The essay about contemporary visual art uses a similar frame of reference: the achievements and opportunities of the artistic avant-garde are subjected here to a multilateral assessment, depending on the point selected on the artistic map of America, Europe and Poland, at the same moments of history. The impulse for reflecting on the value of avant-garde art and the possibilities of developing realism is provided by a visit to the Peggy Guggenheim Art of This Century Gallery, which was open on Manhattan until 1947. No specific works or names are mentioned here, but it can be assumed that the accusation of “betraying the avant-garde” mentioned in the essay is leveled against Europeans by the protégés of the Foundation from Greenwich Village, including Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline, Lee Krasner and Arshile Gorky. A visit to the exhibition provides an excuse to search for an answer to the question that intrigued Theodor Adorno at the time: “In what state of sensitivity and artistic tastes did we come out of the war?”<sup>457</sup> This is how Miłosz sees this matter:

If I tried to apply it to myself, I would have to admit that the exuberance of color and luxuriance of abstract forms seem to me to be something similar to paradise lost. The admiration for color and boldness of forms remains, but it is not sufficiently acrid. When we say “the night of history,” and “the darkness of wartime years” – these are perhaps not mere figures of speech, or turns of phrase; they also mean that we are inclined to imagine the world in darkness, where brightness is a cause for shame, just like lack of tact. Was it not for this reason that I noticed in myself a fondness for Goya's painting, in which he found satisfaction in black, and in Manet's painting – black and pearl, in Rembrandt, whose subject is always twilight, from where one

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<sup>456</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2.

<sup>457</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: “Abstrakcja i poszukiwania” [Abstraction and Searching], *op. cit.*, p. 3.

place emerges – a hand, an outline of a face, illuminated, as if occupying the darkness? (...) And in late Picasso's work, what a powerful means of construction is the repulsive black. If Degas, then only because, despite the lightness of his themes, he was restrained and ironic. Perhaps this austerity simply attracts – an austerity that forces many artists to express themselves in a dim, joyful gamut. This passion for a particular color could be explained by the fact that there is so much discussion about realism: the concept is associated with special means, with particular restraint, but relatively freely.<sup>458</sup>

Admiration for color and form mixes with the emotional distance of a European grown not only on the ground of artistic transformations, but also in connection with a broader historical experience. American avant-garde artists' lack of connection to their European predecessors is not due to the lack of a common artistic language, but due to the lack of a common language of experience. History – as Miłosz argues – cannot, however, take away the voice and rights of art, and this is – as he discreetly suggests – what is happening in Poland, where simultaneous criticism of the avant-garde and postulating a return of realism have strictly current, non-artistic foundations. This situation inspires us to reflect on the principles and possibilities of contemporary realism. The ideological project, ironically summarized in three points: “1) the artist may present only some things (the subject matter); 2) so that it is ‘lifelike’ in the sense that everyone will point their fingers and say: “Oh! A house. Oh, a general!”; 3) and present them in such a way as to awaken certain feelings and passions, considered beneficial *a priori*, in the greatest possible number of viewers.”<sup>459</sup> Miłosz confronts realism of vision. Paradoxically, such reasoning is not too far from the thought of Paul Klee, who believed that art not so much imitates visible things as it renders them visible.

Miłosz presents the realism of such an attempt using examples of contemporary African American art. He emphasizes that his impressions from the exhibition of Black art, which arose in contrast to his impressions from the Peggy Guggenheim gallery, refer only to the works of art and not to the situation of the artists – he wants to remove the suspicion that by describing the values of this art he promotes politically engaged art. He says something quite different: a new realism is being born in both Americas, and its creation does not invalidate the search for the avant-garde:

Anyone who denied the significance of the progress made in the art of the 20th century, especially by France, would betray an exceptional poverty of the mind. (...) Those for whom greyness and boredom in art are associated with “political progressiveness” I can reassure: it is the artistically progressive art that is connected on the American continent with the concept of political progress, and the painting of Mexico and Cuba, for example, is a powerful factor in the struggle for the future of these countries.<sup>460</sup>

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458 *Ibidem*, p. 3.

459 *Ibidem*, p. 4.

460 *Ibidem*, p. 4.

The most interesting comments in the essay transcend the discussion on the fate of the avant-garde movement and pseudo-realism. Miłosz observes revaluations in American visual arts, where advertising and film, rather than painting and sculpture, represent national art. He points out the direction of development of the local art of the image, anticipating its future in the rise of animated film and the comic book although, as do his contemporaries, he ignores the mural art found at railway stations, airports and in urban buildings.<sup>461</sup> Beyond the ocean, he broadens his glossary of visual art terms, transcending racial and ethnic boundaries, gaining an orientation in the new politics of art. It is not known whether his awareness of art circulations was broadened by discussions of critics and artists with the participation of expressionists and supporters of figurative painting.

As we know, Edward Hopper, Georgia O'Keeffe and Andrew Wyeth left New York in protest against abstractionists and assumed the position of outsiders, while disputes with them inspired artists in subsequent decades. The poet knew the views of Clement Greenberg, who was associated with *The Nation*, *The New Yorker* and *Partisan Review*, where he popularized the term 'high-class kitsch' as early as 1946. The article would suggest that he was more interested in the arguments of other supporters of representation – Romare Bearden, Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siquerios, as well as Horace Pippin, whose paintings devoted to John Brown Miłosz discusses in detail. He is also interested in the sculpture of Richmond Barthé, known for his works depicting deserving African Americans – it is his famous work "The Negro Looks Ahead" from 1940 that he admires.

Miłosz begins his account of developments in cinema<sup>462</sup> with praise for Disney's feature films (citing the examples of *Fantasia* and *Dumbo*), emphasizing that their value lies in freeing the imagination, rather than in technology. He also questions the view he encountered in England and at the beginning of his stay in the United States that Americans were not interested in war cinema. He discusses the weight and impact of this topic using examples of films screened in New York: the neo-realist drama *Rome, Open City* [*Roma, città aperta*] directed by Roberto Rossellini (one may ask to what extent it was the inspiration for Miłosz's poem "Dwaj w Rzymie" [Two in Rome]) and the Swiss film *The Last Chance* directed by Leopold Lindtberg. He discusses the French film *Goupi mains rouges* [*It Happened at the Inn*], which in his opinion manifests the differences between European and American cinema. To Miłosz, the Anglo-Saxon temperament manifests itself in factographic film, while that of continental Europe – in artistic film:

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<sup>461</sup> See Foertsch, Jacqueline: *American Culture in the 1940s*, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>462</sup> The poet does not mention that at that time he also watched the films of Orson Wells, film noir or Alfred Hitchcock's famous *Notorious* (1946) and *Rope* (1948).

Europe is serious. And naïveté, or lack of distinction between great human matters and small human matters is the downfall of any work of art, because this is not an era when one can afford to be naïve with impunity. Americans, who, like the English, are masters of the documentary film, excellent press and film journalists, all too often permit themselves to be naïve in artistic film. Too frequently even a good subject (...) in their hands turns into a crime story, not to mention the flood of trashy musicals featuring great stars.<sup>463</sup>

The article touches upon an issue that goes beyond the sphere of cinema – it formulates the conditions that a work of art must meet in order for it to be of high quality:

Ultimately, in order to make a good film, write a poem or a novel, one needs the backing of experience that determines the proper place for life's events. Besides, Western Europe has the capital of visual culture. Reaching for this capital at a time of great political upheavals provides good conditions for the creation of outstanding film works. I saw entire halls full of the greatest Rembrandts and El Grecos in Washington, I saw crowds of receptive, hungry audiences. However, I do think that a young Frenchman or an Italian, who took part in the work on a post-war film has not less, but perhaps more visual culture than the old-timers of Hollywood.<sup>464</sup>

The importance of European cinema would be determined by a certain poetics of experience, which is an expression of a reservoir of experiences in an aesthetic shape selected from a reservoir of tradition, allowing one to find the most appropriate language and dimension for them. Miłosz's review of films draws attention to the idea that culture can be an important item in the national income, and that it can be seen as a branch of economic development.

Miłosz's point goes beyond issues of keeping a positive economic balance. He understands the propaganda value or, to put it today's terms, the image-projecting benefits of participation in the global circulation of culture. The appeal to treat Polish subjects in domestic art as if they were international subjects, so that they might be accepted by a foreign audience, was as obvious as it was controversial in those days. The last essay from 1947, "Na Independence Day" [For Independence Day],<sup>465</sup> has a similar potential. Miłosz uses the occasion to express important issues, putting them the form he considered optimal at the time. As in his previous articles, he tries the principle of the telescopic eye, which observes history in several moments at the same time. The essay is constructed around the thought of historical acceleration, which forces us to think about history on a macro scale, enabling us to track down important phenomena and tendencies. The author begins the argument as follows:

When the 4th of July is coming – the Independence Day in the United States – there are reasons for us to think about the changing pace of history. Just think: Egyptian civilization and the Aztec temples of the sun lasted thousands of years with no change. During the lives of the last few

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463 Miłosz, Czesław: "O kilku filmach" [On Several Films], *op. cit.*, p. 8.

464 *Ibidem*, p. 8.

465 Miłosz, Czesław: "Na Independence Day" [For Independence Day], *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 29, p. 5.



generations, the earth has changed its appearance more than during the lives of thousands of previous generations and there is no end to this terrifying acceleration.<sup>466</sup>

Historical acceleration is a cause for concern, but it also inspires hope. It is not without reason that Miłosz reconstructs the history of the War of Independence in a precisely defined context – he emphasizes that the population of the United States in 1776 was equal to the number of people murdered in one concentration camp in Nazi-occupied Poland, and of New Yorkers, recent collaborators of the English, he says that after the victory of the Americans they showed remorse and purged themselves of “volksdeutschery.”<sup>467</sup> He clearly suggests the possibility of identifying America of the eighteenth century with Poland, additionally showing the British Crown as a colonial empire, which, although it seemed unbeatable, gave way to a new hegemon. The United States after the War of Independence was a community of people determined in their desire for freedom, who were not intimidated by their status as subjects. The reminiscences of Casimir Pulaski, Tadeusz Kosciuszko and Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz have a persuasive and consolatory value, and reaffirm one's conviction of the Polish contribution to the shape of America, and of the potential inherently attached to freedom. One can speculate to what extent Miłosz tries to impose a certain policy of remembrance, in which the accents are distributed in a way that makes it possible to think about analogies between the historical situations of post-war and pre-partition Poland, but then he unexpectedly changes the perspective and returns to the history of the Republic of Poland during the struggle for American independence: “It is necessary to understand what happened at that time, when we, the Polish nation, slept in the deep dream of an oppressed people – and it was a dream full of feverish awakenings and nightmares.”<sup>468</sup> The well-known metaphor of collective sleep is opposed to the activity of Polish fighters for American freedom, and leads to a return into the past, to the times of the Constitution of May 3rd in Poland, the activity of reformers, and the loss of independence. During this period, the poet Kajetan Węgierski travelled to America. As Miłosz says: “For a malicious poem about Catherine he served more than a year in prison, and then went abroad. During his journey to America (he was also in Martinique, Jamaica and San Domingo, and on his way back in England) he was 28 years old.”<sup>469</sup> His letter to John Dickinson, quoted in the essay *in extenso*, dates to 1783. The quotation fulfills several desirable functions: it allows for the technique, tested at the time, of speaking in someone else's voice, and expressing through the quotation an apotheosis of America which the poet would not formulate in his own name:

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<sup>466</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: “Na Independence Day” [For Independence Day], *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>469</sup> *Ibidem*.

True, your valleys are not flowing with milk, but your rivers are wide and deep, your hills do not jump up and down like whip-tops, but they are fertile and full of fruit, and a poor European peasant finds the means to turn his slavery into freedom and his poverty into prosperity. Two years is enough for his outlook to broaden. He becomes a human, and soon also a citizen. He is forced to shed his habits and superstitions and even his faults, and gain the feelings and virtues of his neighbors. (...)

When I think, dear Sir, that with three million people and without money you threw off the yoke of such a power as England, and you gained such a vast territory – and that Poland allowed itself to be robbed of five million souls and a great stretch of the country, I admit, I do not understand so great a difference. (...)

If the state of my homeland always remains the same, if the gods do not show mercy on its fate, I will tell my countrymen: “Come on, let us cross the sea and ensure our children’s well-being and freedom.” If my countrymen do not listen to me, I will say “Come!” to my family. If the family refuses, I will go alone and die free among you.<sup>470</sup>

An illustration of the latter solution is the case of Niemcewicz, who returned to Europe after ten years in the United States at the news of the creation of the Duchy of Warsaw. His figure may be another mask, this time used for suggesting his position on the possible return of emigrants who consider it more advantageous to stay in exile. Węgiński’s letter contains more important questions from Miłosz’s point of view: a series of questions raising awareness of the dangers that a young state will face in defending and strengthening its sovereignty. They are of fundamental importance to the author, and in principle, in keeping with his intentions, they should be considered by readers who dream of freedom. The Wilno realist makes demands at a time when the idea of having to meet them seems improbable. He uses the theme of the Independence Day in a way that is so characteristic – as an encouragement to rethink the practical aspects of the situation of a free state. The point of the article: the repeated thought on historical acceleration adds the value of probability to the Polish dream.

In 1948, Miłosz returned to publishing notebooks, which he treated as much as a kind of a diary or journal of mental life, as a potential source of knowledge. Three articles, two entitled “Notatnik” [The Notebook]<sup>471</sup> and “Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook]<sup>472</sup> close a series of texts whose common name suggests similarities in form, style and narrative perspective.<sup>473</sup> Significant differences between them result from the experience of the following years, which broadened and nuanced Miłosz’s perspective, and resulted in only these texts becoming the basis of the work published in *Kontynenty* [Continents] as “Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook]. None of the other articles – with the exception of those

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470 *Ibidem*.

471 See Miłosz, Czesław: “Notatnik” [The Notebook], *Nowiny Literackie* 1948, issue 8, p. 1 and Miłosz, Czesław: “Notatnik” [The Notebook], *Nowiny Literackie* 1948, issue 15, p. 1.

472 See Miłosz, Czesław: “Notatnik” [The Notebook], *Nowiny Literackie* 1948, issue 40, pp. 1–2.

473 A detailed comparative analysis of the “Notebooks” of 1948 is the subject of Chapter Seven.

on literature – made it into the volume, either as an independent whole or as the basis for a rewritten essay. What was the decisive factor? Probably the conviction the poet shared a good deal later with Anna Frajlich. The “Notebooks” of 1948 have the necessary potential for meditation, which is why they can once again become an inspiration for new thought and a new work expressing it. For a similar reason, as one may suppose, Miłosz did not publish his American journalistic texts in the form of a book. That he was urged to do so, we know from his correspondence. That he himself had such an idea is attested by the handwritten draft of the table of contents of a book about America. This manuscript is not dated, so it is difficult to determine when exactly he worked on the project. It can be assumed that it was around the year 1947, since he was only planning an essay on Faulkner at the time. Eventually, in the 1940s, no book about the United States materialized.<sup>474</sup>

Miłosz was aware that his knowledge of America did not go beyond the stage of learning, and its image had not crystallized enough to frame it. Moreover, as he later admitted in *Abecadło* [Miłosz's ABC's], he valued Louis Adamic's writing,<sup>475</sup> the fruit of many years of observations and reflections which he himself had not accumulated. He spoke on the difficulties of building a portrait of America as early as 1937:

A book by a foreigner about foreigners is much like a monograph on termites written by an ant: this simile, aside from the exaggeration, also holds numerous important proportions. It is enough to recall how much space in each travel book is taken by the measure itself, which is used for gauging new people, new customs, and landscapes. This measure is the memory of people, customs and landscapes of one's own city, province or country. Even the most ardent of wanderers who have brushed against several continents use this cubit of national landscapes, looking for a common language with the viewer, greedy for all the details that would allow him to see his own backyard the guise of strangeness. Perhaps even that which exceeds the size that can be measured using household means – gets lost in the description?<sup>476</sup>

The book about America that was never written and the abundant journalism, as dispersed as it was varied, is as much a metaphor of Miłosz's living situation as they are of the specific post-war conditions that made the state of dispersion one of its distinguishing characteristics. Around 1950, Miłosz parts with the role of a correspondent, moving away from cultural journalism, in favor of simultaneous mediation and meditation in translations that are to dominate his work from 1947 onward. An indirect explanation of the reasons for this change can be found in the essay “Obyczaje” [Customs], in which the performance of *A Streetcar Named Desire* and a retrospective review of silent cinema provide a pretext for reflection on the relativity of cultural values. Tennessee Williams' play reminds Miłosz of the Wilno

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<sup>474</sup> See the manuscript of the table of contents at Beinecke Library, Box 119, Folder 1791.

<sup>475</sup> Adamic, Louis: *My America*, New York–London: Harpers & Brothers, 1938.

<sup>476</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: *Nowa Ameryka* [New America], *op. cit.*, p. 176.

staging of Stanisław Przybyszewski's *Śnieg* [Snow], when the phase of fascination with Young Poland's drama was already over and he came out of the performance only with: "A sharp memory of the border point between two phases, a sad moment for the writer who belongs to the passing phase."<sup>477</sup> He adds the observation that literary interests, which had been exhausted in Europe, were now flourishing in America, which gave in his memory the image of an inverted hourglass:

The point here is not only the phase difference such as the transition from the drama of Young Poland to the plays fashionable on Polish stages in the 1930s. The difference goes further – and here, speaking about the customs of the half-century, I notice that only until 1939 they represent a continuity for me, but now, although they still have retained continuity for Americans, I am at best an observer, a stranger from another planet, where different laws of gravity apply. I do understand the basis of such plays as *A Streetcar Named Desire*, I also know how they emerged: through the collapse of the "social theatre," through Freudianism and with the purpose of competing with the "social theatre." However, my knowledge is already a terrifying historical shortcut: what is still going on here to me is a thing of the past, assuming that there is a certain rock bottom and that after seeing it, one only shrugs one's in the face of other things.<sup>478</sup>

The difficulty of mediation between Europe and America is integrally linked to the inequalities in the development of their cultures: on both sides we can observe the phenomena of anticipation and delay, partial repetition of certain ideological and aesthetic configurations in different spheres. Miłosz seems to be experiencing in culture the state described by Bergson in *Creative Evolution*: the simultaneous persistence of older and younger forms, which do not invalidate or obliterate one another, but do not coexist symbiotically either. This experience allows us to understand why in America he wears the mask of an old poet and how the condensation of time expands his grasp of the past and future.

This situation of unexpected cognitive advantage fascinates and astonishes him: "In the course of one's life, one can experience such a telescopic sense of distance."<sup>479</sup> In particular, rewatching pre-war films shows him the relativity of cultural values, the passing of fashions and customs, the replacement of meanings and interpretative categories:

The pathetic nature of momentary tastes does not encourage one to demarcate any boundaries of human nature, and it undermines what addictions of naturalism still remain after the discovery of the dependence of custom on economic situation. Looking at all the trivialities among which human nature has felt in its own element, one might suppose that even walking on all fours would be accepted easily if need be. Undoubtedly, the Zuni Indians, whose lives are regulated by a religion dating back many thousands of years, could discuss human nature with greater success than the witnesses and participants of the 20th century. (...)

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477 Miłosz, Czesław: "Obyczaje" [Customs], *op. cit.*, p. 81.

478 *Ibidem*, p. 82.

479 *Ibidem*, p. 82.

Also, it is quite strange to think that for millions of healthy men and women, the clothes that were worn did not interfere with love. Women in particular used to put on rags whose ludicrousness was beyond compare. Not just rags, but also smiles, movements, coquettishness, testifying to the falsehood and disintegration of humanity. Queen Bona's outfits are by no means ridiculous, the outfits from 1919 – very much so.<sup>480</sup>

Miłosz looks at the dependence of artists on developmental phases of culture, and at works that become incomprehensible and obsolete beyond their historical time. He considers the use the strategy of an innocent, who observes the world presented in a work as if he were outside its system, to a way of achieving relative independence from custom. As a result, Chaplin's films continue to entertain, and Dreyer's 1928 *The Passion of Joan of Arc* continues to captivate:

Those people who might be called submerged would readily swear that this is the most natural arrangement possible. The illiterate Joan, Chaplin's tramp, Masereel's young vagabond cannot assimilate this naturalness in any way (compare the entire tradition of innocent heroes in literature: Voltaire's *L'Ingenu* in feudal France or Balzac in post-revolutionary France – the role of initiation into evil in Balzac).<sup>481</sup>

Miłosz also touches upon the mechanism of understanding culture as nature, which he observed in the United States in the example of people's attitude towards the goods of civilization. *Gulliver's Travels* could be added to the list, and since this thought remained with him for a long time, also *The Issa Valley*, where the hero, initiated into the world, is surprised by the double life of adults. However, the traits with which he endowed Tomasz with in his novel are not given to him – although the specific *déjà vu*, experienced in a foreign cultural system, gives him an advantage, but it is the distance of experience, rather than innocence. He gains something else: the ability to use a telescope of time to look at his own situation and the passing century. Before he put forward the concept of the “telescopic eye” in *Native Realm*, a decade earlier he considered it the only vehicle that can travel through history, including the history of culture. This, in turn, requires a combination of mediation and meditation, for which the work of a journalist rarely provides an opportunity. Miłosz is therefore seeks the possibilities of activating the telescope of time – before *Native Realm* he will do so in *A Treatise on Poetry*, which he seems to have announced as early as 1950:

I wanted to talk about past customs, but I can see that what I wrote is lacking in that it has no stylish hats, men's pumps, no songs such as *Szumiały mu echa kawiarni* [He heard the hum of cafés], or *Titina*, cavalymen, “conscious motherhood,” trips to Hel, the tango *Jak pantera, co w złotej klatce...* [Like a panther in a golden cage] in a word all the is most important things.<sup>482</sup>

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480 *Ibidem*, pp. 82–83.

481 *Ibidem*, p. 89.

482 *Ibidem*, p. 90.

# Chapter 5: Miłosz in the American Reading Room

## I. Before World War Two

Translations of American literature in interwar Poland were far from numerous, and in the avant-garde environment they did not compete with European works. Miłosz knew the classics of British literature, as well as American literature: novels by James Fenimore Cooper, Jack London and Mark Twain, considered to be an author for young people, and poems by Edgar Allan Poe and Walt Whitman.<sup>483</sup>

The author of *Three Winters* deepened his knowledge of English literature in the 1930s – before the war he translated Thomas Traherne’s “The Salutation,” “The Recovery” and “The Anticipation.” During the years of the German occupation he read English poetry and Shakespeare, which was crowned by his translation of *As You Like It* and T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, and he prepared an outline of an *Anthology of English Poetry*. Eliot’s work was then one of the main aesthetic and philosophical horizons of Miłosz’s poetry. Leaving Poland, Miłosz sensed which of the world’s poets most accurately formulated the questions and dilemmas of the present day. The conversation with Eliot in London was a symbolic moment of his mental journey. It is not known whether the artists ever met again. Eliot visited Washington in January 1948 as a guest of the Episcopal Church and had several meetings, including one at St. Thomas’ Parish.<sup>484</sup> Miłosz then translated a fragment of Eliot’s play *The Rock*, a portion of which he included in his “Wprowadzenie w Amerykanów” [Introduction to the Americans. An Essay on American Poetry] in *Kontynenty* [Continents]. Although he was critical of the *Cocktail Party*<sup>485</sup> when the doctrine of socialist realism was

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**483** Highly symbolic is the fact that one of the first publications Miłosz sent from the USA was a translation of a Whitman poem. See Miłosz, Czesław: “Walt Whitman.” In *idem: Ogród nauk* [Garden of Science], Krakow, 1998, pp. 243–251; Miłosz, Czesław: *Życie na wyspach* [Life in the Isles], Krakow, 1998, p. 97; Miłosz, Czesław: *Słowo wstępne* [Foreword]. In *Pisarze o Ameryce*. 15 głosów ze słowem wstępnym Czesława Miłosza [Writers on America. Fifteen Voices with a Foreword by Czesław Miłosz]. Edited by George Clack. Translation by Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędlich. Coordinator of the Polish edition: Peter Sawchyn, Warsaw, 2004, p. ix–x.

**484** The course of the visit was described in *Partisan Review* 1948, issue 1, pp. 131–138. Miłosz may have discussed Eliot with Kridl, author of the essay “O przyszłość kultury polskiej – Notatki ze szkicu Eliota ‘Notes towards a definition of culture’” [On the Future of Polish Culture – Notes from Eliot’s Essay ‘Notes Towards the Definition of Culture’]. See Manfred Kridl Collection. Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Box 13.

**485** He recalled these views in his commentary to the translation of *The Waste Land*: “Uwagi tłumacza” [Translator’s Comments], *Kultura* 1952, issue 2/3, p. 99.

imposed in Poland in 1949, he expressed his regard for Eliot's 'dictatorship'<sup>486</sup> over English-language poetry.<sup>487</sup>

## Plan for an Anthology of English-Language Poetry

The poet rarely mentioned the anthology of English-language poetry submitted for publication before his trip to the United States.<sup>488</sup> Its content illustrates the literary orientation he had when setting off across the ocean. The final shape of the project, in the form of a typescript, is slightly different from the concept work recorded in the manuscript – a comparison of the two versions may reveal the formation process of the entire conception.<sup>489</sup>

The anthology, in chronological order, spans the history of poetry from the turn of the thirteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century – the list of authors is closed by Eliot. It consists of ten parts. The beginnings of English lyrical poetry are represented by Layamon. The second part includes poems by Geoffrey Chaucer, whereas the next one contains Old English ballads. The quite extensive part four is devoted to Renaissance poetry. The following part showcases the work of the metaphysical poets, and part 6 includes Puritan authors. Part 7 offers poems by John Dryden, John Wilmot and Samuel Butler, while part 8 reserves space for Alexander Pope, Thomas Gray, Oliver Goldsmith, William Cowper, George Crabbe, William Blake, and Robert Burns. Here, the author also planned to place fragments of *The Works of Ossian*. Romantic poetry was to be represented by Walter Scott, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, James Henry Leigh Hunt, George Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats. Poetry under the reign of queen Victoria is represented by Thomas Hood, Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, Matthew Arnold, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, George Meredith, Lewis Carroll, Charles Algernon Swinburne, Thomas Hardy, and Oscar Wilde. The last part exhibits the poetry of Rudyard Kipling, G. K. Chesterton, John Masefield, Rupert Brooke, and finally T.S. Eliot.<sup>490</sup>

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**486** Miłosz found this term in the article by Schwartz, Delmore: "The Literary Dictatorship of T.S. Eliot," *Partisan Review* 1949, January, Vol. XVI, No. 2, pp. 119–137.

**487** Dr Pamfil [Miłosz, Czesław]: "Awantura o nagrodę" [Controversy over an Award], *Odrodzenie* 1949, issue 39, p. 6.

**488** Miłosz wrote about it most extensively in *Ogród nauk* [Garden of Science]. In a footnote written after many years – *Przypis po latach* [A Footnote after Many Years] he says: "In 1945, in Krakow I put together an anthology of poets of the English language for *Czytelnik*, but the liberal course had already become more rigid and the book was never published." (*Kontynenty*, [Continents] 6).

**489** The manuscript and typescript of the design of the anthology are kept in the Beinecke Library, Box 142, Folder 2251–2253.

**490** See Miłosz, Czesław: "Plan Antologii Poezji Angielskiej" [Plan for an Anthology of English-Language Poetry], Beinecke Library, Box 142, Folder 2251.

A 28-page preface precedes the list of works in which Miłosz discussed the subsequent parts of the anthology. It characterizes the selected poets against the background of England's history, interweaving presentations of their work with remarks on development of literary English, its changing styles and genres in subsequent eras, and the mutual influences of the literatures of continental Europe and Great Britain.

This historical-literary outline is concise and expressive, and since it is closely related to the selection of poems made, it makes the entire concept of the anthology more transparent and coherent. The project, with the planned content and preliminary description, merits discussion on its own, both as a separate editorial initiative and as background to Miłosz's other work. One may ask whether and how the work on the anthology affected the poems in the volume *Rescue* and the occupation essays later collected in the volume *Legends of Modernity*, and how (or even if) the preparation of the anthology affected the awareness and workshop of Miłosz the translator of English poetry.<sup>491</sup> The project can be juxtaposed with the plan of another anthology that Miłosz soon began working on in the United States, which became the basis for his subsequent selection of translations in *Mowa wiązana* [Fettered Speech, *Oratio Vincita*]. An issue to consider is the relationship between the preface to the anthology and the biographical notes of the poets prepared for the of the new international selection. Nevertheless, taking up these and other potential threads does require a separate study.

## II. Participation in the Literary Life of the United States

Miłosz's 'education' in American literature proceeded from making acquaintances, attending lectures and meetings with authors, reading books and the press, discussing readings in artistic and journalistic circles, through reading of translations and critical literary essays – the first form of internalization – to including new ideas in the circle of questions and reflections concerning his own work and the potential directions for the development of Polish literature. Since Miłosz used different strategies in his discussions addressed to various audiences, it is even more difficult to recreate this

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<sup>491</sup> Miłosz published translations of English poem prior to his departure for the USA. These were William Blake's "To Spring," and "To Summer," *Dziennik Polski* 1945, issue 56, p. 4; Cowper, William: "The Solitude of Alexander Selkirk," *Dziennik Polski* 1945, issue 208, p. 5; Crabbe, George, "Wioska" [Village], *Dziennik Polski* 1945, issue 208, p. 5; Eliot, T.S.: "Jałowa ziemia" [The Waste Land] (35 lines starting from the words *Krzeseło, w którym siedziała jak błyszczący tron...* [The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne]), *Dziennik Polski* 1945, issue 208, p. 5. They were published with the note "Translations from Czesław Miłosz's Anthology of English-language poetry." A translation of Wordsworth's "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern," "On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour," "July 13 1798," *Nauka i Sztuka* 1945, issue 1, pp. 64–67.



process. The various ways possible fail here. His published correspondence is only a fraction of the huge collection of letters he exchanged with many addressees. They remain scattered, and until they are collected, the trail of correspondence may be unreliable in our attempts to reconstruct many aspects of the poet's life in the United States. The articles only partially reveal the chronology of his reading, the way he valued what he read and where he placed it on his personal map of literature. The works he commented on in his essays did not necessarily mean the most to him. One may risk saying that the works of formative significance were the hidden background of his poems, resonating in them with distant echoes. The process of Miłosz entering the world of English-language literature could perhaps be revealed by exposing the successive layers of knowledge and consciousness deposited in many forms of his writing: utilitarian journalism, portrait-articles and syntheses, disputes and polemics with writers, and in the deepest layer: in his poetry.

Miłosz quickly entered the local community of poets and journalists. He held discussions with Robert Lowell and Randall Jarrell, who published poems and reviews in left-leaning magazines. He grew acquainted with new literary phenomena through Edmund Wilson, wrote to Jacques Maritain, residing in Princeton, about the translation and publication without his knowledge of the work *À Travers le Désastre* by the underground publishing house *Oficyna Warszawska* in January 1942<sup>492</sup> – the philosopher later joined the appeals for granting the poet political asylum in America.<sup>493</sup> At the Bread Loaf Conference he met Robert Frost, Fletcher Pratt, Bernard DeVoto, John Ciardi, Karl Shapiro and David Davidson.

His account of this event contains the first description of a creative writing program in Poland. Miłosz describes with appreciation the analytical workshops during which beginners may discuss their attempts with renowned writers. Even in literary matters, he sometimes pursued a strategy of two voices: he commented on the same event for a magazine, and differently in a report for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The example of Bread Loaf is quite instructive. While the article presents the voices of its participants, and contains counterpoint micro portraits of artists of different generations and mindsets, the report presents the event as an example of cultural and political confrontation, exposing the social side of the event taking place behind the scenes, with its political and philosophical climate. Miłosz the diplomat made no effort to uncover the nuances and complications. He built an elementary anecdotal message and selected eye-catching peculiarities and absurdities. A valuable element of the report is the mention of the New York circle, illustrating how early the poet encountered the milieu of *politics* and *Partisan Review*. In the article, Miłosz

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<sup>492</sup> Letter of Czesław Miłosz to Jacques Maritain of January 4, 1947, Beinecke Library, Box 42, Folder 612.

<sup>493</sup> See Letter of Jacques Maritain to the American Committee for Cultural Freedom of Feb. 25, 1952, Beinecke Library, Box 42, Folder 612.

directs his remarks to a more sophisticated reader and reconstructs the atmosphere of discussion on literary and cultural issues.

He mainly raises the issue of a writer's lack of distance to personal experience – in this context, Frost inspires his greatest recognition. Miłosz is averse to the tendency toward psychologizing, confessionalism, and remaining within the biographical horizon that is understood, in his opinion, far too narrowly, overlooking the more general historical and existential context. The principle of privacy, understood and implemented as a certain evolving tradition of American literature, to Miłosz is its downside. As we know, this view, formed early and held consistently, is one of the foundations of Miłosz's understanding of literature, where transcending one's own experiences to include them in a general paradigm becomes the principle of writing.

As I mentioned, in connection with the preparations for the Congress of Wrocław, the diplomat contacted many artists. He talked about poetry with Saint-John Perse, and exchanged letters with Thornton Wilder. In 1948, he began to correspond with Henry Miller. His communication with Pablo Neruda also dated back to those years. In Washington, his circle of friends was joined by Archibald MacLeish, head librarian of the Library of Congress. Those who continued to influence him were prominent New York journalists, including Dwight Macdonald, I. F. Stone, Ralph Ingersoll, Walter Lippmann and Dorothy Thompson. The poet understood early on that in the American public space the word of a columnist had a stronger and broader impact than the word of a writer, and that the social role of writers was more limited than the one they enjoyed in Europe, and especially in Poland.

Miłosz quickly gained familiarity with the circulation of the press in its political and thematic diversity, and with its reception. Following George Orwell and the columnists of *politics* and *Partisan Review*, he started using the terms *highbrow* and *middlebrow* in describing the socio-cultural strata in the United States.<sup>494</sup> With the exception of Macdonald, however, none of the figures mentioned above influenced him as decisively as his pre-war European mentors. He was more strongly influenced by what he read, although here the selection was to a large extent conditioned by the discussions going on in the press and in his surroundings. A list of names of authors, organizations and magazines important for him dispersed in his writings from this period include i. a. Edmund Wilson, Allen Tate, James Farrell, Hannah Arendt, W. H. Auden, Glenway Wescott, Marc Aldonow, Sidney Hook, James Burnham, Irving Kristol, Thornton Wilder, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Gerald Syker, and the Committee for Cultural Freedom. This enumeration revealed his hierarchy of figures in American intellectual and political life.

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<sup>494</sup> See Zolotow, Maurice: "On Highbrow Writing," *politics* 1944, August, pp. 217–218; Macdonald, Dwight: "On Lowbrow Thinking," *politics* 1944, August, p. 219–220.

### III. American War Literature

Shortly after Miłosz's arrival in the United States, he became interested in the latest war literature. In many places he repeated the view that understanding between Americans and Europeans on this ground can be extremely difficult. In 1946, he commented:

I read a short story in *The New Yorker* which made me laugh. A young American officer during the war was constantly thinking what it would be like when he returned to civilian life. Then came the long-awaited peace. He returned from beyond the sea, put on civilian clothes, and after a few days noticed that this normal life was unreal, fantastic, and that it could not, simply could not last. He found himself expecting an event that would suddenly interrupt the normal course of life and turn things upside down. So he quickly signed a contract to rejoin the army, because it is easier to live day by day. I read this short story with the taste of an old catastrophist. So this is what got them? Well, well.

(...)

Reading the history of the United States, I discovered the insidiousness of European scholars. No textbook ever taught us that one of the main reasons for the colonization of America (apart from the Industrial Revolution in England and religious struggles) was forcible conscription. Round-ups were severe in Europe throughout the 17th and 18th centuries – and those caught were not sent to camps, but conscripted into the army, thus easily taking care of recruitment. European citizens were fleeing the round-ups. I think that our teachers, who told us little about it, did so through a peculiar European patriotism, accepting the principle that it is bad when a bird soils its own nest. I propose the following work: “The role of round-ups in the history of Europe.”<sup>495</sup>

As a public speaker, Miłosz stood in front of diverse audiences, hence his efforts to bring his Polish point of view closer to them. That he met with misunderstanding, he wrote in his letters and memoirs. He was not aware that during the war many articles about Europe were published in *politics*, including reports from the Warsaw Uprising.<sup>496</sup> Works discussing the problem of war orphans were recommended there.<sup>497</sup> Bruno Bettelheim analyzed the psychological effects of the occupation and

<sup>495</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: “Notatnik nowojorski” [The New York Notebook], *Przekrój* 1946, issue 70, p. 11.

<sup>496</sup> In the fall of 1944 *politics* published a cycle of articles devoted to the Warsaw Uprising under the joint title “Warsaw,” framed in black, the way obituaries are. These were reliable accounts of the course of the Uprising, the reactions of the Allies (about England, it said it “behaved shamefully”). They touched on harboring no illusions about Stalin’s policy and the Soviet doctrine, the situation of civilians after the end of the fights, and the lack of interest in this matter shown by the American press. See “Warsaw,” *politics* 1944, October, pp. 257–259; “Warsaw,” *politics* 1944, November, pp. 297–298; “Warsaw,” *politics* 1944, December, pp. 327–328; “Warsaw,” *politics* 1945, March, pp. 67–68 (the words of Jan Nowak-Jeziorański on the passive reaction of the Russians stationing beyond the Vistula, quoted in *The New York Times* 1945, January 26). Also Nazi and Stalinist war crimes were described – see Levcik, Jan: “Buchenwald Before the War,” *politics* 1945, June, pp. 173–174.

<sup>497</sup> This is the book by Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham, *Infants without Families*, International University Press, 1945.

life in concentration camps.<sup>498</sup> Simone Weil's articles on the civilizational significance of war were reprinted.<sup>499</sup>

Dwight Macdonald wrote about the genocide in Auschwitz, Stalinist crimes, and personal responsibility for evil.<sup>500</sup> Many issues of the magazine included correspondence of soldiers from various fronts. In September 1945, the quarterly published information about the effects of the use of the atom bomb in Japan.<sup>501</sup> There were appeals for sending food aid to Europe and charity fundraisers were organized for this purpose.<sup>502</sup> Nevertheless, if one were to ask about the social reach of New York's quarterly magazines and the fact that the anti-war, pacifist current of reflection did prevail in the left-leaning press, one would agree with the poet that ordinary Americans had little knowledge of the wartime fate of Europe. On the other hand, since he wanted to share the Polish experience, Miłosz hardly ever revealed his knowledge of the American part of wartime history. At that time, soldiers' diaries were published in the United States (in censored versions), as were war reports by Ernie Pyle and William L. White. The poet knew the course of the discussion on discrimination against African Americans in the army.<sup>503</sup> Questions about the equality and identity of Americans in the 1940s were raised in the context of the struggle of soldiers of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Miłosz praises the educational programs for veterans, but rarely addresses the issue of the unequal status of U.S. Army members, although he does so in a review of William Gardner Smith's book *Last of the Conquerors*:<sup>504</sup>

Last summer the author of this article often rode on a ferry through a certain bay on the eastern coast of the United States. On this ferry (...) he admired the extravagance expressed in the construction of no less than four privies: one for white women, one for white men, one for black women, and one for black men. However, having got used to seeing this division as natural (supposedly) since the creation of the world, and also taking into account the fact that the project of creating mixed troops in the army, consisting of white and black soldiers, was scrapped quite deliberately, in conjunction with the fact that there is *numerus clausus*<sup>505</sup> at universities – in a

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**498** Bettelheim, Bruno: "Behavior in Extreme Situations," *politics* 1944, August, pp. 199–209.

**499** Weil, Simone: "Reflections on War," *politics* 1944, February, pp. 51–55; Weil, Simone: "The Iliad, or The Poem of Force." Translated by Mary McCarthy, *politics* 1945, November, pp. 321–331; Weil, Simone: "Words and War," *politics* 1946, March, pp. 69–73; Petrement, Simone: "The Life and Thought of Simone Weil," *politics* 1949, Winter, pp. 13–19.

**500** Macdonald, Dwight: "The Responsibility of Peoples," *politics* 1944, March, pp. 82–86.

**501** Macdonald, Dwight: "The Bomb," *politics* 1945, September, pp. 257–260.

**502** "Starvation! America's Christmas Gift to the European Peoples" (An 11-page survey by Dwight Macdonald), *politics* 1945, December, pp. 353–364.

**503** This issue was taken up in *politics*: in Macdonald's articles "Jim Crow in Uniform: Current Notes," *politics* 1945, May, pp. 150–151; "How 'Practical' Is a Racially Segregated Army?," *politics* 1945, July, pp. 184–185.

**504** This is the edition Smith, William Gardner: *Last of Conquerors*, New York: Farrar, Straus, 1948.

**505** *numerus clausus* (łac.) – closed number; the rule of limiting the number of students at universities, motivated by political reasons or simply practical ones, used both in the interwar period

word, taking due account of the circumstances – the author will himself divide the article into two parts – a portrait of a black soldier and that of a white soldier. It so happened by the way that one of the books in question was written by a Negro and the other by a White.<sup>506</sup>

Miłosz did not reveal to what extent he had become acquainted with the poetry presenting the specifically American experience of combat, remoteness, and cultural confrontation.<sup>507</sup> He was close to Shapiro and Jarrell, who wrote war poems from the perspective of a dead person, he also knew Auden's sonnets. It is doubtful that he got to know the war poems of Robinson Jeffers, Wallace Stevens, John Berryman, E.E. Cummings, Hilda Doolittle, Dylan Thomas, Elizabeth Bishop, Edna St. Vincent Millay, George Barker, Robert Penn Warren, Louis MacNeice, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, or Ciardi. However, the point here is not arithmetic – even the knowledge of selected works allows the poet to state how much they differ from Polish works. In “Wprowadzenie w Amerykanów” [Introduction to the Americans. An Essay on American Poetry] he points out that so called “the authentic” poems on war experiences, patriotic experiences would be completely incomprehensible in America, and showing a basic lack of craftsmanship. He discusses this issue using the example of Shapiro's poems, and in particular his *Essay on Rime*.

Miłosz devotes more attention to prose, mentioning first Hersey's reportage *Hiroshima*, and then reviewing the novels *The Naked and the Dead* and *Last of the Conquerors*.<sup>508</sup> A lively discussion ensued in relation to *Hiroshima*.<sup>509</sup> This essay took a special place in the history of the American press: on August 31, 1946 *The New Yorker*, devoted an entire issue to its publication and all its copies were sold out within several hours. The poet urged the editor Karol Kuryluk to do the same in *Odrodzenie*.<sup>510</sup> He sent him a note about the reportage written by Wiktor Raysman, who was ready to translate the text free of charge.<sup>511</sup> In America, *Hiroshima* became

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and after World War II. It was used in Poland, Russia, the United States, Germany, Hungary and Romania. During the interwar period, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, *numerus clausus* referred solely to candidates of Jewish descent.

**506** Żagarysta [Miłosz, Czesław]: “Dwie książki o wojnie” [Two Books about the War], *Odrodzenie* 1949, issue 15, p. 1.

**507** See the entry: *War Literature*. In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature*. Edited by Jay Parini, Oxford University Press, 2004, volume 4, pp. 289–290. The poet probably had not come in contact with comic books about war, which were used for education and propaganda purposes among soldiers. They were also published after 1945, in a way completing the reflection on war in the US. The most famous series, *Captain America*, was published until 1949.

**508** See Żagarysta [Miłosz, Czesław]: “Dwie książki o wojnie” [Two Books about the War], *op. cit.*, pp. 1–2.

**509** This discussion is covered in detail by Boyer, Paul: *By the Bomb's Early Light. American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age*. With a New Preface by the Author, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994.

**510** See the Letter of Czesław Miłosz to Karol Kuryluk, not dated, *Dekada Literacka* 2011, issue 1–2, p. 113.

**511** It was published in *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 2, p. 11. The Polish edition of the book came out two

the subject of enthusiastic reviews, as well as very critical ones at the same time. The *New Republic* predicted that Hersey would be honored with the Pulitzer Prize, which, to the surprise of many, did not happen.<sup>512</sup> Ruth Benedict praised it in *The Nation* for its poignant narrative discretion, whose tranquility and order emphasized the magnitude of the nightmare that took hold after the explosion.<sup>513</sup> The expert in Japanese culture expressed her hope that the reportage would play an important role in the process of expiation in American society. In *politics*, Macdonald accused Hersey of shallow naturalism, laboratory-like verismo, in his opinion not only outdated as a mode of creative expression, but inadequate for the situation described.<sup>514</sup> Mary McCarthy partly defended Hiroshima against Macdonald's criticism, pointing out that Hersey defied the censorship dominant in this matter: "Up to August 31 of this year, no one dared think of Hiroshima – it appeared to us all as a kind of hole in human history."<sup>515</sup> She pointed out that the asceticism of form and the narrator's impartiality were the only ways of reporting on the tragedy whose size exceeded the possibilities of presentation. In 1947, Georges Bataille returned to the topic of *Hiroshima*.<sup>516</sup> Miłosz refers to Hersey's reportage just after its publication:

Yesterday Sommers was very excited. He asked me if I had read Hersey's reportage from Hiroshima in *The New Yorker*. I said I had. Hersey, an excellent war reporter, was sent to Hiroshima to interview people who survived the explosion of the atomic bomb. He made it a big and perfectly written thing. "And what of it?" – Sommers insisted. "Well, terrible. Like the concentration camps." I saw that Sommers felt offended. This reportage was a shock to him. His perfectly balanced, calm, settled world shook for a moment in its very foundations and the fact that somebody would diminish the size of this shock, brushing it off with a mere few words, seemed to him to border on a sacrilege. For me, however, the world had trembled sometimes in its foundations more than once, and somehow seemed to stabilize, and what I read in the reportage in some way fit in with the image of this shaking world. No doubt terrible. People in Poland imagine an explosion of an atomic bomb as a great bang! – those who died died, those who survived survived, and the matter was settled. This is not the case at all. Only 25 percent of the victims died from the explosion, but 50 percent died as a result of wounds, suffocated in collapsed houses, or burned alive, among much vomiting, pain, and literal, slow disintegration

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years later – see Hersey, John: *Hiroshima*. Translated from English by Józef Wittlin. Introduction by Teofil Głowacki, Warsaw, 1948. Before the translation was published, Polish press wrote about the book – see Strebejko, Michał: "Hiroshima," *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1947, issue 129, p. 3.

**512** See Bliven, Bruce: "Hiroshima," *The New Republic* 1946, issue 10, pp. 300–301.

**513** Benedict, Ruth: "The Past and the Future," *The Nation* 1946, issue 23, pp. 657–657. Cf. Bruce Bliven, "Hiroshima," *The New Republic* 1946, issue 10, pp. 300–301.

**514** Macdonald, Dwight: "Hersey's *Hiroshima*," *politics* 1946, October, p. 308. Cf. Ridenour, Louis: "What Is the Crime of War?" *The Saturday Review of Literature* 1946, November, 2, p. 16.

**515** See McCarthy, Mary: "The *Hiroshima* New Yorker," *politics* 1946, November, p. 367. Following Paul Boyer Jacqueline Foertsch writes that *The New York Times* denied the fact that harmful radioactive waves and radiation sickness resulted from the use of the atomic bomb, attributing these claims to Japanese propaganda. See *American Culture in the 1940s*, by the same author, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

**516** See Bataille, Georges: "On Hiroshima," *politics* 1947, issue 4, pp. 147–150.

into pieces. To this we must add a whole army of cripples, and people who were poisoned for a long time, unable to work. *The New Yorker* devoted one entire issue to the reportage, ironically put on the cover an image of a carefree crowd, with people lying on beaches, dancing, playing the banjo, groping one another – which was exactly what most Americans did that Sunday when the issue was published. Sommers became excited, but one supposes that his world will quickly return to balance.<sup>517</sup>

This case illustrates a not so rare situation when what has the strongest impact on the poet resonates more deeply and returns in the form of a poem. The use of the atomic bomb requires mourning with high speech and is commemorated in the poem “Trzy chóry z nienapisanego dramatu *Hiroszima*” [Three Choruses from the Unwritten Drama *Hiroshima*]. The intersecting interviews with the six survivors of the explosion in “Trzy chóry z nienapisanego dramatu *Hiroszima*” do not provide a full picture of the catastrophe, because this is by definition unattainable. Similarly, the poem gives the impression of being a fragment of the whole. The drama of Hiroshima, say Hersey and Miłosz in unison, is impossible to represent. In both works, the consciously adopted principle of fragmentation is the formal equivalent of the destruction of the city, the human body, and human fate. This poem is one of many gestures of transcending the horizon of one’s own war experience and joining the world’s community of mourners. Miłosz expresses a separate reflection on Hiroshima and the civilizational effects of nuclear weapons in his review of the book *Atom Pioneer*<sup>518</sup> and in the essay “Mówiąc o ssaku” [Speaking of a Mammal] written in France in 1955 – here the perspective of Warsaw’s Robinson is included in the universal circle of thoughts about the condition of a human burdened with the memory of crime.

Miłosz, in turn, makes no reference to the reportage “The Wall,”<sup>519</sup> even though its author asked for his consent to include in it a fragment of his own translation of the poem “Campo dei Fiori.”

The Pulitzer-prize winning novel does feature a fragment of “Campo dei Fiori” in Hersey’s own translation.<sup>520</sup>

This is certainly one of the first translations of Miłosz’s poems into English, over which he did not exercise any personal attention. The book does not mention the author of the work or thank him for making it available.

**517** Miłosz, Czesław: “Notatnik nowojorski” [The New York Notebook], *Przekrój* 1946, issue 79, p. 11.

**518** In the 1950s Miłosz reviewed John Rowland and Werner Laurie’s work *Ernest Rutherford, Atom Pioneer*, London 1955, containing an account by the Russian scientist Pyotr Kapitsa on his journey with Rutherford around the USSR that helped the Russians in building their atomic bomb. A sketch of this review is kept in Beinecke Library, Box 127, Folder 2020.

**519** See Hersey, John: *The Wall*, New York: Knopf, 1950. Miłosz refers to the translation of this poem in his letter to Einstein, asking him to intercede with regard to his US visa – see Letter of Czesław Miłosz to Albert Einstein of Feb. 11, 1951. In *Raporty dyplomatyczne Czesława Miłozza 1945–1950* [Diplomatic Reports of Czesław Miłosz]. Edited and annotated by M. Mokrzycka-Markowska. Epilogue by Marek Kornat, Warszawa, 2013, p. 217.

**520** See Hersey, John: *The Wall*, *op. cit.*, pp. 249–250.

Miłosz shows interest in the literary representation of war in the works of Norman Mailer, William Gardner Smith, and Arthur Koestler. Novels by the first two authors are discussed in the review, the latter is mentioned in his correspondence. He considers publishing the novel by Smith to be a way of channeling the protest of the Blacks, frustrated by the lack of equality: “The book is filled with bitterness and a sense of injustice. In America, they believe that words are very far from action, and even that words are a better safety valve than a lack of words. That is why the book had good reviews and was also published in a twenty-five-cent edition.”<sup>521</sup> Miłosz reveals the key moments of the plot, which the racial conflicts gave the character of turning points. On the other hand, he criticizes the author’s sentimentalism and his limited horizon in the perception of wartime realities:

A young black soldier is sent to Berlin, and this first stay of his outside of America is like Alice’s wandering through wonderland. He discovers that Germany is the greatest country in the world, that Berlin (the ruined Berlin) is beautiful and that German people are good. All this because, for the first time in his life, he feels like a human such as others: he is accepted in German homes, lying on the beach with German girls, has a white girlfriend who declares that she loves him. Negro soldiers stationed in Berlin live in constant fear of returning to America: they have tasted... democracy. For Germans, they are simply Americans, i.e. individuals with the attributes of demigods, such as rich supplies of coffee, cigarettes, and chocolate. Anyway, let us add based on our own experience, that Nazi propaganda was sentimental to the Negroes. It is worth recalling here the issue of one German illustrated magazine, containing photographs of lynched Negroes on one side, juxtaposed with photographs from the Warsaw ghetto on the other, showing what wonderful and prosperous Jews lived under German care. We probably saw this issue in Warsaw in 1942. So the Germans, anyway, seem to be much more humane and noble to the black soldiers than their own American white compatriots.<sup>522</sup>

What Miłosz considers most valuable in the novel is how the author skillfully weaves into the plot the events that took place after General Dwight Eisenhower’s order to dismiss soldiers infected with venereal diseases, or those against whom court martial proceedings were in progress – the author describes racial purges in the army, when the command first got rid of as many black soldiers as possible, including ones who were healthy and waiting to stand trial, even though their dismissal in such circumstances carried the risk of stigmatization in civilian life.

The treatment of war as an isolated phenomenon, which cannot be predicted or prevented, Miłosz considers to be a flaw in the literature on this subject. In his opinion, it serves to remove joint responsibility for matters of history. He appreciates the novel *The Naked and the Dead*, which takes a perspective that is different from the dominant one.

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521 Miłosz, Czesław: “Dwie książki o wojnie” [Two Books about the War], *op. cit.*, p. 2.

522 *Ibidem*, p. 2.



Miłosz simplifies somewhat the image of war prose in the United States, omitting, for example, the motif in which it is viewed through the prism of absurdity – Joseph Heller’s predecessor in the 1940s was Irwin Shaw, the author of *The Young Lions*. Mailer’s novel, narrated by a veteran returning to America, tells the story of abuses in the navy stationed in southeast Asia. It depicts the characters as defined by their ethnic and social background, and their actions as consequences of their experiences before the war. Having developed in childhood and youth a set of habits and traits enabling survival, the characters in the novel practice them in a more intense form as soldiers, when a much harder struggle for survival takes place every day. In this sense, the war is a borderline psychosocial situation, creating not only specific conditions for choices on which one’s very survival may depend, but also a laboratory of personality.

The poet applauds this anthropological vision: to show war not as an inventory of dramatic facts, but as a point reached in the development of the individual and, more broadly, in the development of society. Mailer’s philosophy of war converges with Miłosz’s own perspective in many points, for example, that of the author of “Campo dei Fiori.” The novel *The Naked and the Dead* straddles the boundary of popular prose, meant to gain wide public recognition, and a formal experiment characteristic of more sophisticated literature. Miłosz appreciates its form, but he is mainly fond of the method of portraying society at a turning moment in its history:

Every several dozen pages Mailer publishes chapters entitled “Time machine.” In these, he presents scenes from the life of his characters before the war, thus building complete biographies. Thus, the book consists of a series of novels, unified by adventures of a platoon composed of people, each of whom is an equal hero.

The sociological character of the book that we mentioned is expressed precisely in this reaching back and determining the behavior of each individual according to his or her origins and life to date. Here is the difference between Mailer’s philosophy and the philosophy of war as a cataclysm, before and after which people are ‘normal.’<sup>523</sup>

Miłosz recognizes in Mailer a writer for whom the topic of war is a way of expressing social and humanistic views – according to his intention, Miłosz reads *The Naked and the Dead* as an anti-war novel. In later years, however, he does not renew his interest in Mailer or his fate as a writer. He will mention him again in 1951, in a discussion of Hemingway’s novel *Across the River and Into the Trees*.<sup>524</sup>

One may ask where the poet, who was closer to the European view of the war, sought the language to express the trauma of the occupation. This is not easy to say today, with his comments on Mann’s lectures in Washington or to Sartre’s *Portrait of the Antisemite* as the only official evidence. Neither his journalism nor his

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523 *Ibidem*, p. 2.

524 See Żagarysta [Miłosz, Czesław]: “Powieść Hemingwaya” [Hemingway’s Novel], *Twórczość* 1951, issue 2, pp. 184–188.

correspondence mention Hannah Arendt's essay "The Concentration Camps,"<sup>525</sup> nor Albert Camus,<sup>526</sup> whose novel *The Plague* was widely discussed there, or Karl Jaspers, the author of *The German Guilt*.<sup>527</sup> Miłosz does not mention other essays by Jaspers,<sup>528</sup> Weil,<sup>529</sup> Chiaromonte,<sup>530</sup> Silone,<sup>531</sup> or Merleau-Ponty,<sup>532</sup> which provided him with arguments in his reflections on the war as a problem of twentieth century civilization – some of these names will appear only in the essay "Dwight Macdonald."<sup>533</sup> These essays – along with many other studies and books – constitute a fraction of the vast collection of works that influenced Miłosz's thought and are revealed indirectly in his later writings.

## IV. American Literary Portraits

After the war, the Polish literary press published articles about the latest American prose, often in the form of portraits of individual authors. Miłosz enriched this panorama with portraits of Hemingway, Faulkner, and Miller, and indirectly explained this choice as follows:

When I read French writings, I see them as a barometer of sensitivity to new artistic phenomena as Europe absorbs them. They repeat the names of Hemingway, Faulkner, E. Caldwell and Steinbeck, and printers are issuing translations of their novels. From remarks made by Ilya Ehrenburg, who has visited the United States recently, we have learned which American writers are attracting the attention of Russian writers. Again, the same names. It can therefore be said with a high degree of probability that a certain shorter or longer period will be filled with assimilation of the works of the above four writers by the literatures of languages other than English.<sup>534</sup>

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**525** Arendt, Hannah: "The Concentration Camps," *Partisan Review* 1948, no. 7, pp. 743–763.

**526** Albert Camus published the essays: "Neither Victims Nor Executioners." Translated by Dwight Macdonald, *politics* 1947, issue 4, pp. 141–147.

**527** *Partisan Review* published regular advertisements of the edition of this book.

**528** Jaspers, Karl: "Culture in Ruins," *politics* 1946, February, pp. 51–55.

**529** Weil, Simone: "Words and War," *politics* 1946, March, pp. 69–73.

**530** Chiaromonte, Nicola: "Koestler, or Tragedy Made Futile," *politics* 1945, September, pp. 266–273; "On the Kind of Socialism Called 'Scientific,'" *politics* 1946, February, pp. 33–44; "Remarks on Justice," *politics* 1947, issue 3, pp. 88–93.

**531** Silone, Ignazio: "Nihilism," *politics* 1945, May, pp. 138–139.

**532** Merleau-Ponty, Maurice: "Marxism and Philosophy." Translated by Eva and Harold Orlansky, *politics* 1947, issue 4, pp. 173–175.

**533** Miłosz, Czesław: "Dwight Macdonald," *Kultura* 1954, issue 4, pp. 122–129. The first page of the manuscript of the article contains the information that it was a review of the book *The Root is Man: Two Essays in Politics*, Alhambra, California: The Cunningham Press, 1953. See Miłosz, Czesław: "Dwight Macdonald," Beinecke Library 113, Folder 1621, p. 1.

**534** Miłosz, Czesław: "O Hemingwayu" [On Hemingway], *op. cit.*, p. 5. As was the case with other critics, Miłosz omits the post-war works of women, including immigrants from Europe, as well as the "doubly other" women from the colonies.

Considering that he mentioned only the portrait of Faulkner, one can ask to what extent Miłosz treated this type of journalism in a utilitarian way. The more important question concerns the convention he uses in building these portraits. With regard to his *The History of Polish Literature*, the view is maintained, as reinforced by his own suggestion, that the shape of the textbook, partly constructed from a series of portraits, was influenced by Gustave Lanson's *Histoire de la Littérature Française* [History of French Literature]. It is worth revisiting the discussion on this subject, pointing out that in the United States Miłosz carefully observed Wilson's literary-critical workshop. He wrote to Matuszewski: "Wilson is a very good critic – good in the sense that his style is simple, and his analysis brutal and masculine." (*Zaraz po wojnie* [Right after the War]). Wilson developed his own language of describing literature – he treated various schools and methodologies of research as resources holding significant social and political potential.<sup>535</sup> The distinguishing feature of his portraits is the fact that he set the authors and their works against a wider social background. The portraits contain biographies and short summaries of their works of fiction; they touch upon issues of form and style in the context of the historical and moral changes of the era. For Wilson, the issue of literature was a social problem *par excellence* and in interpreting a literary work he reached its very source and center. He avoided the intricacies and deliberations understood only by the narrow elites among the audience. He discussed British and American works and reviewed translations of European literature. He showed equal attention to high-brow works and to good-quality popular works, for example, detective novels. This was not surprising when in 1945, seventy million Americans, half of the continent's population, read comic books. Of course, Miłosz was not preoccupied with the success of such comic heroes as Superman or Batman, and neither was Wilson. Wilson formulated his often strong theses in a clear, fast-flowing, and firm style, which allowed him to popularize among less accomplished readers such authors as James Joyce, Marcel Proust, and T. S. Eliot.<sup>536</sup>

Miłosz's portraits contain some analogies to Wilson's method. Although the poet then witnessed a reevaluation in literary research: the abandonment of traditional geneticism and the growing importance of psychoanalysis, the development of the mythographic method, the growing influence of formalism. Without the ambition

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<sup>535</sup> During the years of Miłosz's stay in the USA Wilson was in a relationship with Mary McCarthy and he collaborated with *politics*. In his reflections on culture, he took a left-leaning perspective – he referred very critically to the so-called program and commented on the possibility of using Marxism as a method of describing works of art. Miłosz may have encountered Wilson's work for the first time in his book reviews and in the articles published in *The New Republic*. Cf. Spender, Stephen: "Wilson Among The Ruins," *The Nation* 1947, issue 22, pp. 592–595.

<sup>536</sup> Cf. Wald, Alan M.: *The New York Intellectuals*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987, p. 88.

of a professional researcher, he probably took Wilson as a model whose erudition, passion, and rich personality were centered in an original, personal critical language.

## 1. On Hemingway

In his first essay about Hemingway, Miłosz starts with comments about the reception of American literature in Europe, and these show his knowledge of Sartre's article about the situation of American prose in France. It is easy to see Miłosz's discreet dependence on the observations of the existentialist, towards whose work he already showed some aversion in the 1940s. Like Miłosz, Sartre begins his essay with statements on the interwar tendencies in treating novels from across the Atlantic:

The greatest literary development in France between 1929 and 1939 was the discovery of Faulkner, Dos Passos, Hemingway, Caldwell, Steinbeck. (...) It is true that these authors have not enjoyed in France the popular success comparable to that of Sinclair Lewis. Their influence was far more restricted, but infinitely more profound. We needed them, not your famous Dreiser.<sup>537</sup>

In his portrait of Hemingway, Miłosz begins by showing the social background of his biography, whose important component is also the background of landscape, as the archetypal source of imagination. The frame of the portrait is the writer's dual relation to America and Europe – the appearance of this relation is, in his opinion, a sign of the era. His creative personality in this approach, as in Wilson's case, is a derivative of a biography that takes place in a specific historical, social, mental, and artistic setting. Having presented the origin, education, and youthful experiences of the author, Miłosz the portraitist goes on to sketch his silhouette against the background of his work. He uses unambiguous theses which serve as an outline to be filled with color. Miłosz writes:

His intentions were modest: he wanted to describe the world as it was, and in this modesty, he jumped, perhaps even unconsciously, over the greatest obstacle of the art of writing. This world, whose image formed in him during the First World War, was reduced to the basic, roughly drawn shapes: life – death, physical suffering, hunger, love.<sup>538</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul: "American Writers in French Eyes," *The Atlantic Monthly* 1946, August, p. 114.

<sup>538</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: "O Hemingwayu" [On Hemingway], *op. cit.*, p. 5. Miłosz's theses harmonize with the voices of other commentators. Joyce said in 1936: "He is a good writer, Hemingway. He writes as he is. He's a big, powerful peasant, as strong as buffalo. A sportsman. And ready to live the life he writes about. He would never have written it if his body had not allowed him to live it. But giants of his sort are truly modest; there is much more behind Hemingway's form than people think." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature*. Edited by Jay Parini, Oxford University Press, 2004, volume 2, p. 212.

This remark is probably a development of Sartre's thought: "When Hemingway writes his short, disjointed sentences, he is only obeying his temperament. He writes what he sees."<sup>539</sup> Miłosz puts forward further theses:

Hemingway is a writer of events.<sup>540</sup>

Ernest Hemingway is a writer of death and spells against death.<sup>541</sup>

These succinct characteristics provide the support for the entire portrait. Although Miłosz describes Hemingway's writing in chronological order, he does not get entangled in the nuances associated with the evolution of his imagination and interests, or the phases of his work. He subsequently discusses the novels and collections of stories, summarizing their plot in a lively, colloquial style. He clearly devotes most of his attention to *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and writes with appreciation about the earlier novel *The Sun Also Rises* and the short story "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." He presents a gallery of Hemingway characters, drawing attention to their common psychological features. He depicts them in their mutual relations and diverse storyline arrangements, and recognizes their discreetly attributed symbolism. Sartre wrote this about the characters of Hemingway:

The heroes of Hemingway and Caldwell never explain themselves – do not allow themselves to be dissected. They act only. (...) We learned from Hemingway to depict, without commentaries, without explanations, without moral judgments, the actions of our characters. The reader understands them because he sees them born and formed in a situation which has been made understandable to him. They live because they spurt suddenly as from a deep well. To analyze them would be to kill them.<sup>542</sup>

The thoughts of the portraitist converge:

Hemingway is a writer of events. He speaks through events, completely hidden from the adventures of the characters, almost absent (...). He uses a lot of dialogue, he describes phenomena without a personal tone, and for the inner experiences of his characters, where dialogues are not enough, he has a monologue – sometimes an inner monologue – and thus a dramatic form, imposing a certain simplicity (the protagonist cannot speak the language of a philosophical dictionary).<sup>543</sup>

Drawn with their own individual features, Hemingway's characters gain a typological value – as participants in the human comedy, playing their roles in the theater of the world, only wearing new costumes, and amid changed decorations. Not without a

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<sup>539</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul: "American Writers in French Eyes," *op. cit.*, p. 118.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6.

<sup>541</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6.

<sup>542</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul: "American Writers in French Eyes," *op. cit.*, p. 117.

<sup>543</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: "O Hemingwayu" [On Hemingway], *op. cit.*, p. 5.

reason, the thought of Balzac and Flaubert returns in the essay. Deriving Hemingway's writing from the tradition of the picaresque novel, Miłosz searches for typical features in his storylines and characters, at the same time showing original shifts within the convention. In Hemingway's fidelity to this tradition, however, Miłosz sees the greatest deficiency of his prose: the absence of perspective which would act on a level outside the narrative. On the other hand, he does note that "American prose, coming out of this new *roman d'aventures* takes from it the maneuvers needed for verbalizing serious matters."<sup>544</sup> He draws attention to the composition and structure of Hemingway's prose, the ability to draw characters without any commentary from the author. He also writes:

Initiation into the writing craft seems to consist first of all in learning which phenomena are suitable for inclusion in a sentence, and which ones must be tackled by other means, as an important, but only generally referenced element of the dramatic arrangement. Hemingway's art attests to his high awareness of these boundaries. Every writer, however, resides on the very borderline. Trying to stay within the boundaries, he may sometimes cross them.<sup>545</sup>

The author treats these remarks as suggestions and hints addressed to writers in Poland. His essay has a clear didactic subtext – it raises the question what Polish writers of prose could learn from Hemingway. The first of the portraits, created not without inspiration from Sartre, is to a greater extent an instruction in novel making, a lesson in style and form than an encouragement to imitate. Hemingway was not Miłosz's most esteemed prose writer from across the ocean, but someone who learned the art of writing by observing his mistakes. His proficiency in writing aroused greater recognition than his work. These are probably the reasons for the fact that the essay was not reissued. The February issue of *Twórczość* in 1951 features Miłosz's review of Hemingway's 1950 novel *Across the River and Into the Trees*. In Miłosz's opinion, comparing it with the writer's previous works provides an overview of the evolution of his prose, and on a wider scale of the entire American prose after the war.

Miłosz the reviewer maintains and clarifies some of the beliefs expressed in the portrait: he places Hemingway's work within the "novel of violence" trend,<sup>546</sup> noting a growing distance toward his own early pacifist tendencies, and a continuation of the naturalistic convention of description. He relates the personality of the main character, a "hard man,"<sup>547</sup> to the ways in which the characters in previous works were constructed, brave in the face of destiny and death. However, Miłosz draws attention here to the intellectual shifts that interest him and that, in his opinion, detract from the value of Hemingway's latest novel:

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<sup>544</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7.

<sup>545</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7.

<sup>546</sup> See Żagarysta [Miłosz, Czesław]: "Powieść Hemingwaya" [Hemingway's Novel], *op. cit.*, p. 185.

<sup>547</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 185.

Death – the expectation of it, and the way it is received, forms the book’s real content. It is not the mere presence of death that determines the decadent atmosphere. This is brought on by the character’s attitude toward death. The protagonist of the novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* meets his death with stoicism, with a good deal of skepticism about its purpose (this “duty in itself” and “death in itself” resulted among other things in this well-known novel about the Spanish war not being counted among the works of revolutionary literature). However, the stoicism there was largely counterbalanced by a sense of human community and hostility to fascism. The latest novel is different. No thought of other people haunts the old colonel. Confrontation with his own death is a kind of race against his own destruction. Such a race can have the characteristics of a great and true tragedy, if death means a sudden obstacle to doing one’s work (e.g. a scientist, measuring every minute he has left until his work is done, as he planned it). However, the protagonist of Hemingway’s novel has no motor of life, no faith. To him, “practicing life” is an art that needs no excuse. Its only point is not being defeated before death (e.g. renouncing alcoholic beverages, or shooting and missing). Thus, the stoic attitude toward death in Hemingway’s “masculine” characters is reduced to a caricature.<sup>548</sup>

Not very skillfully or aptly, Miłosz relates the evolution of the novel’s protagonist to Hemingway’s own biography. From the perspective of what is known today of the dark end of Hemingway’s life, the reviewer’s unjust irony is all the more striking, as he himself did not avoid using in his essay formulations and comments close to the socialist-realist rhetoric. Once again, we do not know whether we are dealing here with interventions of the editorial office, or with the poet’s necessary concessions to the regime just before his dramatic departure from Warsaw in 1949.

## 2. On Faulkner

The second and most important portrait depicts Faulkner, who consistently inspired Miłosz’s imagination, particularly as Miłosz wrote *The Issa Valley* and *Native Realm*.<sup>549</sup> Significantly, in those years Faulkner spoke out against both communist repression and capitalist greed, and encouraged writers to immerse themselves more deeply in the creative process and ignore current political events.

The source of Miłosz’s arguments here is *The Portable Faulkner*,<sup>550</sup> a representative selection of works arranged by the editor and author of the introduction, Malcolm Cowley. Miłosz’s article has a tripartite composition. In the first part, he reiterates his negative views on the novel as a genre, and then outlines the context of American prose through the prism of the works of its leading writers: John Steinbeck, Erskine Caldwell, John Dos Passos, Louis Bromfield, John P. Marquand, William Saroyan,

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<sup>548</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 186.

<sup>549</sup> A critical reader of this essay by Miłosz was Manfred Kridl, whose archive contains a copy of the article with underlined fragments and comments. See Manfred Kridl Collection. Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Box 20, Printed Materials: Clippings, Miscellaneous, Folder 2.

<sup>550</sup> *The Portable Faulkner*. Edited by Malcolm Cowley, The Viking Press, 1946.

Howard Fast, Richard Wright, as well as Hemingway and Faulkner. He treats the main trend in the post-war novel in the United States as a continuation of the *roman noir* – following the critics he uses the term “novel of violence.” Miłosz does not conceal the fact that he developed an aversion to this kind of writing due to its ahistorical perspective, and the presentation of characters as acting mainly under the influence of instincts: “The premise that human life is not very different from that of rats or tortoises seems false to me, and the science of biology is probably not the universal key in the middle of the twentieth century.”<sup>551</sup>

This is why Faulkner, whom Miłosz places outside this tradition, occupies a separate and privileged place in his hierarchy. He sees Faulkner as the heir to his favorite writers: Fielding and Defoe on the one hand, and Balzac<sup>552</sup> and Flaubert on the other. What unites artists from different cultural and historical circles is, in his opinion, the ability to perceive a single fate as universal, and *vice versa* – the ability to build characters that are perhaps improbable, but that possess intense characteristics of the given era, or of human nature, so that they turn out to be representative in perspective, and what is more, they are shown in the quotation marks of authorial irony. Already then Miłosz, an admirer of Cézanne’s painting, separates the realism of the image from the realism commonly understood as verismo. Faulkner in his approach seems to belong to a community of the initiated, capable of presenting the human comedy in an original and distanced way. To illustrate this, Miłosz the portraitist quotes excerpts from the short stories “Red Leaves,” “An Odor of Verbena,” and “The Bear” in his own translation. These are mere excerpts, although Miłosz did make the effort of translating almost the entire short story “Red Leaves.”<sup>553</sup>

In the second part of the essay, Miłosz reconstructs the genetic horizon of Faulkner’s prose. Here, too, he starts by outlining his biography against its background of society and landscape. Miłosz strongly emphasizes that Faulkner’s prose is born and develops on the Mississippi, which is as much a component of the landscape of his childhood as a private and personal myth, harmoniously woven into subsequent stories. This biographical detail clearly links the poet from the land on the river Nevėžis with the writer of the American South. Miłosz also shows the formal affinities of Faulkner’s novels with the prose of Proust and Joyce, which result from a similar understanding of the category of time. He sees his works as successive parts of a larger whole, not least because the same characters sometimes appear in them. He sees in Faulkner an author of one work, developing in multiple dimensions:

Faulkner’s charm lies in the fact that his novels are not a family saga, included in a cycle that the French call “roman fleuve.” (*The Forsyte Saga, Jalna, Undset*). There are many families here,

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551 Miłosz, Czesław: *Faulkner*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

552 Balzac’s trail was followed earlier by Cowley in his edition of *The Portable Faulkner*, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.

553 The manuscript of this translation can be found in Beinecke Library, Box 137, Folder 2176.



many generations, variability in the fates of different social classes, starting from Indian clans, growers, and white farmers, and ending with entire branches of black families.

The fact that we are not dealing here with simple consequence in time, but with the interweaving of times, customs, and epochs, with the simultaneous image of the lives of people who have passed away and those who are alive, is what determines Faulkner's distinctiveness.<sup>554</sup>

He comments on Faulkner's syntax, his predilection for long periodic sentences, his rich vocabulary, which Faulkner intends as a certain historical depository of the English of the South. Thanks to this, as Miłosz suggests, Faulkner moves across a very broad spectrum, drawing both from his own expertise as a chronicler and archivist, and from legends, remythologizing the past in his own way. This duality makes the panorama of his world take on the form of a solid sociological treatise, without anything of its beauty as a fantastic fresco. This is what seems to attract Miłosz the most. Having drawn the outline of this prose, he moves on to a synthetic discussion of its subject matter in chronological terms. He uses an anthology in which fragments of prose are grouped according to Faulkner's vision of historiography. The five-point outline of the periods presented in the novels corresponds to the parts of the anthology, containing fragments of prose preceded by introductions. The times of the first two:

1. Around the 1820: Indian clans and white brawlers. The whites bring in black slaves. Establishment of plantations. Indian clan leaders become infected with the idea of slavery: by breeding Negroes, they get rich, selling their offspring to New Orleans. Breaking down of Indian tribes. A bloody, cruel world of poisoning one's relatives, Parisian fashions, and hunting down escaped slaves using dogs.
2. Blossoming of plantations. Cutting down of the primeval forest. Development of customs which very much resembled the customs of Polish manors. Weddings, inheritances, hunting, witty anecdotes, a patriarchal attitude towards black subjects. The atmosphere of our Rzewuski, and sometimes more of Gogol (*Kontynenty*, 169).

correspond to the contents of the parts titled "The Old People" and "The Peasants." Another era:

3. The Civil War of 1861–1865 as the culmination of the knightly and feudal virtues of the landed class. Heroic cavalry charges, knights with no blemish or stain. At times one is surprised again that he is an American author. It could be a story of some characters taking part in one of our wars. The defeat of the Confederates. The abolition of slavery. Hatred for the invaders from the North (*Kontynenty*, 170).

corresponds to the part titled "The Unvanquished." The next point in this chronology:

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<sup>554</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: *Faulkner*, *op. cit.*, p. 4. The role of the saga in Faulkner's prose is insightfully described in Cowley's introduction to *The Portable Faulkner*, *op. cit.*, p. xiii–xiv.

4. Disintegration of the customs of the feudal class and landed gentry. Invasion of capitalism. An influx of crafty types and “cold bastards” from the North, to whom the knightly code of the Southerners means nothing. The remains of the primeval forest disappear. The last bear hunt in Yoknapatawpha County (...) The Negro cause. Lynch Law (*Kontynenty*, 170).

corresponds to the parts “The Last Wilderness” and “The End of An Order.” The last two parts of the anthology “Mississippi Flood” and “Modern Times” are presented by Miłosz together:

5. The times of capitalism. World War One. Descendants of the old families in “atomized” society. Descendants of these families as soldiers of the First World War. The history of half-bloods from black and white mésalliances and casual relationships (landowner families fathered very significant numbers of children with the servants). The Great Mississippi Flood. The Negro cause continued (*Kontynenty*, 170).

What more does the essay owe to the selection made in *The Portable Faulkner*? Like Cowley, Miłosz the portraitist emphasizes certain biographical details: Faulkner’s lack of systematic schooling, his self-education and his inclination to live in solitude, along with his reluctance to leave his birthplace. Faulkner’s unusual fidelity to his ‘county,’ as Miłosz would put it, and his belief in the value of amateur cognition certainly intrigued Miłosz. Following the anthology, which contains a map of the ‘kingdom of Yoknapatawpha,’ the former resident of Wilno draws out its scenic provinces. Similar remarks about Faulkner’s unusual lexis, which places high demands on the reader, expecting a knowledge of the black dialect of the South as well as archaic vocabulary, appear in Cowley’s work.

Even if one cannot overlook the borrowings taken from *The Portable Faulkner*, one must not omit Miłosz’s personal key to the reading choices he made, which he revealed a long time before making it the principle of his prose. He calls Faulkner a writer of vision, discovering in his writing the rhythms of escalating events and meanings which were also his own. He would concur with Cowley, who believed that Faulkner’s prose “was a form of poetry, and in spite of the echoes it was always his own.”<sup>555</sup> He saw Faulkner as a poet, using the means of fiction to realize the vision that in a poem would be expressed by phrases and imagery. Miłosz heard the inner pulse of this prose clearly. He would then make this idea the constructional principle of *The Issa Valley*. Obviously, the rhythm of the syntax and the sequence of the images are appropriate for expressing a writer’s native linguistic and cultural realities, but the idea to create a structure of sentences, images, and storylines based on the rhythm of a common vision is very much in the spirit of Faulkner.<sup>556</sup>

<sup>555</sup> Cowley, Malcolm: *Introduction*. In *The Portable Faulkner*, *op. cit.*, p. ix.

<sup>556</sup> To Ms. Renata Gorczyńska I owe thanks for the information that in translating *The Issa Valley* Miłosz suggested that Louis Iribarne should use Faulkner’s short story “The Bear” to pattern his translation on it.

If one were to use painting metaphors in relation to this image, one could say Miłosz used Cowley's anthology as a necessary backdrop, so that the figure of Faulkner seen in it would become at least a sketch for his portrait. Perhaps Ryszard Nycz would say about this procedure, as he might about Miłosz's inspiration by Sartre, that they were manifestations of "working with the text," in which an important role was played by "inventive thinking in order to create something out of what may be or not be" and "searching for the 'missing term.'"<sup>557</sup> These "missing terms" were provided by the poet's American readings in no small number.

### 3. On Miller

The portrait of Henry Miller was based on Miłosz's reading of *Tropic of Capricorn*, *The Cosmological Eye*<sup>558</sup> and *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare*.<sup>559</sup> It is not certain that he read the banned books *Black Spring* and *Tropic of Cancer*. We also do not know if, when, and in what context he got to know Miller's other works: *Sunday After the War*,<sup>560</sup> and *Remember to Remember*,<sup>561</sup> mentioned in the article.

In June 1948, Miłosz sought the acquaintance of Miller and then tried to visit him in his California hermitage. He was supposed to visit him in July, on his tour with Wanda Telakowska. In a letter dated June 7, Miller invited him to Big Sur. Despite Miłosz's efforts, the travelers did not manage to find their way to Miller's refuge. What did the poet intend to discuss with Miller? Did he want to prepare for writing his article in this way? The portrait is drawn from a polemical position, but at times it is also contains harmonious dialogue with Miller as a critic of American culture. As in his previous essays, Miłosz reconstructs the social and historical background of Miller's biography. Again, he criticizes the novel as a genre, attacking especially the then fashionable "novel of violence." Miller's social origins, his childhood, and his adventurous youth are the decisive factors in the development of the writer's concept of rebellion.<sup>562</sup> The

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557 Nycz, Ryszard: *Poetyka doświadczenia. Teoria – nowoczesność – literatura*, [Poetics of Experience. Theory – Modernity – Literature], Warsaw, 2012, p. 11.

558 This would be *The Cosmological Eye*, Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1939. In the article Miłosz quotes fragments from this edition in his own translation. He probably read this book around 1947, as he referenced it in the correspondence sent to *Odrodzenie*. In Nowak J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 30, p. 5.

559 This is the edition *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare*, New York: New Directions, 1945. In the essay Miłosz quotes many extensive fragments from this edition, in his own translation.

560 This is the edition *Sunday after the War*, Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1944.

561 This is the edition *Remember to Remember*, New York: New Directions, 1947, Part Two to *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare*.

562 The critics labelled it derivative at the time – borrowed from the French poets. In his review of the collection of essays titled *Art as Experiment* of 1946 Wylie Sypher wrote: "Henry Miller, who some time ago appeared to be the only *révolté*, never has appeared less so than in his present study

Dadaist and Surrealist background of his work, as well as its erotic motifs, somewhat unwieldy in Miłosz's opinion, are explained as provocative responses to American conservatism and puritanism.

Analyzing Miller's method, Miłosz emphasizes the benefits of breaking up the traditional construction of the novel: he is interested in the original connection between autobiography and syncretism of discourses and forms. However, while Miłosz appreciates Miller's novelistic pulp as opening new writing possibilities, he does not believe in its declared sources. According to Miłosz, firstly, automatic writing, which is one of the declarative assumptions of Miller's prose, undermines the writer's sense of selection to the detriment of the entire work, and secondly, it gives the illusion of sincerity only to an inexperienced reader. Nor is Miłosz seduced by Miller's rebellious hero, stylized as a "natural man," whose myth, he claims, dominated contemporary American prose under the influence of D. H. Lawrence. In the way Miller's protagonists are shaped, he is struck, to use the language of later Miłosz, by the humiliation of the *Être*: not elevating human behaviors to any norms, not extracting the contrast between deed and code, showing life as a senseless combination of events, presenting people in their helplessness, which can only be relieved in physiology. It is interesting that only in this way does Miller become Miłosz's interlocutor – in his diagnoses Miłosz recognizes his own observations and – as in the poetry of those years – he speaks about America with the voice of the prose writer from *Big Sur*, confronting him, and considering his theses and assessments. It is also interesting that of Miłosz's three literary portraits, the portrait of Miller is the most independent in regard to the local opinions of his work. Miłosz collected extremely harsh assessments of *The Air-conditioned Nightmare*, as mentioned in the essay on Hemingway. In *Partisan Review*, Isaac Rosenfeld wrote that Miller took a permanent holiday from good taste, based on his propensity for exaggeration and intellectual abuse, and as a result he managed to discredit the American dream and show it as the *American nightmare*.<sup>563</sup> The critic added:

The American nightmare has taken the place of the American dream, and it is as sentimental as its predecessor, and as popular and as widely believed in. We all know our shame and disgrace by now; they have blended us with the breakfast coffee. Miller is in the position once ascribed, if I remember, by Mencken to George Bernard Shaw – parading, stripped to the waist, with a placard that reads: Man is a Mammal and has an Umbilicus!<sup>564</sup>

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of Rimbaud, himself a desperate *révolté*. Only Miller does not recognize him as such. He discerns in Rimbaud the *voyant* so finally alienated from the air-conditioned nightmare of the bourgeois world that he sinks into passivity and renunciation, with Miller's own conviction that 'we are coming to the end.' Here may be a better interpretation of Miller than Rimbaud – but at least Miller can no longer be considered arch-bohemian, or even experimental. His comments are almost academic in scope and precision." *The Nation* 1946, issue 7, p. 188.

<sup>563</sup> Rosenfeld, Isaac: "Return to the U.S.A.," *Partisan Review* 1946, issue 3, p. 380.

<sup>564</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 381–382.

Rosenfeld criticizes Miller's artistic perspective, which narrows down and deforms his view of America: "The limitations of bohemianism are all too obvious. (...) He has nothing to say of American society and politics that his pose and his gesture have not already summarized. Anything not fully covered by his pose is included in his prayer for the immediate destruction of civilization – a device whereby silence can be made to say everything."<sup>565</sup> Rosenfeld does not refer to Miller's arguments, but discredits him through personal attacks. The reviewer's series of offensive epithets about the aging writer who was losing his vigor, as he presents Miller, ends with a crushing punchline: "Miller, the decultured man, can thrive only on the ruins of ancient cultures. Without traditional or classic settings, his pose is no more than another American eccentricity."<sup>566</sup> Miłosz did not share this view. *The Air-conditioned Nightmare* is one of the main books to which he refers in his essay about Miller in 1948 – and it is the source of the majority of the quotations used in his own translation. Miłosz and Miller speak in a similar voice about the catastrophic consequences of the conquest of the continent, the extermination of Native Americans, the boredom of large empty spaces, the ugliness of New York, the apparent displacement of nature by the expanding technical civilization, the unexploited potential of a multiracial society, the limited cultural horizons of White people, the disastrous level of the mass media, the infantilization of adults by cinema and animated films, and the academism of American painting. Miller's portrait is therefore an indirect form of expressing Miłosz's own observations and intuitions.

#### 4. On *Moby-Dick*

In its idea and construction, the article about *Moby-Dick* does not resemble Miłosz's previous essays. His intention was not to outline the profile of Melville, but rather to present his novel in the context of the abbreviated Polish edition entitled *Bestia morska* [Beast of the Sea]:

The book was published in a series of adventure novels, together with numerous reeditions of Jack London's books. A young reader, thirsty for exotic adventures – and all the picturesque covers appeal above all to him – will read this book with interest, while the critics dealing with the so-called serious books, will pass it over with silence.

It should be remembered that *Moby-Dick* or *the Whale* (as this is the title of the original) is one of the most outstanding novels of the nineteenth century and whoever appreciates Dickens, Tolstoy, or Stendhal, cannot pass by it with indifference. Herman Melville represents the "golden age" of American literature, such as Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and finally Mark Twain. This is very special literature and, just as America

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<sup>565</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 382.

<sup>566</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 382.

in the nineteenth century, it was different from that of Europe: the processes that took centuries in Europe, occurred quickly here, forming a kind of laboratory in which the sudden growth of bacteria provides interesting insights for the observer.<sup>567</sup>

These remarks show how far Miłosz had broadened his knowledge of American literature, and how he incorporated it into the horizon of European writing. He made this a principle of his later reading in Europe – in his imagination an ever-clearer image of the writing of both continents was forming, and intercultural translation became his practice. This trend is also evident in his essay about *Moby-Dick*, when the poet outlines the context of Melville's prose:

This literature can be compared (roughly, because all such comparisons are dangerous) to Dutch painting from the period of the sudden and not too long-lasting maritime power of the Netherlands. The country of the Yankees, i.e. the north-eastern part of today's United States, resembled the Netherlands in many respects – it was a country of a wealthy bourgeoisie who drew their wealth to a large extent from the sea. The colonization of the continent removed these similarities, but a hundred years ago the atmosphere of Boston resembled that of Amsterdam in the seventeenth century.<sup>568</sup>

Against this background, Miłosz outlines a profile of the writer. *Moby-Dick* is one of the most important works he read in America – he expressed his enthusiasm for the novel several times in his correspondence. The memory of the novel is so enduring that even in the poem “So little”, the pursuit of Moby Dick figuratively represents the fate of the poet, who says about himself: “The white whale of the world hauled me down to its pit.”<sup>569</sup> Melville's novel meets all his expectations, and becomes a warranty of his own writing invention. First of all, its plot, built on the classic model of adventure novels, is a vehicle of deep symbolic and existential meanings. It becomes at the same time a document of life of the era and an unparalleled ethnographic, sociological, and cultural source. Miłosz writes:

Secondly, *Moby-Dick* abolishes the division into fictional and non-fictional literature, blurring the boundary between novel and autobiography, arousing admiration as a hybrid of genres and discourses: its entirety is interwoven with philosophical chapters that are a mixture of Melville's misanthropy and sincere mockery – serious deliberations turn into mockery surreptitiously. This insidious mockery, made with the most serious face (...) has something of the writing method of Rabelais, whom Melville liked to read. If we add that strong romantic elements add extraordinary character and melancholy to some of his descriptions, we will understand why this book-concoction did not succeed in primitive America.

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567 Miłosz, Czesław: “Moby-Dick”, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

568 Miłosz, Czesław: “Moby-Dick”, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

569 Miłosz, Czesław: “So little”. In *idem: Wiersze 3*, p. 117.

Although the article about *Moby-Dick* is mainly utilitarian in nature (in order to raise the awareness of the need to publish it on the basis of a full translation from the original and not, as in the case of the edition discussed, an abridged French edition for young readers), it reveals Miłosz's ideas about what a novel should be, what the possibilities of fictional prose are, and in what direction it should be developed – Miłosz himself will remind us Melville's lesson as the author of *The Issa Valley*. The essay was significantly extended by general remarks concerning the knowledge of foreign languages among Polish writers, and the necessity of translating the classics of literature.<sup>570</sup> It is pessimistic in its conclusions concerning the current situation of Polish literature and flattering in its evaluations of translation work in the past, especially in the interwar period.

## V. Concealed Readings in America

Miłosz's image of American prose is more complete at the end of the 1940s than would appear from his journalism. The "Sturm and Drang" of American literature was for him the years after the First World War. This period of artistic experiments, and social revolts against the American mentality was symbolized by the name the "lost generation." In the American novel the poet sees the influence of French prose, and particularly the prose of Gustave Flaubert. The subsequent period brought the economic crisis, the New Deal and Marxism. Like in Europe, the Second World War closed both those periods. However, Miłosz sees a certain continuity in the novel about social injustice, a large number of books on racial issues, mainly about Jim Crow laws in relation to blacks, and about antisemitism. Also, he observes the last wave of Zola's naturalism in its exaggeration on the example of *Never Come Morning* by Nelson Algren.

The list of his latest prose readings was also longer. Miłosz only mentions some of the books, such as *Point Counter Point* by Huxley, Koestler's *Thieves in the Night*, and *East River* by Sholem Ash, *Peace of Mind* by Joshua Liebman, F.S.C. Northrop's *The Meeting of East and West*, *The American Dilemma* by Gunnar Myrdal, and memoirs devoted to Roosevelt. In his reports, Miłosz comments on *Animal Farm*<sup>571</sup> and *I Chose Freedom* by Victor Kravchenko. Miłosz announces the third topic of contemporary prose: books on the history of America among which he highly evaluates Thornton Wilder's *The Ides of March*.

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<sup>570</sup> The manuscript of the article is kept at the National Library, collection Akc. 14618, p. 1–9.

<sup>571</sup> In the USA the novel was reviewed by Redman, Ben Ray, *politics* 1946, March, pp. 88–89, and Orwell was often mentioned there – see Woodstock, George: "George Orwell. 19th Century Liberal," *politics* 1946, December, pp. 384–388.

Among the works Miłosz commented on we do not find *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, or the works of Truman Capote, Saul Bellow, J. D. Salinger, Robert Penn Warren, Dorothy West, Carson McCullers, Joseph Heller, George Santayana, Philip Wylie, Thomas Merton and the emigrant authors who were at the beginning of their career: Isaac Bashevis Singer, Vladimir Nabokov,<sup>572</sup> or Elias Canetti.<sup>573</sup> In this group he only mentioned Alberto Moravia.<sup>574</sup> Did these works broaden the catalog of his concealed readings, which he did not reveal even indirectly, either then or later? He had a broader perspective not only in his overview of fictional prose. *The New Republic* published reviews of, among others, *Animal Farm*,<sup>575</sup> *North and South* by Elizabeth Bishop,<sup>576</sup> plays by O'Neill,<sup>577</sup> *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*,<sup>578</sup> the prose of Saul Bellow,<sup>579</sup> and plays by Williams.<sup>580</sup> *The Nation* discussed Ernst Cassirer's philosophical essays,<sup>581</sup> Arnold Toynbee's studies,<sup>582</sup> reviews of Sartre's prose<sup>583</sup> and *A Man in The Divided Sea* by Thomas Merton.<sup>584</sup> Lists of the most important books of the year were published there,<sup>585</sup> as well as comments on the importance of existentialism.<sup>586</sup> *The Saturday Review of Literature* discussed new books by Merton,<sup>587</sup> Pearl S. Buck,<sup>588</sup> works of science fiction<sup>589</sup> and fantasy,<sup>590</sup> but also European literature –

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572 He began his career also as a translator – see Lermontov, Michail: “Thanksgiving.” Translated by Vladimir Nabokov, *The Atlantic Monthly* 1946, November, p. 108.

573 His prose was recommended by *The Saturday Review of Literature* in 1947.

574 Miłosz recalls that a story by Moravia was a topic of conversation during the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference. See Żagarysta [Miłosz, Czesław]: “Zabawy i spory” [Games and Arguments], *op. cit.*, p. 4. In the USA, a volume of Moravia's prose was published: *Two Adolescents*, New York: Farrar, Straus, 1950. The book was reviewed by Charles J. Rolo in his column “Reader's Choice,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 1950, August, pp. 84–85.

575 *The New Republic* 1946, issue 9, p. 267.

576 *The New Republic* 1946, issue 21, p. 525.

577 *Ibidem*, p. 517.

578 *The New Republic* 1947, issue 6, p. 39.

579 *The New Republic* 1947, issue 8, p. 27.

580 *The New Republic* 1947, issue 25, p. 34.

581 *The Nation* 1946, issue 23, pp. 666–667.

582 *The Nation* 1946, issue 16, pp. 440–444.

583 *The Nation* 1947, issue 6, pp. 146–147.

584 *The Nation* 1947, issue 2, p. 50.

585 See *The Nation* 1946, issue 24, p. 704, *The Nation* 1947, issue 23, p. 632, issue 24, p. 657, as well as *The Nation* 1947, issue 6, pp. 146–147.

586 *The Nation* 1946, issue 13, pp. 346–349 and *The Nation* 1947, issue 17, pp. 449–450.

587 John Frederick Nims reviewed his volume *A Man in the Divided Sea*, *The Saturday Review of Literature* 1946, October, 26, p. 36.

588 Wolfe, Ann F.: “By a Dedicated Storyteller,” *The Saturday Review of Literature* 1946, November, 23, p. 10.

589 Holcomb, Claire: “The S-F Phenomenon in Literature,” *The Saturday Review of Literature* 1949, May, 28, pp. 9–10.

590 Pratt, Fletcher: “Science Fiction & Fantasy – 1949,” *The Saturday Review of Literature* 1949, December, 24, pp. 7–8.



*The Stranger*,<sup>591</sup> the prose of Arthur Koestler,<sup>592</sup> Franz Kafka,<sup>593</sup> Herman Hesse,<sup>594</sup> Graham Greene,<sup>595</sup> Erich Fromm,<sup>596</sup> and Arnold J. Toynbee.<sup>597</sup> Essays by Józef Wittlin, Thomas Mann, Truman Capote, Einstein, Ciardi, and Ruth Benedict were also published there. *politics* commented mainly on works bordering on political science, sociology, and history,<sup>598</sup> touching on women's issues, racial discrimination, the sexual revolution, human rights, and the future of Marxism. It published texts by Chiaromonte,<sup>599</sup> Camus,<sup>600</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty,<sup>601</sup> while John Berryman reviewed the latest poetry there. *Partisan Review* recommended works by Camus and Sartre (Miłosz commented on his *Portrait of the Antisemite*<sup>602</sup> in *Życie w USA*), Isaac Babel,<sup>603</sup> Jorge Luis Borges,<sup>604</sup> and devoted a great deal of attention to the poetry of Stevens,<sup>605</sup> Pound and Jeffers,<sup>606</sup> Tate,<sup>607</sup> Cummings,<sup>608</sup> Merrill,<sup>609</sup> and Bishop.<sup>610</sup> The poetry column was also written by John Berryman, while Orwell exchanged the "London Letters" with Koestler. Other contributors included Maurice Merleau-

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591 "Benign Indifference," *The Saturday Review of Literature* 1946, May, 18, p. 10.

592 Pick, Robert: "The Story of Ezra's Tower," *The Saturday Review of Literature* 1946, November, 2, p. 12.

593 Weiskopf, F. C.: "More Fuel for the Kafka Followers," *The Saturday Review of Literature* 1946, November, 16, p. 17.

594 Pick, Robert: "Nobel Prize Winner Hesse," *The Saturday Review of Literature* 1946, November, 16, p. 38.

595 *The Saturday Review of Literature* 1948, October, 9, p. 8.

596 Brynes, Asher: "End of Psychological Man Proclaimed," *The Saturday Review of Literature* 1948, February, p. 25.

597 Edman, Irwin: "On the Right Road to a Snail's Pace," *The Saturday Review of Literature* 1948, May, 1, p. 9.

598 Sebastian Franck discussed Tocqueville's study of democracy in the article "Prophet of the Total State," *politics* 1946, April, pp. 127–128.

599 Chiaromonte, Nicola: "On the Kind of Socialism Called 'Scientific'," *politics* 1946, February, pp. 33–42.

600 Camus, Albert: "Neither Victims Nor Executioners," *politics* 1947, issue 4, pp. 141–147.

601 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice: "Marxism and Philosophy." Translated by Eva and Harold Orlansky, *politics* 1947, issue 4, pp. 161–172.

602 Sartre, Jean-Paul: "Portrait of the Antisemite," *Partisan Review* 1946, Spring, Vol. XIII, No. 2, pp. 163–178.

603 Babel, Isaac: "The Sin of Jesus," *Partisan Review* 1949, Vol. XVI, No. 1, pp. 67–71.

604 Borges, Jorge Luis: "Emma Zunz," *Partisan Review* 1949 September, Vol. XVI, No. 9, pp. 937–943.

605 See Schwartz, Delmore: "Auden and Stevens," *Partisan Review* 1947, September–October, Vol. XIV, No. 5, pp. 528–532; Sypher, Wylie: "Connoisseur in Chaos," *Partisan Review* 1946, Winter, pp. 83–94; Bewley, Marius: "The Poetry of Wallace Stevens," *Partisan Review* 1949, Vol. XVI, No. 9, pp. 895–915.

606 See Davis, Robert Gorham: "Pound, Jeffers, and Others," *Partisan Review* 1948, November, Vol. XV, No. 11, pp. 1219–1249.

607 Tate, Allen: "The Eye," *Partisan Review* 1948, January, Vol. XV, No. 1, pp. 40–41.

608 Cummings, E. E.: "Five Poems," *Partisan Review* 1949, February, Vol. XVI, No. 2, pp. 152–155.

609 Merrill, John: "The Grape Cure," *Partisan Review* 1949, February, Vol. XVI, No. 2, pp. 155–156.

610 Bishop, Elizabeth: "Over 2,000 Illustrations," *Partisan Review* 1948, June, Vol. XV, No. 6, p. 631; "O Breath," *Partisan Review* 1949 September, Vol. XVI, No. 9, p. 894.

Ponty,<sup>611</sup> Siegfried Kracauer,<sup>612</sup> Louis Zukofsky,<sup>613</sup> Arnold Hauser,<sup>614</sup> Sidney Hook,<sup>615</sup> Jose Ortega y Gasset,<sup>616</sup> Saul Bellow,<sup>617</sup> Erich Auerbach,<sup>618</sup> Karl Jaspers,<sup>619</sup> and many others who co-created the Western intellectual circle in the twentieth century.<sup>620</sup>

*The Atlantic Monthly* included works by Truman Capote,<sup>621</sup> John Heller,<sup>622</sup> treatises by Isaiah Berlin,<sup>623</sup> prose by Virginia Woolf,<sup>624</sup> essays by C. S. Lewis,<sup>625</sup> poems by Dylan Thomas; it recommended *Waters of Siloe* and *The Seven Storey Mountain* and Merton's poetry.<sup>626</sup> Miłosz does not comment on these works – neither in the United States nor when he takes stock of this five-year period<sup>627</sup> – perhaps he considers them as an obvious component of his self-education overseas, a circle of readings common to all intellectuals.

Miłosz's predictions on the future of American prose at the time are interesting – he sees its development mainly in the context of the political and economic situation.

In his unpublished article about American literature he closely analyzes the *Partisan Review* survey on the condition and future of literature.<sup>628</sup> Its respondents included John Berryman, Richard Palmer Blackmur, Robert Gorham Davis, Leslie A. Fiedler, Clement Greenberg, H. L. Mencken, Wallace Stevens, Lionel Trilling, and John

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611 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice: "Cézanne's Doubt," *Partisan Review* 1946, September–October, Vol. XIII, No. 4, pp. 464–478.

612 Kracauer, Siegfried: "Caligari," *Partisan Review* 1947, March–April, Vol. XIV, No. 2, pp. 160–173.

613 Zukofsky, Louis: "Sequence 1944–46," *Partisan Review* 1947, July–August, Vol. XIV, No. 4, pp. 390–391.

614 Hauser, Arnold: "Can Movies Be 'Profound'?", *Partisan Review* 1948, January, Vol. XV, No. 1, pp. 69–73.

615 Hook, Sidney: "On Historical Understanding," *Partisan Review* 1948, February, Vol. XV, No. 2, pp. 231–239.

616 Ortega y Gasset, Jose: "On Point of View in the Arts," *Partisan Review* 1949, August, Vol. XVI, No. 8, pp. 822–836.

617 Bellow, Saul: "From the Life of Augie March," *Partisan Review* 1949, November, Vol. XVI, No. 11, pp. 1077–1089.

618 Auerbach, Erich: "The Scar of Ulysses," *Partisan Review* 1950, May–June, Vol. XVII, No. 5, pp. 411–432.

619 Jaspers, Karl: "Philosophy and Science," *Partisan Review* 1949, September, Vol. XVI, No. 9, pp. 871–884.

620 This is discussed by Cooney, Terry A. in *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals. Partisan Review and Its Circle*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1986.

621 Capote, Truman: "Shut a Final Door," *The Atlantic Monthly* 1947, August, pp. 49–55.

622 Heller, Joseph: "A Man Named Flute," *The Atlantic Monthly* 1948, August, pp. 66–70.

623 Berlin, Isaac: "Mr. Churchill," *The Atlantic Monthly* 1949, September, pp. 35–44.

624 Woolf, Virginia: "My Father: Leslie Stephen," *The Atlantic Monthly* 1950, March, pp. 39–41; "Selina Trimmer," *The Atlantic Monthly* 1950, April, pp. 73–74.

625 Walsh, Chad: "C.S. Lewis, Apostle to the Skeptics," *The Atlantic Monthly* 1946, September, pp. 115–119; Lewis, C. S.: "The Pains of Animals. A Problem in Theology: The Reply," *The Atlantic Monthly* 1950, August, pp. 59–61.

626 Weeks, Edward: "The Peripatetic Reviewer," *The Atlantic Monthly* 1949, May, pp. 80–81; Merton, Thomas: "Hymn for the Feast of Duns Scotus, The Reader," *The Atlantic Monthly* 1949, December, pp. 54–55.

627 The only exception will be Thomas Merton, the subject of Miłosz's essay "Amerykański poeta kontemplacyjny" [American Contemplative Poet], *Kultura* 1951, issue 4, pp. 135–141.

628 The survey was published in *Partisan Review* 1948, August, Volume XV, No. 8, pp. 855–894.

Crowe. The survey focused on the most important phenomena and transformations of literature in the 1940s in the context of the past decades and in relation to the European tradition. It asked about the place and meaning of middlebrow culture. The respondents were encouraged to reflect on the role of re-editions of old works and their influence on the latest works. This initiated a discussion on the current attitude of writers to experimentation as a creative path and the degree of assimilation of the achievements of the avant-garde. The question of the role of the writer in public life was raised in view of the fact that writers were increasingly members of the academy, earning a living as lecturers and not, as in the past, working in many professions, and moving in more diverse social circles. Questions were asked about the status of criticism as a separate form of writing and its contemporary relationship with literature, its creators, and audiences. Finally, attempts were made to determine the impact of the political situation, including the growing tension in the relations between Soviet Russia and Western democracies on the future of literature in the United States.

The survey participants pointed to several major changes in literature in the post-war years. They considered this period to be transient, marked by a sense of powerlessness and, with the exception of a few individual authors, they did not see the successors of the outstanding writers who debuted in the 1920s and 1930s. They emphasized the superficiality of the reception of European literature, including existentialism. They watched with anxiety the gradual loosening of ties between writers of literature and the rest of society. Looking for the reasons for this situation, they pointed out specialization of the press, the fact that high-volume magazines had largely stopped publishing new works, and that discussions were moving to campuses, which resulted in the isolation of literary life. In their opinion, the academic work undertaken by writers was detrimental to creativity and limited the scope of their influence. Appreciating the development of professional criticism, they regretted that it remained less and less in dialogue with the writers and readers. They saw the development of middlebrow culture as a kind of response to these processes, and they warned that soon these closed cultural circuits would remain self-sufficient and isolated on both sides. The artist, who already had the status of a misfit, might be even more severely excluded – the migration of writers to universities was one of the first mild forms of it. Some believed that this hindered experimentation, that the culture of the 1940s was entering a dangerous phase of academicism. Others emphasized the need to find a form of experiment that would be both a path to social understanding and, as did Stevens, claimed that experimentation was a synonym, or perhaps a definition of creative work, so the discussion around it was the only artistic debate *par excellence*. The participants assessed the impact of the international situation on literature in extremely divergent ways – some underscored the value of artistic autonomy, others tried to estimate the effects of assimilating or rejecting Marxism.

Miłosz presented the issues proposed by the editorial office and summarized the statements of the successive writers. His syntheses have the character of selective abbreviations – he sometimes reduced several-page treatises to one paragraph, in which the key sentences were quoted, often out of their original context and the longer sequence of thoughts. Although the sentences he juxtaposed often sound impressive, they do not illustrate the way of thinking expressed in the longer and much more subtle deductions, and they often change their original sense and direction. Miłosz omits numerous threads, digressions, and examples illustrating successive arguments, and quoting individual theses, he deprives them of their persuasive power and expression. Certainly, the poet was aware of these simplifications. The advantage of the essay lies in the characterization of the average recipient of culture, although it also owes much to the knowledge of the survey.

Miłosz's journalism is not the only form in which he presented American prose. In the years preceding his departure from the United States, however, Miłosz moved away from cross-sectional essays, in favor of translations, by means of which he participated in the national discourse on artistic and political issues.

## VI. Faced with Poetry in the English Language

Miłosz's literary journalism contained no portraits of poets – the only essay of 1949 was only indirectly devoted to the work of Saint-John Perse. Moreover, the list of poets that can be recreated based on his texts does not include many names considered crucial for the history of English-language literature. There is no mention of John Berryman, Dylan Thomas, Elisabeth Bishop,<sup>629</sup> Marianne Moore, Hilda Doolittle, Ogden Nash, the Fugitive Poets and the Objectivists, or the left-leaning poets. This is not an accusation if we remember that the poet used *A New Anthology of Modern Poetry*,<sup>630</sup> in which the poems of many of these authors were included in a representative selection. It is rather a statement that helps to outline the circle of poets Miłosz moved in during the American postwar period – including Eliot, Frost, Pound, Auden, Lowell, Shapiro, Ciardi, and Jarrell. As early as 1947–1948, other poets became important to him, which is evident in his translation of the proclamation “American writers in defense of Pablo Neruda” – signed by i.a. Dorothy Parker, Louis Untermeyer, Mark Van Doren, Karl Shapiro, Marianne Moore, Conrad Aiken, William Rose Benet, Van Wyck Brooks, Louis Adamic.

In his discussions of poetry, Miłosz also chose different strategies from those he used in relation to prose or drama. His articles contain references to poets – he

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<sup>629</sup> Her poetry was reviewed in the column “Verse Chronicle,” *The Nation* 1946, issue 13.

<sup>630</sup> This is the edition *A New Anthology of Modern Poetry*. Edited and introduced by Selden Rodman, New York: Random House, 1946.

also devoted extensive remarks to them in his essay “Zabawy i spory” [Games and Arguments]. He worked on essays which were meant, among other things, to show English-language poetry in relation to Polish and European poetry – “List półprywatny o poezji” [A Semi-Private Letter about Poetry] and “Wprowadzenie w Amerykanów” [Introduction to the Americans. An Essay on American Poetry]. He reveals in them that he read the works of Sandburg, Lindsay, Edgar Lee Masters, Jeffers, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Vincent Béné, and Hart Crane. He is interested in the famous trial of Ezra Pound and the background of awarding him the Bollingen Prize. In the end, however, he makes translation the most important form of presenting poetry, and over time he publishes more poems in his own translation.

### 1. “List półprywatny o poezji” [A Semi-Private Letter about Poetry]

The persuasive power of “List półprywatny o poezji” [A Semi-Private Letter about Poetry] written in response to Kazimierz Wyka’s essay about the poems in the volume *Rescue*, comes from more than assimilating Eliot’s idea of transmitting tradition. Miłosz’s views are supported by his knowledge of Shakespeare, as well as British and American poetry. On the one hand, “List” reconstructs the process of searching for a new authority, which is also reflected in many poems from the volume *Rescue*. On the other hand, it proposes to inscribe Polish poetry (starting from the Renaissance) in the tradition of European poetry and, more broadly, to write its history in the same terms as those used for describing the history of English-language literature, which entails not so much a replacement of the authorities, but an awareness of the need to change the way of thinking about them. As Józef Olejniczak writes, “the polemic between Wyka and Miłosz only seemingly concerned poems from *Rescue*. In fact, it was rather a discussion about the shape of Polish poetry after the experience of the Second World War and the German occupation, and about its attitude toward the Romantic tradition.”<sup>631</sup> It is a way of defending his own position, also thanks to the new arguments gained after his departure from Poland. Miłosz later refers to this in a footnote to “Wprowadzenie w Amerykanów” [Introduction to the Americans. An Essay on American Poetry]: “When I was getting down to studying English in German-occupied Warsaw, I knew that I was looking for support for various reflections – I could not find it in Polish, Russian or French. However, it was only in America that I got to the books. And it is much more convenient to hide behind authorities than to step forward with a program of one’s own.” (*Kontynenty*, 91). This second dimension of “List” owes much to Miłosz’s acquaintance with Eliot and recent English-language poetry. In this aesthetic frame, Jan Kochanowski, as the author of *Treny* [Laments],

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<sup>631</sup> Olejniczak, Józef: *Arkadia i małe ojczyzny. Vincenz – Stempowski – Wittlin – Miłosz* [Arcadia and Small Homelands. Vincenz – Stempowski – Wittlin – Miłosz], Krakow, 1992, p. 198.

is an experimenter, searching in the history of poetry for patterns of expressing existential anxiety related to old age and death. Ignacy Krasicki achieves the ideal combination of seriousness and bombast, renewing the tradition of political satire. Mickiewicz, as the author of *Sonety krymskie* [The Crimean Sonnets] and *Ballady i romanse* [Ballads and Romances], practices artistic irony, thanks to which he reaches the fullness of distance to the characters and events presented in *Pan Tadeusz* [Sir Thaddeus]. The procedure of "transcribing" the history of Polish poetry into the idiom of English-language concepts is necessary to show that from the earliest days, both the objectivizing distance and the potential for public commentary and satire have been present. Such a presentation, in turn, allows Miłosz to demonstrate that his own work fitting in with this trend is not an imitation of new Western models, but a resurrection of the best models of his native literary heritage. Miłosz first tells the story of poetry in Poland and abroad, and then, in order to strengthen his own theses, evokes the figure of Shapiro, whose work, like his own poems, he presents as a consequence of the development of the poetry of his language, as the contemporary stage of transformations of the tradition that was of key importance to him. The example of Shapiro serves to a large extent the conviction that this is the direction in which world poetry is developing, and in this sense *Rescue* was one of the stages of searching for the form and attitude of the poetic subject. Miłosz reveals these intentions in these words:

When, after many years of broken contact with French poetry, the first books by Éluard and Aragon fell into my hands, I felt both satisfaction and embarrassment. I was glad that my prophecies concerning the extension of the range of topics proved to be true. My embarrassment was the embarrassment of a Pole: damn it! We could have been writing in the same way during the war. But it did not occur to us. We were ashamed – they are throwing themselves into patriotic themes with a rapaciousness we could not afford. In such cases we would quote Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Krasiński, or Norwid. We have a tradition of suffering. They are not threatened by the shadow of Victor Hugo, and they have the greed of neophytes (*Kontynenty*, 79).

In "List półprywatny o poezji," Eliot's essay "Tradition and Individual Talent" is a weapon used for a twofold purpose. First, to defend the position of the author of *Rescue* as a restorer of the tradition of Polish poetry of distance, and second, to express criticism of the actions of the worshipers of shallowly understood Romanticism, who deform its ideas in their appeals to return to directness and a cult of feelings, and in disseminating illusions about the Romantic identity of the poetic "I" with the author who constructs it. The latter, as Józef Olejniczak comments, "boils down to a warning against closing literature (i.e. poetry, poets, and critics) within one circle of tradition, and one ideological formula."<sup>632</sup> Miłosz writes: "Left-wing critics claiming to be humanists do what they can to push writers in this direction. They are not humanists,

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632 *Ibidem*, p. 198.

but disguised romantics, wolves in sheep's clothing, and they have such insolence as if each of them were Erasmus of Rotterdam" (*Kontynenty*, 90).

## 2. "Wprowadzenie w Amerykanów" [Introduction to the Americans]

Consequently, in "Wprowadzenie w Amerykanów" [Introduction to the Americans. An Essay on American Poetry], Miłosz describes the contemporary development of this current of poetry, which is inspired by "French influences, then T.S. Eliot, poets of the seventeenth century, W. H. Auden and other English poets" (*Kontynenty*, 96). He points out that alongside it there exists "American poetry, searching for 'purely American' forms of expression (Whitman!) more eagerly read by the audience" (*Kontynenty*, 96), but he also observes that "The new generation of poets is turning away from these writers. They seem too 'impure' in the artistic sense, too chatty" (*Kontynenty*, 96), and he himself also follows the authorities of the younger generation. This seems important because, first of all, *Daylight* is largely inspired by this trend – the remarks in which Miłosz summarizes the poetic achievements of Eliot (one can speak of Miłosz's Eliot not only in the light of the translations), is a program realized in poems from the volume of 1953, secondly, in time the author of *Bobo's Metamorphosis* returns for a longer time to the works of poets pushed aside in the essay of 1947 – mainly Jeffers, Sandburg and Frost.

A footnote to the essay in *Kontynenty* contains the caveat that the author treats the essay as "informative," and "reporting" in nature. Even if one were to rely on this assessment, it is worth displaying in the "Wprowadzenie w Amerykanów" [Introduction to the Americans. An Essay on American Poetry] these issues which either signal an interesting, and not fully disclosed, context of Miłosz's reflection, or point to the directions of his further research in an embryonic form. The article has a distinct bracket-like composition – it opens and closes with observations of the landscape of New England, notes from a journey, which may have been the real background for writing the essay, or merely a literary way of signaling a certain cognitive situation. The description of the March night in an inn by the Atlantic serves as an introduction to a reflection on a new volume of Lowell's poems, presenting Lowell as the leading poet of New England. At the end of the essay, Miłosz returns to reading *Lord Weary's Castle* and to observing the New England campus. Inscribing Lowell's work in the local landscape and embedding it in the history of Boston's patrician class are indirect ways of expressing a sense of alienation and inability to understand some of its meanings. Even then, Miłosz strongly emphasizes the local dimension of literature, its connection with the native language, landscape and childhood experience, which obviously complicates the situation of reception.

The thought of a certain untranslatability of poetry and its immanent hermeticism bothers him when he observes the emergence of an international group of English

poets. Nearly half of the content in "Wprowadzenie w Amerykanów" is devoted to a description of the work of Eliot and Auden, as the authors who had the strongest influence on contemporary American poetry at that time. If the influence of an American living in London on world poetry is so extensive, and the position of a poet from Oxford living in Brooklyn is so indisputable, he needs to put in parentheses his own earlier remarks about the archetypal significance of one's language, origins, spatial imagination, and literary tradition. In contrast, it makes one think about contemporary poetry from the perspective of mutually permeating influences, conduct disputes and negotiations not only on the local ground of one's own culture, but on a much broader level. For the Polish artist, the expansion of English as the new language of discussion about poetry is an interesting and personally important phenomenon, forcing Miłosz to reorganize his thinking about the future of Western literature and his own place in it. At a certain level of reflection, "Wprowadzenie w Amerykanów" [Introduction to the Americans. An Essay on American Poetry] is a testimony to this reorganization, to the process of drawing a map of poetry with new centers, and at the same time reconstructing one's own creative identity. At the intersection of his observations on the phenomena of local poetry and those that are becoming common in it due to the universalization of English, Miłosz searches for a place within this horizon of attitudes, beliefs, and styles. He searches for it – let us add for the sake of precision – for himself, but also for Polish poetry, which he incorporates into the circle of Western influences.

Aware of the fact that in each language one can point out the achievements of poetry characteristic to it, Miłosz pushes them away, focusing on the issues that Americans and Europeans jointly consider important and take up in the seemingly common medium. They share the tradition of French poetry, primarily the current of pure poetry, whose continuation – in the form transformed by Eliot and Auden – is intellectual poetry.

Miłosz understands that despite the apparent common language, poetic intellectualism in America and Europe is not the same. As he says, the most serious discrepancies in the definition of intellectual poetry result from the vast difference in experience and the lack of similarity in the formation of the European and American minds. The former manifests itself in a fundamentally different attitude to history, and especially to the events of the last war. Here Miłosz seems to be most instructive with the case of Shapiro, which best illustrates the problem of a different perspective on suffering and its literary treatment. Miłosz reconstructs the composition of beliefs about war that had currency among the Americans:

1. War has nothing to do with values.
2. Those who try to convince us that war has something to do with values are merely creating propaganda for ad-hoc use.
3. Propaganda divides nations into ones that do harm and ones that are harmed, while in fact there are no devils or angels.



4. Descriptions of crimes committed by a nation should not be believed, as this is part of the propaganda. (...)  
 What is important here is that the relationship between human suffering and the world of values is severed. Here we come to a significant point. The civilized poet considers images of human suffering to be secondary material, because they do not form a part of any intellectual construction. On the other hand, we know from experience that watching bestialities affects the entire world of values very strongly, resulting in readjustments, and what I would call a reduction of mental indulgence. However, it is possible to create even highly intellectual art which takes this into account (*Kontynenty*, 130–131).

When exploring the concept of intellectualism of American poetry, Miłosz cannot avoid the question of how the intellect is defined in America and what is its nourishment. Here, too, he recognizes the fundamental dissimilarity to the European tradition.

Miłosz precisely delineates the dividing line between poets of one program option and one language, as if the thought of Wilde was a beacon over him that nothing divides the discussions about English literature as much as language. This dispute is of fundamental importance to him – it is probably in this place that the *differentia specifica* between his own poetry and Polish poetry manifests itself in all its acuity, and its later impact on American authors is a symptomatic confirmation of the accuracy of his insights from the 1940s. Miłosz does not stop at tracing the non-identity in the program of English-language intellectual poetry. He tries to describe American literary life sociologically. With his propensity to categorize, he presents the structure of literary circulations and the dominant types of readers in them. The overarching goal is to introduce the reader to the world of this culture and to reveal its mechanisms. It seems no less important to show analogies between American and socialist realist practices of exerting pressure on authors to adapt the form and subject matter of their works to the cognitive capabilities of the audience.

The crusade against incomprehensible poetry, which he observed across the ocean, resembled to a considerable degree the one in Poland, waged from other positions, but intended to lead to a similar result. Miłosz discredited the myth of dissemination of literature:

So far, as it seems, no means of introducing man into the world of art have been devised. Those who believe that such means have been invented work consciously to eradicate too difficult artistic methods and in this way to lower art to a more primitive level – although deep in their hearts they are not sure whether this transitional period, which they would like to regulate themselves, will not pass into a permanent state, sweeping them and their more conscious successors away from the surface (*Kontynenty*, 117).

This fear, perhaps, should explain Miłosz's proposed strategy of describing the history of Polish poetry according to the European model, and displaying its shared breakthroughs and mechanisms of transformation. Just as contemporary poets of the English language reach back to eighteenth-century works in search of patterns of new diction, so he tries to draw attention to the potential of native classicists with their

ability to objectify feelings, maintain an ironic distance, and a jocular approach to sensitive issues. He warns against engaging in a new dispute between romanticists and classicists, in which the former "throw themselves at the smoking guns of history, wishing to devour them raw" (*Kontynenty*, 123). It is clear that the context of reflection is the national socialist realist offensive and its indirect aim is to suggest ways of avoiding its consequences. In his "Wprowadzenie w Amerykanów" [Introduction to the Americans. An Essay on American Poetry], Miłosz inserts a wedge between supporters of engaged poetry and defenders of literary autonomy, showing at the same time the perspective – not only temporarily – of a third way. Whether it was realistically possible is a question that requires a separate answer. His essay is equally a laboratory of his poetic program in which certain principles are only just being clarified. This, I believe, can be interpreted as recognition for the phrases of Eliot and Auden, which, although based on variable meter and devoid of rhyme, were marked by an internal rhythm resulting from the peculiar use of word and sentence stress. This explains his interest in the genre syncretism of *Essay on Rime*, which inspired him to look for a form that would be more accommodating. In other words: in the question who is it that Miłosz introduces to the Americans contains a question about this moment in the history of English poetry, this moment in the history of Polish poetry, and this moment in the development of his own work, which can be better captured thanks to his essay.

### 3. "Awantura o nagrodę" [Controversy over an Award]

Miłosz's last essay on American poetry published in the 1940s covers the public debate around the Bollingen Prize for Poetry awarded to Ezra Pound for *Pisan Cantos* by a jury composed of Eliot, Auden, Shapiro, Lowell, Tate, and Leonie Adams. He signed the article using the pen-name Dr Pamfil – the Greek name *Pamfil* can be translated as *friend*, and *all-loving*. He used his commentary on the prize as an opportunity to write about the relationship between literature and politics and, what is more important for him, art and morality. Miłosz had no doubts about his assessment of Pound's activities during the war.

The verdict stirred up New York's intellectual circles to such an extent that it was discussed at the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace in March 1949.<sup>633</sup> *politics* reported that delegates of the Progressive Party demanded a resolution condemning the awarding of the Bollingen Prize to Pound, which was to deal an indirect blow to Lowell, a delegate favoring the opposing political option. However, this

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<sup>633</sup> Miłosz comments on this in the report for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs MSZ of April 28, 1949, AMSZ, DPI, c. 9, b. 1, f. 17.

initiative did not gain support.<sup>634</sup> The press considered the relation between the name of the prize and the person who won it when it turned out that its founder wanted it to indirectly commemorate the figure of Carl Gustav Jung. Miłosz comments as follows:

Dr. Jung, although a Swiss man, held numerous scientific posts in Nazi Germany and was a *persona grata* of the regime at the time when many German psychologists went into exile, or found themselves in camps, and at the time when Sigmund Freud's sister died in a gas chamber in Treblinka. The award was founded by one of the greatest American billionaires, Mellon, a cordial friend of Jung's, and named the "Bollingen Prize," in order to preserve the memory of the place of residence of the ingenious theoretician of instinct and the collective subconscious allegedly ruling the life of human societies.<sup>635</sup>

The dispute culminated in a series of aggressive articles by Robert Hillyer in *The Saturday Review of Literature*. As Hillyer began to receive thousands of letters of support, a storm broke out around the award, which, according to Miłosz, was difficult to anticipate in a country where literary life mainly went on behind the walls of universities.<sup>636</sup> About the academy itself he wrote as follows:

These are monasteries of sorts, in the sense of being detached from the outside world: university campuses, usually in the countryside or in small towns, with playing fields, swimming pools, libraries, laboratories, concert halls, their own theaters (the only experimental theater in America) – in a word, a microcosm where one can live without sticking one's nose out. There is also a sense of something of a greenhouse. Universities (...) play a dual role. The upper-middle-class passes through universities, i.e. the true rulers of the country. On the other hand, universities represent "culture" as opposed to the level of the "middle class," and the "clan of intellectuals" is connected with them in one way or another (although the clan is mostly made up of poor people).<sup>637</sup>

Among the arguments advanced by the opponents of the verdict was one that held personal significance for Miłosz, namely that poetry and criticism were gravitating towards incomprehensibility, thus functioning within the narrow circles of initiates, and becoming less and less accessible to readers outside these circles. Miłosz analyzed this way of thinking, observing at the same time how the discussion around the award related to the figure of Eliot, who probably had the greatest influence on the jury's decision.

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**634** Macdonald, Dwight: "The Waldorf Conference." A supplement to *politics* 1949, Winter, p. 3.

**635** Dr Pamfil [Miłosz, Czesław]: "Awantura o nagrodę" [Controversy over an Award], *op. cit.*

**636** The dispute over this prize is discussed in detail by Leick, Karen: "Ezra Pound versus *The Saturday Review of Literature*," *Journal of Modern Literature* 2001, Winter, Volume 25, No. 2, pp. 19–37 as well as the book *The Case Against The Saturday Review of Literature. The Attack of the Saturday Review Modern Poets and Critics*, Answered by the Fellows in American Letters of the Library of Congress, Together with Articles, Editorials, and Letters from Other Writers, Chicago 1949.

**637** Dr Pamfil [Miłosz, Czesław]: "Awantura o nagrodę" [Controversy over an Award], *op. cit.*

The key to these remarks seems to be their historical context. The article was published in the autumn of 1949, when, after a visit to Poland, Miłosz confirmed his decision to leave the diplomatic service. Even though the article was extremely topical – discussions in *The Saturday Review of Literature* also took place in 1949 – it is difficult not to gain the impression that Miłosz was also commenting on Polish issues in it, indirectly participating in the discussion where on one side there were socialist realist critics of formalism and incomprehensibility in art, while the other was being defended poorly, if at all, by the chastised artists. Although Eliot's opponents are presented as representatives of *middlebrow* culture, interested in establishing a counter-dictatorship of bourgeois culture, ostensibly in defense of *the American way of life*; he generalized this dispute, interpreting it as an attempt to ideologize culture, betraying an affinity with a disgraceful political tradition:

For a long time now, the issue of "growing up" of the petty bourgeoisie has been deliberated in small magazines, and some have even prophesized the eventual dissolution of "intellectuals" in the petty bourgeoisie. In practice, this would mean that the sphere of resources the "clan" had at its disposal would become even smaller, and our omnipotent *As* [– a pre-war weekly published in Krakow – used figuratively in the article as the leading metaphor for pop culture – E. K.] would embrace everything, including taking over some of the easier tricks of avant-garde art (which is happening for example in painting, where abstract art dissolves into drawings for advertising, designs of machines, etc.).

In this case, literature would become easier, 'healthier,' patriotic, and chauvinistic. The rebellion of bourgeois sons against the bourgeoisie would vanish, or it would take on features clearly conducive to a *nation-on-the-march* dynamic. Difficult art would be faced with the same reaction as what happened in Germany to – in Hitler's words – 'degenerate art,' that is to say the case of Ezra Pound would be repeated once more on a much wider scale: a visitor to Montparnasse would suddenly wake up in front of a microphone. The fact that such a development is possible is easy to see by observing in the march of the middle class such organizations as the Ku-Klux-Klan, the American Legion, veterans' associations, and the Knights of Columbus. One look at their faces is enough to reach the conclusion that these people are strangers to any limits of sophisticated taste outlined by the mandarins, and that they are ready to throw at the stake both paintings of the communist Picasso, and books by the aristocrat Eliot. In this light, both the Bollingen Prize, and the fight against the poetic dictatorship of Eliot and his followers show their multi-layered nature.<sup>638</sup>

If this commentary were to be read only as Eliot's apology, this alone should be considered an extraordinary correction of the official position. The metaphors of propaganda, woven ironically into the defense of the culture of the artistic mandarins suggests that the point of it was much more: a reflection on the relationship between power, capital and culture, on cultural policy in totalitarianisms with different ideological backgrounds. On the other hand, the poet did leave without comment what was in his opinion the most important problem that emerged in connection

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638 *Ibidem*.

with Pound being awarded the Prize, to which only Shapiro reacted, namely the relationship between aesthetic and ethical values. In 1949, Miłosz would certainly have read the widely discussed book *Literature and Morality* by James Farrell,<sup>639</sup> written from a Marxist position. The relationship between literature and morality was at that time one of the problems that preoccupied him the most. Neither Eliot nor Auden helped Miłosz in his reflection on the verdict. If Pound had received the award for work expressing his worldview, the decision might have been a cause for concern, all the more so since the two poet-theologians were members of the jury – as Miłosz called Eliot and Auden. In his commentary on the Bollingen Prize Miłosz asked:

So, if these mandarins, representing refined taste, very much not the taste of As, or that of the middle class, negate moral indignation as a “mundane” value, is the young American writer not mistaken in expecting from his “upper class” to put in stops where there are only power games and where forces more powerful than “pure intellect” are at play? As for the opponents of the literary dictatorship of the mandarins – we will not be so sure that they are expressing a tendency toward progress. It may well be the voice of the powerful As that, as we know, cannot stand the mandarin class and naturally wants the cow to be painted as in real life, and the sofa to be decorated with dog-shaped cushions. As naturally wishes to see aesthetic values in strict harmony with morality. It is alien to the attitude of tightrope dancers that the mandarins are maintaining, pretending not to notice the earth. Yes, but in harmony with what morality?<sup>640</sup>

Miłosz confronted the types of morality that remained in an antagonistic relationship. As sources of creative imagination, they led to diametrically opposed artistic results. The proposed model of bourgeois morality on the literary plane went hand in hand with sentimentalism or the most shallowly understood realism, and the dispute over realism was, as we know, the subject of one of the most serious literary debates in post-war Poland. However, rejecting this combination of ethical and aesthetic pseudo-values did not lead to an easy recognition of what morality in literature or morality of literature meant at the time. Miłosz posed this question, providing a certain outline of the answer in the image of a tightrope dancer, and he suggested this answer not as a columnist but as a poet. It is clear that he used his commentary on the award as a pretext, firstly, for expressing an opinion on the future of Polish literature, and secondly, for signaling his own difficulties as an artist to whom the observation of cultural life suggested the possibility of resolving personal dilemmas. He concluded in the spirit of Nikolai Gogol,

To conclude: as a result of the scandal caused by awarding the prize, the United States Congress passed a resolution to prohibit the Library of Congress from dealing with the Bollingen prize in the future, which thus resulted in the fact that the award ceased to exist. This is because healthy

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<sup>639</sup> See Farrell, James T.: *Literature and Morality*, New York: Vanguard Press, 1947.

<sup>640</sup> Dr Pamfil [Miłosz, Czesław]: “Awantura o nagrodę” [Controversy over an Award], *op. cit.*

American principles proclaim that the federal authorities should not deal with controversial literature, which principle has the added benefit of not generating any costs.<sup>641</sup>

#### 4. “American Poetry” – Not Only on Alain Bosquet’s Anthology

Miłosz’s reflection on American poetry closes with a discussion of a selection of it made in France in Alain Bosquet’s anthology of 1956 – it is interesting that due to the time of publication of the anthology and the circumstances of Miłosz’s becoming acquainted with it, the review is put in *Kontynenty* in the part titled “Francja” [France], rather than “Ameryka” [America]. This is a good illustration of Miłosz’s thinking in terms of the flow and movement of ideas through many geographical, linguistic and cultural territories – although at the same time he is far from the conviction about the “parallel development of poetry in different countries” (*Kontynenty*, 407), which, being the tacit assumption of the anthology, was the main reason for criticism of it. Although the analysis of the anthology aims to show that its concept is based on the application of “native criteria,” the result is “a certain reduction of bizarre and surprising phenomena to ones that are already known” (*Kontynenty*, 406). More interesting than following Miłosz’s arguments seems to be looking at the essay as a kind of revision of his own image of American poetry from the 1940s. Of course, Miłosz used here the knowledge of historical sociology of literature he acquired in the USA. It allowed him to invalidate the pseudo-denominators to which Bosquet reduced French and American poetry. Thanks to this, Miłosz formulated conclusions on a different understanding of the poet’s social involvement on both sides of the Atlantic, on the non-identical relations between the poet and society, on the different status of poetry, its different place in culture, and among more specific issues – on a different understanding of its form and style. On these foundations, however, he built a slightly different hierarchy of literary phenomena than in the previous years. First of all, when writing about English-language poetry, he no longer mentioned Eliot and Auden in one breath, but signaled that despite the common language, there was a problem with their placement: “American poetry has separated itself from English poetry, but then again not all that much. T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden, who one does not know where to place, symbolize these ties” (*Kontynenty*, 408). Secondly, although Miłosz is generationally closer to the Imagists and authors from the school of New Criticism, he broadens his circle of his interest to include names not mentioned before – John Gould Fletcher, Marianne Moore, Theodore Roethke, Delmore Schwartz, Muriel Rukeyser, Richard Eberhardt, Elizabeth Bishop, Conrad Aiken and Pieter Viereck.

It seems that Miłosz was interested in the work of younger Americans, who rejected the principles of poetry which were close to his own in the English-

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641 Dr Pamfil [Miłosz, Czesław]: “Awantura o nagrodę” [Controversy over an Award], *op. cit.*

language tradition. He observed their thematic and aesthetic choices, and the stage of development of their poetry, whose “paths were intricate” (*Kontynenty*, 412). The change of perspective was also visible in his approach to specific poets, on whom he shed additional light, presenting their poems in his own translation, as in the case of Viereck, Aiken and Moore.<sup>642</sup> In the next essay, “Próba porozumienia” [An Attempt at Reaching Understanding], he places other translations: “Of Modern Poetry” by Stevens, “Partner” by Roethke, and “Corps de ballet” by W. S. Merwin.<sup>643</sup> Over time, he was no longer interested in drawing a map of poetic creation, but rather in selected points of it, over which he focused his thought, often taking the form of a translation. In his walk, the pause became more important than the sequence of steps. “The review from Bosquet’s anthology is only a pretext” (*Kontynenty*, 417) – he writes. Meditation on a single poem, for which unique conditions were created by translation, not only helped him to understand the rules of speaking in a foreign language and of imagination that had grown on a different soil, but it also leads to the following question:

But is the current American poetry still poetry, or is it philosophy? This is the question. It seems that as soon as philosophy at universities became preoccupied with dealing death to itself and admitted openly that it consisted in mere philosophizing, new responsibilities fell on the poets. In the end, they are the consciousness of modern man (*Kontynenty*, 412).

Ultimately, all the characters and works mentioned here are presented through the prism of this question, which would prove Miłosz internalized the language and expression of American poetry and included it in the deep current of his thought (not only) about literature. The essay, richly inlaid with translations, ends with the observation that perhaps “in the poems and fragments quoted, the reader may find a common element, easier to feel than to name with words” (*Kontynenty*, 425). American poets, even the younger ones or those to whom Miłosz paid no attention, at this stage have become his allies not only in his search of “a more spacious form.”

## VII. Translations of Poetry

As mentioned, around the year 1947, Miłosz made translation of poetry his main way of presenting it. In October, he explains to Iwaszkiewicz, “I have a lot of my own poems, but I suffer from a strange disease – a reluctance to publish, which results

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<sup>642</sup> An additional impulse for becoming interested in the poetry of Marianne Moore was her being awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1951, the Bollingen Prize the National Book Award for the volume *Collected Poems*.

<sup>643</sup> See Miłosz, Czesław: “Próba porozumienia” [An Attempt at Reaching Understanding], *Kultura* 1956, issue 11, pp. 38–50.

not so much from pride, but from growing scruples and fears about the traps of popularity, which is an extremely dangerous thing” (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 184). According to Katarzyna Jakubiak, the expression “[t]he pitfalls of popularity” can be read as a code phrase that signaled the poet’s unwillingness to pander to the socialist state and the aesthetics of social realism it promoted.”<sup>644</sup> On the other hand, the poet may have been close to the position of Ezra Pound, who placed translation among his five types of literary criticism.

In 1945, his series of translations opens with a poem by Whitman.<sup>645</sup> In 1947, Miłosz submitted for publication a collection of Polish translations of poems by Pablo Neruda, who grew in popularity also in the United States: “Bitwa nad rzeką Jarama” [Batalla del río Jarama], “Hymn i powrót” [Himno y regreso], “Młodziutka Angela” [Ángela adónica], “Ocean” [Océano], and “Trzy pieśni materii” [Tres cantos materiales].<sup>646</sup> At that time Miłosz also broadened his interests in Spanish-language poetry, and he translated poems by Andrade: “Drugie życie mojej matki” [Segunda Vida de mi Madre], “Głos wyborczy dla zieleni” [Ballot for Green], “Miejsce, skąd pochodzę” [Lugar de origen], “Nic nie jest nasze” [Nothing is Ours], “Ziemskie mieszkanie” [Morada terrestre] and by Federico Garcia Lorca: “Lament” [Lamento] and “Mała ballada o trzech rzekach” [Baladilla de los tres ríos].<sup>647</sup> In a letter to Iwaszkiewicz written in May 1947, Miłosz says, “You have no idea how strangely Spanish is similar to Polish in all its syntax and in a certain exuberance, of course, thanks to the common influences of Latin. And there are people in Poland who want to expel Latin from schools, even though it opens a window to the world” (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 172). He encourages the publication of Andrade: “Whatever you say about these translations, you will agree that they are colorful, and color is very much needed in Poland” (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 172).

In 1948, Miłosz’s translations of Negro spirituals were published: “Zejdź Mojżesz” [Go Down Moses], “Kiedy złote trąby zagrają” (probably a free translation of “Where Shall I Be When the First Trumpet Sounds”), “Widzę księżyc wschodzi” [I Know Moon-rise], “O, chciałbym mieć orle skrzydła” [I Wish I Had an Eagle’s Wings]<sup>648</sup> and the poems “The Man with the Hoe” by Markham, referring to the painting by Jean-François Millet bearing the same title, and “Simon Legree” Lindsay’s

<sup>644</sup> Jakubiak, Katarzyna: “Translation’s Deceit: Czesław Miłosz and Negro Spirituals,” *Przekładaniec* 2013, issue 25, p. 200; <http://www.ejournals.eu/sj/index.php/Przeklad/article/view/3799/3704>.

<sup>645</sup> “Walt Whitman, Pieśń dla poległych. Przełożył Czesław Miłosz” [Dirge for Two Veterans. Translated by Czesław Miłosz], *Przekrój* 1945, issue 30, p. 6.

<sup>646</sup> “Pablo Neruda w przekładzie Czesława Miłosza” [Pablo Neruda in the Translation of Czesław Miłosz], *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 23, p. 10.

<sup>647</sup> “Federico Garcia Lorca, “Lament,” “Ballada o trzech rzekach” [Lament. A Little Ballad on Three Rivers]. Translated by Czesław Miłosz, *Nowiny Literackie* 1947, issue 1, p. 4.

<sup>648</sup> “Negro spirituals,” *Odrodzenie* 1948, issue 26, p. 4.



*Negro Parable*.<sup>649</sup> Miłosz also prepared the first collection of Chinese poetry (which included Ai Qing's "Trumpet Player," Wen Yiduo "The God of Love," "Lady Macbeth" by Yu Min-Chan, "The First Lamp" by Bian Zhilin and "Snow" by Mao Zedong),<sup>650</sup> whereupon he returned to the works of the Chilean poet. In *Odrodzenie*, he published his translations of the poems "Alberto Rojas Jimenez przybywa lecać" [Alberto Rojas Jiménez Viene Volando], "Almería" [Almeria], "Serce Magellana" [El corazón megallánico], "Znieważone ziemie" [Tierras ofendidas],<sup>651</sup> and in *Nowiny Literackie* a translation of "Pogrzeb na wschodzie" [Entierro en el Este],<sup>652</sup> and "Oda do Federico Garcia Lorca" [Oda a Federico Garcia Lorca].<sup>653</sup> Between the poems by Neruda, also an older translation of a fragment of Milton's *Paradise Lost* was published,<sup>654</sup> as well as "The Banks o'Doon" by Robert Burns.<sup>655</sup> Miłosz kept reading Spanish-language poetry and translated "Canción De Cuna Para Dormir Un Negro" by Ildefonso Pereda Valdes.<sup>656</sup> Last to be published in this year were Polish versions of several poems by Sandburg,<sup>657</sup> and a fragment of Whitman's "Song of Myself."<sup>658</sup>

In 1949, Miłosz submitted for publication a translation of "For my People" by Margaret Walker, "Ñáñigo al Cielo" by Luis Palés Matos, "Doświadczenie" [Journey to a Parallel] by Bruce McMarion Wright, "Guinea" by Jacques Roumain, Campbell's "Litany," "Return" by Carberry, "Jaszczurka" [Lizard] by Ingram and "Megalú" by Helene Johnson.<sup>659</sup> *Kuźnica* published Polish versions of fragments of Ai Qing's

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**649** "Lud będzie żył. (Przekłady z poezji amerykańskiej)" [The People will Live on. (Translations from American Poetry)], *Odrodzenie* 1948, issue 12, p. 3.

**650** "Współczesna poezja chińska w przekładzie Czesława Miłosza" [Contemporary Chinese Poetry Translated by Czesław Miłosz], *Odrodzenie* 1948, issue 20, p. 1. Among the translations of Chinese poetry from the 1940s, there is an unpublished translation of the poem by Wen Yiduo "Noc wczesnego lata" [Early Summer Night], Beinecke Library, Box 141, Folder 2248.

**651** "Pablo Neruda. Przekłady" [Pablo Neruda. Translations], *Odrodzenie* 1948, issue 23, p. 12.

**652** "Pablo Neruda. Pogrzeb na wschodzie. Przekład Czesław Miłosz" [Pablo Neruda. Burial in the East], *Nowiny Literackie* 1948, issue 3, p. 3.

**653** "Pablo Neruda, Oda do Fryderyka Garcia Lorca. Przełożył Czesław Miłosz" [Pablo Neruda. Ode to Federico Garcia Lorca. Translated by Czesław Miłosz], *Nowiny Literackie* 1948, issue 18, p. 1.

**654** Among the translations of Milton's manuscripts from 1945–1954 there are unpublished translations of scenes from *Samson Agonistes*, Beinecke Library, Box 139, Folder 2203.

**655** "Nowe przekłady" [New Translations], *Nowiny Literackie* 1948, issue 4, p. 2.

**656** "Ildefonso Pereda Valdes, Kolysanka dla murzyńskiego dziecka" [Lullaby to Sleep a Black Child], *Nowiny Literackie* 1948, issue 6, p. 1. Among the translations of poems by Valdes, there is an unpublished translation of the poem „Rynek na wyspie Trinidad," [A Square on the Trinidad Island] Beinecke Library, Box 140, Folder 2217. No original version of the title.

**657** "Carl Sandburg. Przekłady Czesława Miłosza" [Carl Sandburg. Translations by Czesław Miłosz], *Kuźnica* 1948, issue 13–14, pp. 8–9. Among the translations of Sandburg's poems there is an unpublished translation of the poem "Bilbea," Beinecke Library, Box 140, Folder 2221.

**658** "Walt Whitman: Z 'Pieśni o sobie samym'" [From "Song of Myself"], *Odrodzenie* 1948, issue 12, p. 3.

**659** "Czesław Miłosz. Przekłady z poezji murzyńskiej" [Czesław, Miłosz. Translations from Negro Poetry], *Odrodzenie* 1949, issue 20, pp. 1–2.

poem “He Died the Second Time.”<sup>660</sup> The translator also drew attention to younger Americans and translated the poem “Partner” by Roethke<sup>661</sup> and published the last translation – Neruda’s “Canto a Stalingrado.”<sup>662</sup>

The year 1950 was equally fruitful for Miłosz’s translation work, and as the poet confessed in a footnote to his correspondence with the Krońskis, he planned to “hide away from socialist realism in the translation of Shakespeare.” (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 270). He created the collection “Małe wypisy historyczne” [A Small Historical Reader].<sup>663</sup> He managed to place in *Twórczość* a translation of several scenes from Act I of *Othello*<sup>664</sup> and a collection of poems by Chinese authors, which included “Black horse, Revolver and Song,” “I have but a scrap of paper and several bloody stains,” and “Pieśń w górach” [Song of the Hill Country] by Tian Jian, “Gwiazda bez imienia” [Star], “Łzy, krople potu i perły” [Tears, Sweat Drops and Pearls], “Morze” [The Sea], “Odpoczynek w południe” [Rest at Noon], and “Powrót” [Return] by Zang Kejia, and “Rozmowa między słońcem a poetą” [Invocation to the Dawn] by Ai Qing.<sup>665</sup> In January 1951, he signed a contract for the translation and edition of *As You Like It*.

Miłosz’s publications in the press included the majority of his translation work carried out in the United States. He published a large number of his translations in *Kontynenty* and in later anthologies, although in the 1940s they were planned as part of a separate publishing project. Few – including the Polish versions of Eliot’s and Faulkner’s works – remain in the form of manuscripts. At the same time, he shared his experience as a translator and translational reflection in the essay.

What intentions accompanied him in translating works from such different periods and cultural circles? Katarzyna Jakubiak writes, “First, they allowed him to continue working creatively and publishing without major ideological compromise. Second, the translations were an act of resistance against the officially promoted aesthetics, which, in his letters, Miłosz described through yet additional code expressions: ‘drabness’ and ‘boredom’.”<sup>666</sup> This is probably the point at which the common negative motivations of his translation work were exhausted. The detailed motivations, related to the selection of specific authors and texts were partly revealed in the commentaries attached to the translations, and partly, as in the case of Neruda’s poetry, in the retrospective summaries of the years of diplomatic service.

660 “Ai Czing: ‘Człowiek, który umarł drugi raz.’ Przełożył Czesław Miłosz” [Ai Qing, He Died a Second Time. Translated by Czesław Miłosz], *Kuźnica* 1949, issue 19, pp. 8–9.

661 Roethke, Theodore: “Partner,” *Kronika* 1949, issue 20, no page number.

662 “Pablo Neruda. ‘Pieśń do Stalingradu.’ Przełożył Czesław Miłosz” [Neruda, Pablo: “Song to Stalingrad.” Translated by Czesław Miłosz], *Odrodzenie* 1949, issue 28, p. 3.

663 “Małe wypisy historyczne” [A Small Historical Reader], *Nowa Kultura* 1950, issue 20, p. 4.

664 Shakespeare, William: *Othello* (Act I, sc. 1–3), *Twórczość* 1950, issue 7, pp. 116–146.

665 Miłosz, Czesław: “Przekłady z poezji Chin Ludowych” [Translations from the Poetry of People’s China], *Twórczość* 1950, issue 9, pp. 83–88.

666 Jakubiak, Katarzyna: *op. cit.*, p. 201.

Even though it is difficult to find one key to his translations of poems, written in various languages, coming from different cultural circles, diverse in their themes and forms, written in different genres, conventions, and styles, one may venture the claim that Miłosz's translation work was characterized by constantly going beyond the Polish and European canons. The transgressive dimension of his translations is revealed for the first time in his work on Spanish-language poetry, where he found himself in an unknown territory, both linguistically and culturally, particularly in the case of South American poets. Going beyond the zone of the English-language, and more broadly beyond the literary system of the Old and the New World, Miłosz was in fact only at the beginning of his journey. He was interested in contesting Western culture, and in the original shape of the work of authors of various races – he listened to the voices of Negro spirituals, African-American poets and African-American artists, whose expression he considered in the precursor categories of the community later called The Black Atlantic. He became an unintentional forerunner of the revision of the identity of American literature, represented through much of the twentieth century by white Protestants of Anglo-Saxon descent. American literature ceased to be English literature for him. He left Europe, and the West, and began his explorations in the East, which in the future would take the form of permanent, multithreaded inspirations. Crossing the boundaries of language, culture, civilization and historical formation allowed him to find himself in a space of freedom that no job in the world of culture on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain would have afforded him in those years. The translation work provided him with an opportunity to travel, situating him in many places on the axis of time and space, within various cultural coordinates. Of course, English was the *medium* that mediated and distinctively limited the results of these expeditions, but it served as a necessary code of access, which – whether it was a mother tongue or an acquired language – enabled and determined cognition. One may ask to what extent Miłosz's path was marked by the current literary situation in the United States. Certainly, to a large extent he was influenced by the fashions of the day, and promotion of foreign artists, whose context often had more to do with politics than with art – such was probably the case with Neruda and the Chinese poets, but they also had the undeniable value of guideposts.

Another insight into the focal points of Miłosz's translation work comes from Miłosz's reflection on the peripheries as an ideal position for observing reality. Going beyond the Euro-Atlantic canon would be yet another way of validating the peripheries, treating them as shifting perspectives that allow a multilateral view of the center. Translation here would also be a way of finding oneself at a distance both to one's own culture, and to one's own writing, which remains in a relation of exchange and interdependence with the culture.

In the 1940s, Miłosz not only assumed the position of a subverter, as he did in his translations of Negro spirituals and “Małe wypisy historyczne” [A Small Historical Reader], but also that of a promoter of intercultural exchange, and that of an intermediary in this exchange. The question of how he fulfilled this mission concerns

the value of his translations, interpreted as manifestations of cultural mediation at the time, and the extent to which intercultural communication was possible. One of the poems translated by Miłosz thematizes the issue of such mediation – the work in question is Sandburg’s poem “House,” which tells the story of an old soldier trying to interest boys from a Swedish immigrant family in the history of the Civil War. The poem dealing with the issue of Americanness and cultural succession in the context of the phenomenon of immigration, taken out of this framework, can be interpreted as a symbol of the failure of intergenerational and intercultural dialogue.

In contrast, Yu Min-Chan’s poem “Lady Macbeth” is a Chinese portrait of the Shakespearean heroine, and the translation of this poem is a transposition to the power of two: Lady Macbeth in the Chinese frame, outlined with Polish words, becomes an archetypal heroine, wandering between cultures, and wearing costumes from their wardrobes. A separate stream of reflection on the mediational value of Miłosz’s translations could include issues from the area of anthropology, and it would concern how he managed to deal with the cultural realities contained in the original, and the linguistic categories used by the original text, in relation to those he uses himself. For example, in the translation of Sandburg’s „picnic boat”, due to the lack of a precise equivalent, Miłosz uses the periphrasis “wielki statek majówkowy” [a great May Day Picnic boat] to describe a popular cruise ship sailing on American rivers. In the translation of the poem “For my people”, what draws particular attention is when Miłosz uses the Polish word *ulica* [street] leaving the original word „street” in as well; one also wonders to what extent the Polish borrowing of the word „tawerna” corresponds culturally to English „tavern”. Similarly, in the translation of “Snow”, Miłosz leaves the word “lǐ” (里) with no translation, and instead adds a footnote explaining that it is a Chinese mile. On the other hand, an example of skillful cultural contamination of Polish and African-American folklore is “Kołysanka dla murzyńskiego dziecka” [Canción De Cuna Para Dormir Un Negrito], in which a mother calms her son by assuring him that the “straszny, biały dziad” [a terrible old white man] would not catch him.

To a certain extent, this issue also refers to the strategy of manipulating the translation not only in order to adapt it to the target culture, but also to camouflage politically unacceptable content in it – so the question posed earlier would also contain the issue of the ideological implications of translation. Apart from Negro spirituals and “Małe wypisy historyczne,” it is worth paying attention to other titles. The translation of the poem “The People Will Live On” by Carl Sandburg is masterfully ambivalent: when read with good political will, it is an apotheosis of victory over the oppressors, when read against the grain – a well-known way of reading in the Polish tradition – it proclaims a message of hope for those currently oppressed. In the collection of Miłosz’s translations from the 1940s, we will find many works in which the addressee or the subject is a *people*, a *human*, an *individual*, the *human family*. These may have harmonized with the tone the poetry of the proletariat only seemingly – close in their aura to the “Ballad of Levallois,” they are a testimony to Miłosz’s

thoughtful choices when, in an act of solidarity with the weak, the humiliated and the powerless, he translates Lorca's "Lament," Dodson's "Decision," and "Gwiazda bez imienia" [Star] by Zang Kejia. Markham's "The Man with the Hoe" seems to be a repetition and reinforcement of the warnings from the poem "Który skrzywdziłeś" [You Who Wronged]. "The Burial in the East" by Neruda seems to be a dramatic allusion to Stalinist crimes, while "Almeria" is a complaint about the tyranny and soullessness of power. Lindsay's "Simon Legree" is a parable about the punishment for the evil committed, and "Ñañigo al Cielo" by Matos is a triumphant song about the gospel salvation of the "last one" – the addressee of the promises of the eight blessings.

In a similar indirect way, Miłosz expresses his longing for his home country – translations of the poems "Guinea" by Roumain, and Neruda's "Himno y regreso" seem to echo his earlier lyrical poem "W mojej ojczyźnie" [In my Home Country]. The role of the translator allows him to speak with the voice that Miłosz denies himself in poetry. Translation is not so much a substitute voice as a dialectic way of revealing and concealing the feelings of the premature *age of defeat*. The poet was clearly aware of the potential roles and possibilities of translation. He treated the role of a translator very subjectively, which he demonstrated back in the 1930s. His choices can therefore also be seen from the biographical and existential side. In the American reality, translation may be a form of transcending literary and personal loneliness, building a different community. What is more, in the act of translation, the author of poems becomes not only a partner of dialogue, but also a stranger, who becomes the translator's "I" – in the articulation of this issue Guillén's poem "I Don't Know Why You Think" comes to Miłosz's aid unexpectedly.

This happens not only when the poem translated by Miłosz resonates with his own poetry, although there are at least several such examples. The most important is probably the translation of Andrade's poem "Segunda vida de mi Madre," in dialogue with the "Grób matki" [Mother's Grave] written after the death of Weronika Miłosz – these works constitute a diptych in which Andrade's text goes beyond the experience of mourning, a way out to a *second space*. It is worth reading "The Banks O'Doon" by Robert Burns along with the poem "Na śpiew ptaka nad brzegami Potomaku" [On a Bird's Song Heard on the Banks of the Potomac], the rhythm and mood of the poem "Megalu" is surprisingly close to "Piosenka o końcu świata" [A Song on the End of the World], and fragments of Neruda's poems correspond to certain parts of "Pieśni Adriana Zielińskiego" [Songs of Adrian Zieliński]. A translation would therefore be a repetition of the recent diction, a confirmation of its value, an exercise of its efficiency, and in Miłosz's sense of the word: a poetic activity *par excellence* and an activity of existential significance.

Encounters with the Other in translation are an opportunity to broaden poetic diction, take up familiar issues and forms, but also to head down the paths which for some reason Miłosz does not traverse in his own work. One of them is the theme of war in elegiac, mournful, pacifist, and consolational poetics, as in Whitman's "Song of Myself," in which we find the words "The smallest sprout proves that there is really

no death” (*Przekłady poetyckie*, 89), “Lamento” and “Guitar,” Lorca’s poems-laments, or the poems “The Bugler” and “He died the Second Time.” The latter also pose a question about the place and tasks of poetry in the realities of war – the instrument of the fallen bugler after his death still reflects the march of troops. A separate place in this set is occupied by Bruce McMarion Wright’s poem „A Journey to A Parallel” a self-ironic confession of the lyrical ego stylized as an American soldier, who learns about Europe and has a lesson in history only during the war.

This poetry settles the scores that Miłosz does not settle himself. In his translations, he reaches ever more boldly for works that openly and directly speak about suffering, about the inability to purify one’s memory, and poems about death. A certain variation on this trend are translations of those poems by Neruda which are written in the convention of an inner journey of Dantesque provenience, and works in the convention of a lament on a riverbank, of being an involuntary witness to history, including conquests and bloody colonizations. It is here that the phrase “on the riverbank” is repeated several times – i.e. Ai Qing’s poems containing a reflection on dying on the bank of a river, on death, and a grave on the riverbank. The opposite pole of the elegiac war trend of translations is a group of works in which Miłosz the translator makes his dream come true: “I want to take sing praises of festivals, / Happy groves to which / I was introduced by Shakespeare” („In Warsaw”, *Wiersze* 2, 230). Just as the translation of Shakespeare’s comedy *As You Like It* during the occupation was a way of finding distance, a form of protecting the fragile substance of poetry, a similar role was played by Miłosz’s translation work during his years of diplomatic service. On this basis, Miłosz allowed himself to penetrate and travel through the literary areas that had fascinated him for a long time. What areas are they? The search for poems describing nature, expressing admiration for its beauty, its grandeur and exoticism, such as Ingram’s “Lizard” or the poems by Andrade. In Miłosz’s translations, a privileged place is taken by the names of exotic plant species, including fruit and flowers: in the poem “Ñañigo al Cielo” it is “the sweetness of carratos” (*Przekłady poetyckie*, 132), in “Lizard,” “the leaves of caladium” (*Przekłady poetyckie*, 135), in Campbell’s “Litany,” „the scarlet poinsettia, the yellow cassia flowers and green cacti” (*Przekłady poetyckie*, 138–139).

“Litany” can be read as a twin poem to Miłosz’s “Słońce” [The Sun] in the volume *The World. (A Naïve Poem)* – both works touch upon the ontic and metaphysical meanings of dispersion of light – the formation and richness of colors. As in “Słońce” [The Sun], the coda of a series of poems of profound religious significance, “Litany” is a prayer of thanks for the gift of existence – daylight, to which it is addressed, was used as the title of a volume of 1953. Andrade’s poetry, on the other hand, is a true botanical garden, where the translator enjoys rare, mysterious words like “chirimoya,” “aguacate,” “capuli,” “eucalyptus” (*Przekłady poetyckie*, 183), “the tattooed head of a pineapple, the green rage of a cactus” (*Przekłady poetyckie*, 184). Green is here called the soother of the world (*Przekłady poetyckie*, 184). This current of translations is

one of the poles of Miłosz's meditations on nature, revealed in one part of *A Treatise on Poetry*. It proves that the Linnaean passion was once more reinvigorated in him, that he believes in the concrete, in the possibility of poetic imitation of reality. In a way, these translations provide arguments and inspiration in later discussions about the mimetic qualities of literature, about understanding it as a trope of reality. It is difficult to resist the impression that they are also a fitting tool for translating such poems as Wallace Stevens's "Study of Two Pears" and for undertaking polemics with his poetic program. They also provide a link with later poetry, perhaps better than the poems from *Daylight*.

What conclusions can be drawn from these inquiries? One may venture the thesis that it was in the 1940s, when Miłosz worked with determination on his translations, that the role of the translator became a part of the role of the poet, which made it more problematic and revealed new aspects. The encounter made possible by translation, understood in Benjamin's terms, became an opportunity to enrich one's own identity. In other words, the act of translation, understood existentially, would be an attempt to face reality, a form of Miłosz's pursuit of what is real, a shifting of the cognitive horizon in his hunt in *Unattainable Earth*. Paradoxically, translation was the mark he left, and the condition and place for leaving this mark.

Little is known about the contemporary reception of Miłosz's translations from the 1940s. A separate reflection would be required to trace how these texts functioned in Polish culture, whether they played a role in broadening the canon, or in searching for other texts by the authors presented. There are questions related to the culturally creative role of translation, and to its significance in the process of interpreting original works and the target culture. During the American postwar period, the poet frequently voiced his encouragements to increase translation efforts. For the first time then, he also expressed the idea of looking at the history of literature as a place of meeting of native and translated works:

The influence of translations on the literature of Poland has rarely been the subject of exhaustive research so far. Translations have had particular importance in Polish literature. To establish the veracity of this, one has but to look at the experience of the twenty-year interwar period. Translations from French, Russian and English, were abundant at the time, and some foreign writers immediately after World War One (Jack London, later Conrad, Stendhal, Sholokhov, Huxley, Proust) aroused more interest than Polish writers. For a whole generation of poets who grew up over the course of the twentieth century, translations of foreign poetry, especially French poetry, were probably a school no more important than the works of Polish poets. Suffice it to mention the small volume of Rimbaud's poetry published by the Skamander group, or one of the first translations of Apollinaire by Ważyk, published in *Wiadomości Literackie*.<sup>667</sup>

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667 Miłosz, Czesław: "Wiersze polsko-francuskie" [Polish-French Poems], *op. cit.*

In 1948, Miłosz formulated his creed of a translator for the first time. It may leave the translologist unsatisfied, as it is not a declaration of a professional who builds his own theory of translation based on available concepts, but rather a personal reflection on the subject. As mentioned earlier, Miłosz in this role thinks as a poet and critic, treating translation as work that remains in an important relation to his own literary output. Thus, he stresses the importance of the sentence as the constructional basis of a piece of writing:

The decline of respect for a single line of a poem is puzzling. And one cannot build a poem from a line of bricks falling apart. Ultimately, a poem is nothing other than a column of lines, each of which is bound so strongly that it persists independently of the others. Good poetry can be recognized by the fact that one line can be pulled out of a poem and it will still have the full charge. (...) Without understanding the value of the line, it is impossible to understand the value of the phrase (stretching it over several lines or the so-called *enjambment*, or the so-called *couplet*, or two successive lines) (*Kontynenty*, 153–154).

A sentence of the original, understood as a particle that is also meaningful through the sound resulting from the combination of a repertoire of phonemes and rhythm – a combination of word stresses and sentence stress, is a challenge and a commitment for the translator who wants to express it using the means afforded by a different language. Formulated in this way, the principle of translation extends to larger units of meaning and covers the entire work embedded in the convention of the genre, era, culture. The rule described by Miłosz is not universal – it is closely intertwined with his convictions as a poet, critic, and creator of a program.

Even then, he expresses the opinion that knowledge of the language from which one translates is not necessary. This view justifies his occasional Polish versions of poems by Chinese poets or African-American poets, and validates his project of an anthology of poems of different epochs and different nations, where the figure of the translator and author of the selection acquires an even greater significance than in the case of direct translations from popular languages. In 1948, probably for the first time, Miłosz declared his position in favor of the realists against the idealists.

Miłosz also does not conceal his way of reading foreign poems. In the essay about Saint-John Perse's poetry, he signals problems with reading Perse's poems – this statement is a link between his literary journalism and translation work:

There are many ways to read poetry, but there are even more ways to read poetry in a foreign language. The poet who gives in his poems some kind of a "story" is probably most accessible to readers abroad, while the poet who is primarily interested in the deep layers of his native language is the least accessible. That is why the image of the poetry of each nation, as it is reflected in translations and influences abroad, is necessarily distorted.

Certain types of poetry cannot be fully captured if the poem is separated by a glass wall from the age of the reader's childhood, and from the intonations and aura that his childhood gave to words. I could see that my method of reading Saint-John Perse was to quickly translate his stanzas into Polish in memory, or at least to try to translate them in this way. This does not



mean that the French text disappears, but I did notice that it was insufficient for my needs as a foreigner. In other words, it was a work of recreation in another language, and this work was something between the efforts of the reader and the efforts of the poet (*Kontynenty*, 237–238).

Two issues draw attention in this self-observation – sensitivity to the melody of the poem, a derivative of the rhythm of the language, and recognition of one’s native language as primary, which means assimilating foreign poetry through the filter of one’s own speech. Regardless of how early Miłosz started reading in Russian and French, and then in English, in America in the 1940s he did not think of himself as a polyglot-reader, but as a poet of the Polish language who became a prism for other languages. It is also important to emphasize the special status of the reader-poet, who learns foreign poetry differently than a foreigner who does not write poems himself. He later maintains this position – in 1963, in a letter to Karl Dedecius, where he upholds it:

I have read your comments on the art of translation in the London periodical *Kontynenty*, and I am glad that you have highlighted two aspects: translation as an act that has consequences, and translation as the translator assuming a role. I only do not know why you call it a pathology. Too much of a sense of shame. If it is pathological, what is not? But I did like your article.<sup>668</sup>

In 1948, Miłosz also prepared a project called *Antologia wierszy różnych epok i różnych narodów* [An Anthology of Poems of Various Epochs and Various Nations], also known as the *African Anthology*,<sup>669</sup> probably because of the large number of poems written by black poets and *Negro spirituals*. This selection was to consist of several parts.<sup>670</sup> It does not respect the chronology of his translations. Part one includes translations of English poetry, which were originally part of the anthology prepared in Poland under the German occupation. Part two contains poems by Whitman, Markham, Sandburg and Lindsay published in the Polish press in the 1940s. Part three contains pre-war translations of works by Baudelaire and Oscar Miłosz. Part four, contains *Negro spirituals*, poems by the so called black poets. In part five, we find Polish versions of poems by Garcia Lorca, and in part six, poems by Southern American poets. Part seven is a collection of translations of Chinese poetry. The anthologist provided the

**668** Letter of Czesław Miłosz to Karl Dedecius of April 17, 1963. In *Dedecius–Miłosz. Listy 1958–2000*. Collection, preparation, notes and introduction by Przemysław Chojnowski. Translation of the letters by Lothar Quinkenstein, Lodz 2011, p. 16

**669** A copy under this name is found in the Miłosz Family Archive in the National Library of Poland (Akc. 18492, vol. 1). On the rough copy of a translation of Eliot written during the German occupation, the poet wrote the working titles of this anthology: *Księga poezji (przekłady z poetów świata)* [A Book of Poetry (Translations of World Poets)] and *Książka poezji (przekłady z poetów świata)*.

**670** See Miłosz, Czesław: “Rękopis przedmowy do *Antologii afrykańskiej*” [*Manuscript of the Foreword to the African Anthology*], Beinecke Library, Box 141, Folder 2249, p. 1.

selection of poems with a preface and footnotes in which he used comments from press publications or formulated short biographical notes of less well-known authors.

The *African Anthology* project is Miłosz's first attempt to recontextualize his translation work from the 1930s and 1940s. Miłosz made translations of poems by authors of many epochs and languages in different periods of his life and in various moments in the history of his generation, nation and, finally, the community of civilization. The poet brought them out of these original contexts and merged them according to a new thematic and aesthetic rule. He re-arranged his reading list anew, checking if he could build a different constellation out of them, and using it to tell the story of growing up, understanding himself, his world, and literature. This new polyphony would be a form of objectification, an achievement of purification necessary for art. It would also be the final result of thinking about the stranger as the "I" – the authors of the poems presented indirectly characterize the figure of the translator and anthologist. The project of the anthology is therefore another reflection of Miłosz's choice at that time to use a mask, a 'role,' and someone else's voice in telling a story about himself. What is interesting, it was also an attempt at building a new perspective, enabling the poet to see the past through the prism of literature understood as a palimpsest of experience. It would have combined the experiences of reading and translation with the experience of history and existence. It would have made it possible to reconstruct the identity of the translator-anthologist by showing its spiritual and mental adventures in motion through time and space – in this sense, it would have been a great hermeneutical project.

Since Miłosz never carried out his plan of publishing his *Antologia wierszy różnych epok i różnych narodów*, it is worth asking what, apart from potential practical obstacles, prevented him from doing so. For some reason, it may not have been satisfactory to him. It probably lacked the poet's own voice, which is why it is worth looking for answers in the edition that fully executed his concept. Although Miłosz did not publish the *African Anthology*, he did not abandon the idea – *Kontynenty* is an anthology conceived and planned in this way. In this "capricious book," as Miłosz himself described it, we find a comprehensive presentation of the artist's identity, which splits into many roles, without losing coherence. It fully reveals the poet, translator, essayist, intercultural mediator, chronicler and anthologist. Published ten years after the conception of the *African Anthology*, it is not merely contributory in character, which was to some extent a characteristic of the 1948 project. It is a mature, exhaustive execution of the ideas from a decade before. Alongside *A Treatise on Poetry* and *Native Realm*, it shows the complex and long-lasting processes of reevaluation that took place in Miłosz's thought on culture, politics, and history. It provides an insight into the new canon, which the poet persistently built over these years, confronting what was peripheral and considered as such, with what was considered to be the center of modernity. It is the fruit of self-education and a private textbook from which Miłosz learned for at least as long as later from *The Land of Ulro*.

# Chapter 6: Miłosz and Multi-Racial Society in the United States

## Miłosz and Native Americans

Reading translations of novels about American Indians was a component of the upbringing of boys among the Polish intelligentsia in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. When the country was partitioned under Russian, Prussian and Austrian rule, these novels were often read in an Aesopian way, where the red and white characters corresponded allegorically to the figures of patriots and invaders. Only after returning to Europe in 1950, when Miłosz reassessed his past experience, he reminisced on the books read in childhood in his work on the novels *The Issa Valley* and *Native Realm*. In *The Issa Valley*, the narrator says the following about Tomasz:

Pretending he was in a dugout, he stood on the footbridge and took potshots at the ducks. This once led to an investigation when one of the ducks was found dead in the middle of the pond and he refused to take the blame. Since the Indians were known for hunting fish with a bow and arrow, he was constantly on the lookout for fish along the river shoals (so as not to lose any arrows), but they always got away in time (*The Issa Valley*, 64).

In the description of a kayaking trip to Paris, we read:

Every bend in the river concealed a secret which, when disclosed, took our breath away. If anywhere, it was here we could have said that we had penetrated into an enchanted land. From the steep slopes, branches hung out over the green water, making grottoes which were surely homes for nymphs. In those branches, Delaware warriors from the novels of Fenimore Cooper could have been crouching (*Native Realm*, 154).

Inclusion of his own biography in a literary framework is one of Miłosz's main narrative strategies not only in *The Issa Valley* and *Native Realm*. In the fragments quoted above, his reading experience and his biographical experience, and his distant and recent past, are integrated. The act of integration, recurring in Miłosz's poetry and prose of the 1950s, is a peculiar effort of self-reparation, necessary to overcome the trauma of the war, the Hegelian bite, and the post-war fury of the American years. Why is this important? In order to show what the poet initially thought about history and contemporaneity, it is worth looking at some point of access in a later period of his work. Since already in the 1950s he showed a post-colonial sensitivity in the chapter on the extermination of the Baltic peoples in *The Captive Mind*, while in *Native Realm* he called Lithuanians the "Redskins of Europe," it is worth asking where and under what influence this outlook was born. There are many indications that this was a path leading through books, mediated by the written word rather than a reflection of important meetings, conversations, or events: Miłosz's stay in the United States shed new light on his youthful readings. It was there that he discovered the colonial

character of the books read in childhood, which allowed him to reinterpret Polish-Lithuanian relations as colonial relations on returning to Europe.

In the 1940s, Miłosz travelled extensively on the East Coast, and the routes of his trips can be recreated with relative ease. He visited industrial and academic cities on business, and with his family he liked to go to the ocean, to the woods, and on river cruises. He did not look for traces of reality behind novels about American settlers and Natives. At that time, Miłosz used a strongly polarized and very traditional thought scheme: American nature was nature *par excellence*, observed through Manichean and Darwinian lenses – then the last part of his *A Treatise on Poetry*, entitled “Nature,” was written – while history was the domain of people, but, most importantly, mainly of the residents of metropolises. In the countryside, there was no flow of historical time, only the wheel of the seasons revolved endlessly there – biological life, whose changeability was simulated in the irregular rhythm of village dances and local armed robberies. History was made in big cities, political offices, newspaper editorial rooms and stock exchange offices, even though, as early as 1946, Miłosz wrote the following words:

Surprising things in the United States can be seen only in the provinces. New York’s monumental ugliness is in fact only an escalation of the characteristics of any big city. A small town in the woods is uniquely American, and for good reason have American sociologists devoted many monographs to it. The fate of the world depends to a large extent on the American small town, which, combined with other small towns, makes up the character of one of the two great powers that rule world politics.<sup>671</sup>

Familiarity with Miłosz’s journalism and correspondence of that period allows us to assess how deeply ironic this statement was – the idea of the provincialism of the American Empire recurs more than once in his works written at the time. Immediately after his arrival in the United States, he put an equals sign between history, politics, and economics on the macro scale. He mapped out the world on the center-and-provinces model, in which the former was the strong center of influence, while the provinces were mainly the territory for absorption. His thinking was burdened by a totalitarian influence, tinged with the Manichean and Marxist image of a constant struggle of the strong with the strong. In the 1940s, the history hidden in the names of American rivers, forests, geographical landscapes, mountain ranges and peaks evaded the recent lover of Belarusian folklore, and translator of Baltic poems by Kazys Boruta. The history of Native America from the times of the conquest, etched in its onomastics, remained invisible to him for a long time. Even there, however, he was also tired of the occupation dilemma related to the tasks of art and duties of the poet. This situation is best illustrated by the poem “Na śpiew ptaka nad brzegami Potomaku” [On a Bird’s Song Heard on the Banks of the Potomac], written in 1947. On

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671 Miłosz, Czesław: “Massachusetts”, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

the one hand, it is a classic poem-lament on the river of time, inscribed in the literary tradition of mourning one's fate:

Kiedy zakwita magnoliowe drzewo  
I park zielonym zmaça się obłokiem,  
Słyszę twój śpiew nad brzegiem Potomaku  
W uśpione płatkami wiśniowym wieczory.  
Wybacz mi, proszę, brak tego wzruszenia,  
Które prowadzi przymocą z powrotem  
W miejsca i wiosny dawno zapomniane,  
Aby małuczkich uwodził poeta  
Patriotycznym sentymentem, serce  
Cisnął stęsknione i farbując łzy,  
Mieszał dzieciństwo, młodość, okolice.  
Mnie to niemiłe.  
*Wiersze 2, p. 32*

When the magnolia tree comes into blossom,  
And the park swirls with billowing clouds of green,  
I hear your song on the banks of the Potomac  
At dusks, lulled to sleep by pink cherry petals.  
Forgive me, please, this lack of emotion,  
Which leads the mind forcibly back  
To places and springs long forgotten,  
So that the poet might seduce the lowly  
With patriotic sentiment, hurling their hearts  
Forth and tingeing their tears,  
Mixing up childhood, youth, and surroundings.  
I find it disagreeable.

The rhetorical figure of *apóphansis*, an apparent declaration of omitting some issues, is an introduction to Miłosz's reminiscences on his childhood at the Sigismund Augustus Gymnasium in Wilno, his youth, stylized as philomatic, in the Academic Vagrants' Club, mass murders of Jewish, Polish, Roma and Russian people committed in the Ponary forest in 1941–1944 by the SS assisted by volunteer units of Lithuanian police. The author returns to his rhetorical reservations in these words:

Już nie pamiętam. Ptaku, wdzięczny ptaku,  
Ty, który dzisiaj śpiewasz mi to samo,  
Co słyszał tutaj indyjski myśliwy  
Stojący z łukiem na ścieżce jeleni,  
Cóż możesz wiedzieć o zmianie pokoleń  
I o następstwie form w ciągu jednego  
Ludzkiego życia? Tamte moje ślady  
Zatarł nie tylko pęd zim i jesieni.  
Ja byłem świadkiem nieszczęść, wiem, co znaczy  
Życie oszukać kolorem pamiętek.  
Radośnie słucham twoich ślicznych nut  
Na wielkiej, wiosną odnowionej ziemi.  
Mój dom sekunda: w niej świata początek.  
Śpiewaj! Na perłę popielatych wód  
Syp rosę pieśni z brzegów Potomaku!  
*Wiersze 2, pp. 32–33*

I no longer remember. O bird, graceful  
bird,  
You, who are singing the same tune to me,  
That an Indian hunter heard here  
Standing with his bow on the deer path,  
What could you know about changing  
generations,  
On the succession of forms within one  
Human life? Those traces I left,  
Effaced not only by the rush of winters and  
falls.  
I was a witness to misfortune, I know what  
it means  
To cheat life with the color of keepsakes.  
I listen joyfully to your lovely notes  
On this great Earth, renewed by spring.  
My home – a second: in it the world's  
beginning.  
Sing! Over the pearl of the ash-colored  
waters  
Spread your song like dewdrops from the  
banks of the Potomac!

The interplay of meanings in the poem results from the use of two identities: the song of the bird over the Potomac sounds like the singing of birds heard by the poet in his youth in his home country, and it becomes – in as in Proust – a stimulus for remembrance, which the poet resists, but at the same time the birdsong sounds the same as it did centuries ago, before the colonization of America, to an Indian hunter – in this way the poet introduces the idea of slow evolution, almost imperceptible in comparison with the pace of history, especially within the framework of a single human life. Evoking the image of the Indian hunter not only highlights the drama of a human whose history, wherever and whenever it takes place, is always indifferent to nature. It is also a reflection on history, where a single lifetime is a mere second. This thought becomes the source of both pessimism and, paradoxically, of consolation. Even though this is not clear in the foreground of the poem, its protagonist is in favor of the second possibility: he wants to listen to the song of the bird. But – as Jerzy Jarzębski comments,

– nothing comes free in the world of the poet: to enjoy the trills of a bird, which are always the same, because they reflect the eternity of nature (relative, yes, relative, but let us not be too particular) – one must, even for a moment, erase the memory of the world of human history, based on constant change, and on destruction of keepsakes.<sup>672</sup>

So why listen to the song of the bird? Would it be a sign of fidelity to oneself, one's youthful poetic imagination, in which birds had an important symbolic place, or a sign of faith in the spiritual order, of which the bird is sometimes a delegate – as we know, in many religious systems and traditions birds were symbols of the spirit, spirituality, a higher reality. Is it a gesture of embracing the poetic tradition in which invoking birds started the most intimate soliloquies, as in John Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale"? Is this a sign of interest in the spirituality of Native Americans, where the Supreme Being often merged with the mythical personification of lightning and thunder, which was a great bird? There is no need for a single answer to these questions.<sup>673</sup> Something else is important here: in the poem, the river does not become an impulse for reminiscences on the Native American people living in this area, nor on the history of the Civil War, in which the Union Army of the Potomac fought a number of victorious battles. Only

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672 Jarzębski, Jerzy: "Obrazy Ameryki w *Świetle dziennym* Miłosza" [Images of America in Miłosz's *Daylight*], *op. cit.*, p. 4.

673 The situation of this poem, on many transformations, will become the model situation of the poet, of which Seamus Heaney wrote as follows: "In other words, these two figures which constantly recur in Miłosz's poetry – the boy in the power of dreams on the bank of a river, and the grown man held captive by necessity – represent the destiny of the poet who lives between two places: his place on Earth, and in exile, in his art." In *idem*: "Czesław Miłosz i poezja światowa." [Czesław Miłosz and the World Poetry]. Translated by Renata Gorczyńska, *Zeszyty Literackie* 1999, issue 2, p. 53.

in the series *Życie w USA* [Life in the USA] did Miłosz recall a trip to the river during his visit to the state of Virginia.

There is nothing to suggest that the diplomat had the opportunity to meet the Native Americans of the East Coast. Decimated by the wars, they were pushed into the territories of the central states.<sup>674</sup> His correspondence and articles do not even mention a desire to meet them. It is in his wife's letter to Andrzejewski, dated 25 July 1946, where we find the following remark:

The ride on the Hudson River, by which we often camped with a friendly tribe of Indians during the steamy nights of the adventurous youth of our teenage years, was intoxicating. At the same time, it brought disappointment. Is there really nothing left of it? Well, No. Brazen white men, who think that they deserve everything, came over here to stay (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 42–43).<sup>675</sup>

Neither did the holiday in Rehoboth Beach inspire Miłosz to look for traces the culture of the Delaware tribe.<sup>676</sup> In his works in written those years there is not a single description of a Native American, which should be explained not so much by a lack of interest, but first of all by the situation of the marginalized Native Americans, rarely living in cities, and secondly, by the situation of the diplomat himself, absorbed by the affairs of Europe, seen in relation to white America. In Poland, the history of Native Americans also did not concern Polish historians and columnists at the time – the exception here would be essays by Arkady Fiedler about Mexican Indians and Cortés, which the poet, collaborating with *Odrodzenie*, certainly read.<sup>677</sup> He was also undoubtedly familiar with Aimé Césaire's speech on the colonial policy of the West delivered at the World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace, in Wrocław, Poland.<sup>678</sup> Bogdan Żyranik wrote the following in his commentary to his own translation of "The

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**674** The history of Native Americans is treated exhaustively by Champagne, Duane in the book *Native America. Portrait of the Peoples*. Foreword by Dennis Banks, Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 1994.

**675** A counterpart of this remark in Miłosz's articles are the words: "The banks of the Hudson River, whose estuary was the site where industrious colonizers founded New Amsterdam, later known as New York, are among some of the most beautiful places in the world. Their wild, rocky and wooded landscape makes one imagine the moment when the first boat of white settlers moved carefully upstream, and from above, from caves hidden in the vegetation they were followed by gazes of Indians." In Miłosz, Czesław: "Notatnik nowojorski" [The New York Notebook], *Przekrój* 1946, issue 70, p. 11.

**676** The fate of this tribe is discussed in Weslager, Clinton A.: *The Delaware Indian Westward Migration*, Wallingford, Pennsylvania: The Middle Atlantic Press, 1978.

**677** See Fiedler, Arkady: "Chwała indiańskiej przeszłości" [Glory to the Indian Past], *Odrodzenie* 1949, issue 21; *idem*: "Cortez, el destructor," *Odrodzenie* 1949, issue 24, p. 2.

**678** Césaire, Aimé: "Sprawa ludów kolorowych" [The Issue of Colored Peoples], *Kuźnica* 1948, issue 2, p. 6. In the 1950s Miłosz reviewed the book by Bhattacharya, Bhabani: *So many hungers*, London: V. Gollancz, 1947, covering the famine in Bengal, Ghandi's movement and India's aspirations for independence. The manuscript of this review is kept at the Beinecke Library, Box 127, Folder 2036.

Song of Hiawatha:” “When the Blacks are still treated today in the United States with a multitude of racial superstitions and phobias, the Indians are not touched by these superstitions.”<sup>679</sup>

Although Miłosz’s knowledge of Native Americans was not mediated by reading, it is worth mentioning the titles of the books that led him to their tracks. The most important historical book of those years was Edward Gibbon’s *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*;<sup>680</sup> the Native American context was suggested by *In the American Grain* by William Carlos Williams<sup>681</sup> and *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* by Francis Parkman.<sup>682</sup> From the volume of essays by Williams Miłosz translated two excerpts about the conquest of South America and the fall of the Aztecs and gave them his own titles: “Wyspy ziemskiego raju albo gospodarka folwarczna w Indiach Zachodnich w XVI w., czyli Ponce de Leon” [The Islands of Earthly Paradise, or Manor Economy in the West Indies in the 16th century, i.e. Ponce de Leon] and “Zniszczenie miasta Tenochtitlan czyli koniec państwa Azteków, albo biada zwyciężonym” [The Destruction of Tenochtitlan, that is the End of the Aztec state, or Woe to the Defeated]. From Parkman’s work he chose to translate a dialogue from an anonymous satirical play *Ponteach: or the Savages of America* from 1766. These translations were published in a joint collection under the title “Małe wypisy historyczne albo czytanki na lato dla miłośników dawnych dobrych czasów” [A Small Historical Reader or Summer Readings for Lovers of the Good Old Days]<sup>683</sup> – among them there was also a short fragment of Gibbon’s *Decline*, entitled “Błogosławiony Marcellus czyli zapał

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**679** Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth: “Pieśń o Hajawacie” [The Song of Hiawatha]. Translation and commentary by Bogdan Żyranik, *Twórczość* 1946, issue 7–8, pp. 78–79.

**680** Miłosz read *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* in the original. How important this book was for him is attested by the fact that he returned to its Polish translation at the end of his life, and also by the essay devoted to Gibbon “Upadek Cesarstwa Rzymskiego czyli coś dla zwolenników śródziemnomorskiego mitu” [The Fall of the Roman Empire or Something for the Supporters of the Mediterranean Myth], *Tygodnik Powszechny* 2002, issue 48, reprinted in the volume *O podróżach w czasie* [On Time Travel]. Selection, preparation and introduction by Joanna Gromek, Krakow, 2004, pp. 46–59.

**681** The first edition of Williams’ book was published in 1925, whereas Miłosz most likely used the edition published by New Directions in Norfolk, Connecticut from 1940. As we know, Macdonald was the author of the book *Against the American Grain*, New York: Random House, 1962. Nonetheless, Miłosz did not mention anywhere that Williams’ collection of essays was ever a subject of their conversations.

**682** Miłosz probably used the edition *History of the Conspiracy of Pontiac and the War of the North American Tribes against the English Colonies after the Conquest of Canada*. With an introduction by Joseph Schafer, New York: Macmillan, 1929. During his diplomatic service, another important book came out, namely McNickle, D’Arcy: *They Came Here First: The Epic of the American Indian*, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1949 – Miłosz’s writings do not reveal whether or not he read it.

**683** “Małe wypisy historyczne albo czytanki na lato dla miłośników dawnych dobrych czasów” [A Small Historical Reader or Summer Readings for Lovers of the Good Old Days]. Selected and translated by Czesław Miłosz, *Nowa Kultura* 1950, issue 20, p. 2.



chrześcijański w IV wieku po Chr. albo konserwatywni wieśniacy” [Blessed Marcellus or Christian Zeal in the Fourth Century AD, or Conservative Villagers].

The translations from Williams and Parkman were reprinted in *Kontynenty* [Continents] and provided with new comments. In the case of Williams, the poet argued that “This is the title of one of the most beautiful books on the history of the American continent” (*Kontynenty*, 149). He wrote the following about the dialogue from the English satirical play: “I have translated these fragments, because the dialogue in verse, entirely realistic, and even trivial, seemed to me to be something difficult to achieve in the Polish language, and tempting” (*Kontynenty*, 155). Miłosz never republished his fragments from *In the American Grain*. Very clear is the act which, over time, Miłosz the translator repeated – a gradual and consistent decontextualization of the old translation. While the poet Polonized certain texts with a clear intention of using them as a substitute voice in the realities of the Stalinization of life in Poland, after more than fifty years he focused on their strictly cultural and literary values. Only to Kroński did he reveal his original intentions:

I am already finishing Act II of *Othello*, I have also prepared a small historical reader, from Gibbon, and from various Americans, including verse, e.g. fragments from 18th century plays about the martyrdom of Indians, the whole thing is quite venomous, I sent it to *Nowa Kultura*, they might just print it (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 380).

This example shows how Miłosz’s understanding of the utility principle evolved: translating stories about the colonization of America, the poet understood it narrowly and *ad hoc*, and when the current purpose disappeared, he incorporated the old translations into the realm of poetry on the rights assigned to other works. In the 1940s Miłosz used Native American history as an emblem of the permanent laws of history, he retold stories of the bloody conquest of America not as further arguments against the Western empire, but as evidence of the repetition of history. He made them his ‘Aesopian voice.’

Interesting and well thought-out is the strategy chosen by the editor of “Małe wypisy historyczne.” The syntax of the titles given to the juxtaposed excerpts imitates the models of Polish textbooks and didactic literature of the 18th century. What is more, according to the Enlightenment rule of *docere et delectare*, each of them, not only thanks to open stylization, contains a dose of humor, achieved through imitation of moralistic clichés. The title puts the translation in Miłosz’s own quotation marks – an official strategy of reading is thus imposed on the reader. As the editor of the collection, Miłosz reveals himself here in the role of a mocking hunter of absurdity, an exposé of past stupidity and cruelty. He can go far, since the stigmatized situations concern the history of Christianization, exploitation and extermination of Native Americans. As the recent author of “Campo dei Fiori,” “A Song on the End of the World,” and the “Song on Porcelain,” Miłosz can afford such an openly ironic gesture. Once again, he benefits from the antagonization of form and content, breaking

the principle of decorum, *nomen omen*, in an *enlightened* way. Putting everything in double quotes, in the stories of the conquest of America Miłosz smuggles an *exemplum*, teaching about the foreseeable effects of various actions against the occupiers. The story of chief Montezuma, who first surrendered to Cortés without a fight and then could not prevent the uprising that broke out after his imprisonment, seems particularly valuable here:

In response to screams from the outside, Montezuma, a prisoner, appeared on the walls of the besieged fortress and began to call on his people to stop the attacks. It was then that a stone thrown from the crowd struck him in the head and killed him. Only their horses and their military formation saved the Christians in their memorable retreat on the great dyke. Fighting madly to break through the enemy's ranks with the rest of their forces, and to keep the prisoners and the treasures at the same time, Cortes lost everything. Montezuma's children, the gold, everything was lost on this crowded route through the lake, with the Spaniards retreating step by step from the swarms of Indians throwing themselves against them. They fled. Several months later they returned and continued their work of destruction, this time with premeditated cold calculation. Tenochtitlan was surrounded, the flow of water was cut off, and the strengthened Spanish forces started to slowly break through, and after several weeks of desperate effort they reached their goal.<sup>684</sup>

Miłosz is not interested here in the Native Americans as Native Americans, not least because the Native American question does not appear to him as clearly as does the issue of African Americans at the time. The poet sees this more broadly, and perhaps the best illustration of this is the fragment of *In the American Grain* he selected for translation:

They took them in droves, forced them to labor. It was impossible to them — not having been born to baptism. How maddening it is to the spirit to hear: — Bands of them went into the forests, their forests, and hanged themselves to the trees. What else? Islands — paradise. Surrounded by seas. On all sides “heavenly man” bent on murder. Self-privilege. Two women and one man on a raft had gotten one hundred and fifty miles out to sea — such seamen were they — then luck again went against the Indian. Captured and back to slavery. Caravels crept along the shore by night. Next morning when women and children came down to the shore to fish — fine figures, straight black hair, high cheekbones, a language — they caught them, made them walk in bands, cut them down if they fainted, slashed off breasts, arms — women, children...<sup>685</sup>

Miłosz had already seen this, and he read about it — in Conrad. Already in “Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook] from 1948 he wrote:

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**684** Miłosz, Czesław: “Zniszczenie miasta Tenochtitlan czyli koniec państwa Azteków albo biada zwyciężonym” [Destruction of the City of Tenochtitlan, that is the End of the Aztec State or Woe to the Defeated], *op. cit.*, p. 4.

**685** Miłosz, Czesław: “Wyspy ziemskiego raju albo gospodarka folwarczna w Indiach Zachodnich w XVI w. czyli Ponce de Leon” [The Islands of Earthly Paradise, or Manor Economy in the West Indies in the 16th century, i.e. Ponce de Leon], *op. cit.*, p. 4.

To civilization, man officially begins from the belt upwards, the natural man, unfortunately, stinks. This agreement, as if it were a theatrical convention, also extends to man's urges, their limit which is cruelty and brutality, is bypassed.

Of course, the shell is fragile, and the whole of civilization is fragile.

The sight that shook me the most me was the disintegration of this shell in Warsaw, in September 1939. Afterwards one would see all sorts of things. But those faces of the tired, sweaty women, their makeup and lipstick dripping in streaks at the mouth – that was the symbolic beginning. Yes, the civilized Brussels of the marble *sociétés anonymes*, where Joseph Conrad signed his contract to depart for the Congo, was an illusion. What was real was the Congo (*Kontynenty*, 38–39).

The poet did not need any additional evidence in this case. He prepared his “Małe wypisy historyczne” after the publication of *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals], after the Szczecin meeting of the Union of Polish Writers and his visit to Poland in the summer of 1949. Thus, he reduced the particulars to the common denominator of cruelty, and if so, this would be a significant act of expanding his historiosophic consciousness, which would direct him in *The Captive Mind* toward a search for a more general model in spatially and temporally distant events, problems and historical processes.

This does not mean that Miłosz was not interested in the ethnic and racial diversity of American society. It is not known whether among his many readings was John Collier's seminal work *The Indians of the Americas*, published in New York in 1947.<sup>686</sup> With Wanda Telakowska, he travelled to Santa Fé, the largest Native American

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**686** The book by Collier, John: *The Indians of the Americas*, New York: Mentor Books, 1947 covered the prehistory of Native Americans, including the Empires of the Incas and Aztecs, the history of the Spanish conquest of South America, management of the colonies by the Spanish Crown and the Catholic Church until the Napoleonic era, the wars fought in the Americas during the Napoleonic era, the Mexican Revolution, the history of Native Americans in the United States considering its territorial division, the history of Native Americans during the Mexican Revolution, and the realities of life of Native Americans until the end of the 19th century. Collier, a well-known advocate of Native Americans, presented the cultural history and extermination of Native Americans from their point of view. As early as the 1920s, he became interested in Native American issues. He strove to improve their situation during the Great Depression, and to achieve broader changes in the policies directed toward them. He sharply criticized the activities of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. During Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidency, he was invited to cooperate with the administration as Commissioner of Indian Affairs. At that time, he established the Indian division of the Civilian Conservation Corps which oversaw material issues, the situation in reservations, and renewal of the natural environment destroyed by white people, so that Native Americans could again engage in their own agriculture. He was instrumental in the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act in 1934, which was then considered part of the New Deal policy. He rejected the policies of the time which imposed forced assimilation and Americanization of Native Americans following the rules of the white immigrants. On finishing his work with the federal government, he became the director of the National Indian Institute. John Collier settled in California in 1919. It was there that he first came into contact with the art of the Pueblo Indians of Taos, and then led the thriving development of the town of Santa Fé, which became

art center in New Mexico at the time, created also thanks to the efforts of Collier, a defender of Native Americans and connoisseur of their art, fascinated by the Pueblo culture. In 1948, the first lady of Polish design had an exhibition of Polish folk art in the USA, and the secretary of the Embassy organized help for her and accompanied her on her journeys. In May 1948, Santa Fé became their most distant – and not accidental – destination, where Telakowska could seek inspiration for her book.<sup>687</sup> Unfortunately, no photographs have survived from this journey. The poet wanted to reach Miller, who lived in Big Sur, California. He recorded his walk around the town in “Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook] rewritten and included in the *Kontynenty* – the entry devoted to Santa Fé remained in the new version without any changes. Miłosz, however, had doubts as to whether it was worth developing this topic:

I started to write about Santa Fé and the Taos valley, but I lost my spirit. The question is why. One’s aversion to the thing one writes usually proves that something is wrong. Either the subject or the way of writing. The subject – in itself, quite rich. Not many people from Poland arrive in the depths of the American continent, on the border of the United States and Mexico (*Kontynenty*, 42).<sup>688</sup>

Since few readers in Poland ever found themselves deep in America, few might have been interested in these issues, and in what Miłosz might have written about them. The question is whether the subject he took up was attractive, while at a deeper level, it concerns common cognitive practices, i.e. whether people would rather read about what they did not yet know about or would prefer to deepen their knowledge of what they already know. The author did give an account of the history of the conquest of those lands, the Spanish rule and Native American wars with the colonizers, described the historic palace of the governors, wrote several lines about the climate and colors of the landscape, and looked for possible points of reference: he compared the discovery of Native American art to the fashion for the Polish highlander art, and looked at nature through the prism of civilization and literature. In the end he surrendered:

Here, in the desert of New Mexico, a dozen or so miles from Santa Fé, in an inhuman landscape, the atomic bomb was born. In the Taos valley, which you enter through a gorge of ashen volcanic rocks – suddenly a gentle green space opens up at the foot of the snowy mountains – English writer D. H. Lawrence lived and died here. He considered this to be the most beautiful place he knew, and since he condemned modern civilization as devoid of sensual fullness in all his books,

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a Native American art center after the war. See *Santa Fe. History of an Ancient City*. Edited by David Grant Noble, Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2008; Collier, John: *From Every Zenith: A Memoir, and Some Essays on Life and Thought*, Denver: Sage Books, 1963.

**687** See Telakowska, Wanda: *Twórczość ludowa w nowym wzornictwie* [Folk Art in New Design], Warsaw, 1954.

**688** The visit in Taos did not inspire Miłosz to reflect on the work of Robinson Jeffers at the time.

he was fascinated by the original rituals of the local Indians. The object of these burnt mountains of New Mexico would have provided an opportunity for writing. But the object must be attached to some passion of ours; it must become a personal matter for us. New Mexico, even though I was there, is for me like a country seen in the cinema (*Kontynenty*, 43).

There are several secrets hidden in this remark. Miłosz marks the contrast between seeing something directly and seeing the same on screen but does not explain what the difference means to him. The key seems to be a matter of “passion,” a “personal matter,” without which what you see in person looks as if on screen. Many times, the poet complained that America of the 1940s was not sufficiently real for him, but is this what the cinematographic metaphor seems to suggest? Or is it about the exotic nature of the landscape, which, although seen in person, is so fundamentally different from what Miłosz was used to that it seemed to be the background of a film from some distant, foreign land? And what kind of film did he have in mind: a feature film, documentary, or newsreel? The analogy with cinema probably does not concern the situation of mediation – after all, the poet himself searches for the possibility of taming the unknown in historical parallels, and in references to civilization. Perhaps, then, the point is the sense of unreality, stopping of the development of the Pueblo culture in a phase which the contemporary resident of a metropolis cannot feel as his own. The poet goes on to explain this further:

As for the way of writing, perhaps dyed-in-the-wool prose writers feel the pleasure of meticulously repeating the details of reality on paper. At any rate, there is probably such a variety of prose writers. If writing about New Mexico started to make me weary, it is probably because I am not attracted to making an inventory of reality, but rather to the tensions in it (*Kontynenty*, 43).

One such dramatic tension seems to be found in a religious ritual in which young Native Americans participate: the poet finds it incredible that it is possible to return to traditional ritual after the experiences of war in Europe.

Miłosz knew that in the last war young Native Americans were soldiers valued for their exceptional manual skills – here he observed that the Native American community returned to the old practices, as if their history had been following a different track. Dry, dialectic reason shifted their indigenous practices into the sphere of theatrical folklore.

The reader of Conrad and Gibbon exposed analogies between the practices of conquistadors, armed missionaries and Marxists. The intuitions written on the first pages of *Native Realm* were born there and then, although it is not certain how early Miłosz was accompanied by the thought formulated precisely in this form.

In “Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook] written in America, Miłosz reflects on the commercialization of Native American art, and on the destructive influence of the market on its originality:

Now this Indian art (necklaces, fabrics, ceramics) is ending because it is in the hands of shopkeepers, for whom Indians work as cottage-industry workers. It is clear that the orders follow the tastes of the customers, which are terrible. This is how the last center of handicraft and folk industry in America is dying out (*Kontynenty*, 44–45).

The poet makes observations on the twilight of Native American art at a time when Americans consider the restoration of Santa Fé to its former splendor a success...

The account of a visit to Taos contained in “Notatnik amerykański” reveals the ambivalence with which Miłosz approached Native Americans in the 1940s. For a long time Miłosz had been unable to define his attitude towards Native American culture that was spread – as his impression would indicate – between the open-air museum and the hieroglyph. The metaphors he used – of a theatre spectator and moviegoer – emphasize the difficulty of his situation. It would seem that we were at the center of Miłosz’s dilemmas if we were to stop at his published accounts from his journey to California, edited and included in “Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook]. Meanwhile, the freshest and most complete testimony to the poet’s stay in Santa Fé is the extensive, unfinished composition “W dolinie Taos” [In the Taos Valley],<sup>689</sup> preserved only as a manuscript. It consists of nine parts of unequal length, separated with asterisks. It takes the form of a journal from a journey, understood more as a literary essay than a documentary account in the strict sense of the word; descriptions of the places seen and customs learned are usually accompanied by more general reflections of a different character. It preserves the chronological order of his visit to California at least partially: it begins with a description of the flight and landing in Santa Fé, and ends with a reflection on folk art, and it is interrupted in the first sentence of the description of the village of Tesuki. The narrator acts in it as a documentary filmmaker and camera operator: from sketching out the historical background and landscape of the land, he moves on to observations on the town, a village, a street, and finally to individual scenes and eye-catching details. He describes the New Mexico landscape from the perspective of an airplane passenger – his sight is attracted by clouds, compared to clouds in the country of his childhood. It ends with a brief description of the tiny airport opposite the vastness of the surrounding empty space. Miłosz then tells the story of the town of Santa Fé from the time of the first settlers until it was taken over by the United States. He outlines the origin, evolution, conditions of development and achievements of the local civilization from the great ancient migration of peoples. His knowledge of history is combined with archaeological knowledge, which shows how well he had prepared for his first visit to the southern border of the USA. His camera lens narrows down the angle in the following remarks that describe Santa Fé itself: its landscape, location, climate, architecture, and its racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse population. The antithesis to this description is a remark about the construction of the atomic

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689 Miłosz, Czesław: “W dolinie Taos” [In the Taos Valley], Beinecke Library, Box 118, Folder 1777.

bomb – this reflection Miłosz will rewrite in “Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook]. From Santa Fé, he moves to Taos, the way to which he will describe later in the essay. While driving to Taos, the driver directs the passengers’ attention to the roadside information boards with facts about the history of the region – Miłosz juxtaposes the attitude of Americans and Poles to their own history, accusing the latter of particular neglect. He also recalls here the figure of Lawrence, an inhabitant and lover of the Taos Valley: he is an ethnographer who devoted many pages to the culture and customs of Native Americans. Only now does Miłosz reflect on the situation of the Native Americans, discussing their close past, their great military service in the Second World War, and their present economic and legal situation, including lack of voting rights. For the poet who often thinks of alienation as a sign of his contemporaneity, their attachment to their village and roots is very meaningful. However, he sadly observes how former soldiers, and not rarely Japanese prisoners become shop assistants selling commercialized folklore products for tourists. This extensive observation would not be repeated by the poet anywhere else, just as he would not publish anywhere else his description of the impressions from a Native American procession on the harvest festival. In “Notatnik amerykański,” Miłosz mentioned this event as an example of the fusion of paganism and Christianity, but only in this unpublished sketch he expressed his enchantment with the exoticism and magic of this ritual.

Both the point of departure and the point of access are different in both accounts. The diary is governed by immediate impressions. In the “Notatnik” [The Notebook] – in keeping with the author’s own declaration – the impressions have been subjected to the test of time and selection, and included in the whole as functional elements, leading to certain generalizations assumed a priori. The ecstatic viewer from the diary transforms into a calm artisan, who achieves his goals playing the game of disclosure and concealment. Why did Miłosz not publish the colorful story about the Taos Valley?

It does not seem that he doubted its intellectual and literary merits. Rather than that, the strategy of assuming masks and roles, of key importance for Miłosz, was revealed here. In other words, he carefully managed his capital of knowledge, awareness, and experience. One can distinguish in his writing at the time the roles he assumed, and discern the levels of information he shared, and estimate how much of the knowledge he assimilated at that time he kept for himself for a long time. The fate of the unpublished composition “W dolinie Taos” [In the Taos Valley] encourages us to consider how long Miłosz needed to maintain his garden of learning before he would open the gate to it for others. Would his Taos experiences not return transformed in *The Issa Valley*, and in *Native Realm*? They did return, of course, but only at the moment Miłosz chose himself, and in accordance with his understanding of the principle of mimesis, where the condition of imitation is purifying his gaze of passions and desires. Similarly, in his introduction to the anthology *Kultura masowa* [Mass Culture], the remarks from the diary on folk art return – perhaps inspired by conversations with Telakowska and by reading *politics*.

The accounts from the trip to Santa Fé from the diary and “Notatnik” are, on a micro-scale, the limits of the process that proceeded from getting to know America to a reassessment of his initial American experience. The example of the change of perspective on Native Americans is quite instructive here – the poet published some of his old opinions in the new approach, but also – in accordance with his sense of hierarchy – he kept secret those of them which were supposed to mature and become the basis for deeper, more important and more general diagnoses. The ambivalence of “Notatnik” [The Notebook] is one thing. The ethnographic, anthropological, and spiritual fascination with Native Americans is another. This fascination, even if concealed, determines the continuity of imagination for the author of *Traktat moralny* and *The Issa Valley*. Already in the 1940s, the poet unveils the secret. In the Native American, what attracts him, as he betrays in his correspondence, is the inner man, the *homo religiosus*. He writes to Matuszewski:

Why are the barefooted Aztecs capable of absorbing the paintings of Diego Rivera or Siquieros? Why is an average French film too difficult for an average American audience? Why was the great poetry and great music of *Negro spirituals* created by Negroes, slaves and illiterate people? Because in people there is death, atrophy, downfall, inertia, sentimentalism – and there is life, flourishing, power, grandeur – and whoever thinks and uses the effort of will, is bad if he plays for death, and not for life (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 429).

## Miłosz and Black Americans

In the literary returns to his birthplace, Miłosz refers to his childhood books and, as he reminisces in *The Issa Valley*, beside the stories about Indians,

He had more fun with the travel books. Negroes, armed with bows and arrows, were shown standing naked in reed boats, or towing a hippopotamus familiar to him from his natural-history book. He often wondered whether their bodies were really striped, or just painted, and dreamed of accompanying them on a long voyage to distant waters, and, among papyrus plants standing taller than a man, of building a village inaccessible to outsiders (*The Issa Valley*, 63).

It is not known whether these books included the famous novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe.<sup>690</sup> Miłosz's meeting with African Americans, getting to know their situation and culture created in America was different than his encounter with Native Americans. Entering the New World, Miłosz already knew the history of American slavery, and had some idea of the living conditions of black people. Unlike Native Americans, African Americans were also residents of New York and

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<sup>690</sup> The novel titled *Chata wuja Toma. Opowiadania dla młodzieży z czasów niewoli murzyńskiej* [Uncle Tom's Cabin. Stories for Youth from the Times of Negro Slavery] was published for the first time in Lwów in 1912 by the Publishing House Kultura i Sztuka, translated into Polish by Józef Łomnicki.



Washington, and therefore fellow passengers on the subway, passers-by, employees, and customers.

Miłosz's meeting with African Americans took place on several levels: the poet read journalism about the Negro issue, described the situation of black people in the press, was interested in their painting and sculpture – he reviewed the most interesting works, read and translated poems by black poets, devoted some space to them in his own poetry, and finally made the first Polish translation of *Negro spirituals*.<sup>691</sup> As a secretary of the Embassy, he visited an African American university where a Chopin concert took place – he mentioned this in a letter to Iwaszkiewicz (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 250). Of course, not all the activities mentioned here happened at the same time. On the contrary, we can observe a gradual increase in Miłosz's interest in the affairs of African Americans and a growing understanding of the complications of life in a multi-racial society. It should be remembered, however, that the poet then knew more than he let on – his comments on racism were characterized by a self-censoring reticence. Secondly and no less interestingly, although he devoted more time, and lines of text, to African Americans, his curiosity about them did not last. This was unlike his encounter with Native Americans, whom the diplomat neither saw every day nor described at length, and whose work – apart from what he saw in Taos – was unknown to him. How to explain this exhaustion? It is probably related to his functional, or better yet, metonymic approach to this issue.

Initially, Miłosz revealed the background of someone who was a graduate of a pre-war European gymnasium (high school), who learned about the history of the American Civil War. He jokingly referred to this knowledge in his correspondence, especially at the beginning, when he shared his first impressions of the USA. From the very beginning, he was curious about the black minority taking a specific place in society – he tried to define and explain its various coordinates. It is then that his first comments appeared in the series *Życie w USA*. In the last issue of *Odrodzenie* of 1946, he described the organization of the Columbians, a successor of the Ku Klux Klan, established in Atlanta. At the beginning of 1947, Miłosz wrote about violations of the electoral rights of black people.

While Miłosz paid attention to glaring examples in the series *Życie w USA*, he was silent on the realities of everyday life: segregation on public transport, and restrictions on African American participation in cultural events.<sup>692</sup> Only in his discussion of the Writers' Conference at Bread Loaf did he report the story of one of its participants, but he did this for much deeper reasons, and with different intentions:

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<sup>691</sup> Not many African-American texts were published in Polish literary press. See Lindsay, V.: "Kongo. (Studium szczepów murzyńskich)" [Congo (A Study of Negro Tribes)], *Twórczość* 1946, issue 7/8, p. 95.

<sup>692</sup> He writes more on this in the article "Literatura amerykańska w 1948 roku" [American Literature in 1948].

Roger's maladaptation dates back to his school years. "I was in an art school that had three departments: fine arts, music and writing. Many blacks studied at the school and the relations between the whites and the blacks were good," he says. I made a mistake. Once I bought ice cream for twenty Negroes. A whispered rumor went around the school and I had fingers pointed at me: "a rich Jew." A few days later, while playing football, all the blacks ganged up on me. They pretended to be fighting with one another, but I was at the bottom of a big pile of bodies and they beat me till I bled. The whites shunned me because I had given to the blacks. I had to leave the school. But I am stigmatized everywhere: I come from a family that is Jewish and rich – a bad combination, and because of my disability. The worst thing is the awareness of being an outsider.<sup>693</sup>

Miłosz quickly understood the risk of writing about the problems of African Americans – in the atmosphere of growing anti-American propaganda in Poland, his testimonies could be read as echoes of Polish Zoiluses. Therefore, shortly after his reports, he commented on the accusation of racism repeated in Polish press. He dealt with in the seventh issue of *Odrodzenie*, and the pretext for this was the manipulation in *Kuźnica*:

In the issue of *Kuźnica* of December 10, 1946, on the first page, under the great title: "One of the four freedoms: freedom from fear" there are photographs of Ku Klux Klan members and hanged Negroes.

It is puzzling that a magazine of left-wing intellectuals uses sensationalist methods, which in America are the monopoly of a certain type of daily press, far from intellectualism, avoided with contempt by educated people. Presenting America as a country where Negroes are hanged is more or less as precise as writing about Poland that everyone there wears bowler hats, because this is the type of hat traditionally worn by owners of horse-drawn carriages in Krakow. The black issue in the United States of course does exist, but it is discussed and written about openly here. Nowhere in the world have so many books been written on this subject. To those who are interested, one may recommend Myrdal's monumental study *An American Dilemma*. A large number of organizations, publishers, educational films, and churches fight against racial discrimination – and the progress achieved so far is unquestionable.<sup>694</sup>

Miłosz added an explanatory note to his previous comments. In it, he pointed out that racial differences clearly translated themselves into class divisions and determined one's place in the social hierarchy. If at all possible, the advancement of non-white citizens required more time and effort. He pointed out that the status of black people did not differ significantly from the status of immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe, but the latter were more efficient in climbing the American social ladder. Because of their low salaries, African Americans and Poles were unexpectedly often – as he wrote – neighbors in the poorest districts of big cities, so when it came to antagonism between whites and blacks, there were a fair number of disputes between these two groups. He did not hide the fact that "the standard of living of the black population, very low for American conditions, was nonetheless probably higher than

693 Miłosz, Czesław: "Zabawy i spory" [Games and Arguments], *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 44, p. 4.

694 Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA*, *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 7, p. 9.

the standard of living of people in Poland.”<sup>695</sup> The correspondent also touched on the mechanism of social regulation in America – while enjoying the rights of democracy, people were not free from economic fears and it was their financial stability that determined the comfort of their lives. In a similar tone, he said in the reports for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: “These symptoms [of racism – E.K.] are not as glaring as a European is used to imagining them and I think that they often obscure more important issues (...).”<sup>696</sup>

Since this polemic with *Kuźnica* in 1947, the author of *Życie w USA* made no further comments in the press on the situation of African Americans until 1950, when he compared the situation of Polish economic emigrants and the black population in the United States:

The particular racism that occurs in treating people of Slavic origin is simply the result of class habits – just as this is exhibited more strongly in relation to Negroes, after all the point is nothing else than forcing the Negroes to ‘know their place,’ i.e. the place of a person used for menial work. (...)

The history of Polish economic emigration in America will be discussed, I believe, at great length both in Poland and in the United States. For someone who knows America, it is clear that it is connected with the victory of progressive forces in America, because only the abolition of the “origin-based” segregation will heal American Poles of their inferiority complex and make them proud of their tradition. Let us take into account that whoever wants to find an unbiased picture of the history of the Negroes in America today has to draw on the works of Marxist historians. The same will apply to other population groups, whose role in the development of America is now subtly diminished.<sup>697</sup>

In the essay entitled “Obyczaje” [Customs], written in 1950, Miłosz added nuance to his earlier statements about the situation of African Americans, drawing attention to relations within this group:

Before entering the theatre there were picketers. People steaming with moisture, mostly Negroes, carrying signs saying: “This theater is racist,” “Down with Hitlerism,” “Fight against racism.” The reason for this was that the theater did not sell tickets to Negroes and only allowed whites. (...)

As we know, American blacks are descendants of slaves, caught in different parts of Africa, and therefore coming from different tribes and nations, so there are different anthropological types and different shades of skin: from almost completely white to ebony black. Addition of white blood has enlarged these differences. At a large university I know, students with light

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<sup>695</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 9.

<sup>696</sup> *Raport sytuacyjny o nastrojach na terenie działalności Konsulatu Generalnego w New Yorku za okres 1 VIII – 1 IX 1946* [Situational Report on the Moods in the Area of Operations of the New York Consulate for the Period from Aug. 1 to Sept 1, 1946]. AMSZ, c. 21, b. 87, f. 1182.

<sup>697</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: “Poeta-pieśniarz” [Poet-Bard], *op. cit.*, pp. 5–6. This issue is nonetheless a permanent feature on the reports written for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

skin and straight hair belong to some fraternities and sororities, and those with dark skin and curly hair belong to other “inferior” ones. (...) These differences are by no means detached from economic conditions. But these are very complicated issues, dating back to the times of slavery. There are sharp conflicts among the Negroes, and contempt for the “blacks.” Their financial and cultural elites like to derive their origins from the manor house service, as opposed to the “black” descendants of slaves working on plantations. The people employed in the house service often had European features (selected by the owners) and light-colored skin (sexual relations between the owners and the service). Standing at a much higher cultural level than the workers on the plantation, they had a better start when slavery was abolished. This scheme, however, does not exhaust the sociological complexities, including the problem of “borderline” Negroes, completely white, including: “Should I cross over to the other side?”<sup>698</sup>

Miłosz’s decision against taking up the issue of racism very often does not allow us today to assess what, apart from his personal experience, was the source of his knowledge about racial discrimination. We do not know if any books, apart from *An American Dilemma* by Gunnar Myrdal and *The Negro* W. E. B. Du Bois,<sup>699</sup> shaped his awareness of these issues. The 1940s, after a fertile period of two decades, were still abundant in valuable works on racial relations. Among them, to name but a few in chronological order, there were books by the recent precursors of the Harlem Renaissance: *The Negro in Art* by Alaine Locke,<sup>700</sup> *Dusk of Dawn* by W. E. B. Du Bois,<sup>701</sup> *American Negroes and the War* by Earl Brown,<sup>702</sup> *Modern Negro Art* by James A. Porter,<sup>703</sup> *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a*

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**698** Miłosz, Czesław: “Obyczaje” [Customs], *op. cit.*, p. 77 and 87.

**699** Miłosz took an excerpt out of the book by Du Bois (published in New York by Henry Holt and Co. in 1915). See Beinecke Library, Box 121, Folder 1868.

**700** Alaine Locke’s album *The Negro in Art. A Pictorial Record of the Negro Artist and of the Negro Theme in Art* (first printing, Washington D.C., 1940) presented the history of emancipation of the black artist, the evolution of the subject of the Negro in the visual arts, and African sources of black art in the United States.

**701** The autobiographical essay by Du Bois (first edition: New York, Hartourt, Brace&World Inc., 1940), is among others a reflection on the history of race as an arbitrary concept built by white English-speaking people. Du Bois overthrows its pseudo-scientific premises, revealing its ideological background. He analyzes the model of democracy based on Christian morality and the rules of white domination. He discusses the conditions in which African Americans as a minority may transform from a group of consumers into important political and social subjects – the background for these considerations is also Marxism. Du Bois considers the time after the end of World War Two as the most suitable time for conducting a revolution aimed at achieving equal rights for African Americans.

**702** Earl Brown’s article (first published in *Harper’s Magazine*, April 1942) described the rules of racist segregation in the US Army and glaring examples of discrimination of blacks by white soldiers.

**703** This book by Porter (first edition: New York, Dryden Press, 1943) is a comprehensive presentation of the history of African American art and craft of from the times of slavery, through the Civil War, until the 20th century. It describes the emancipation of black artists, the process of their individualization and achievement of their own identity, including the New Negro Movement, as well as the relations between African American art and mainstream American art, achievements in painting, sculpture, graphics and popular culture of the black minority.

*Northern City* by St. Claire Drake and Horace R. Cayton,<sup>704</sup> *A Rising Wind* by Walter White,<sup>705</sup> and *Color and Democracy* by W. E. B. Du Bois.<sup>706</sup> It is safer to assume that Miłosz, a reader of the literary press, was familiar with the contours of the discussion on African Americans at the time. It was not without good reason that Jerzy Giedroyc in the 1950s recommended to him to continue reading American books.<sup>707</sup>

In parallel to his interest in the social and economic situation of African Americans, a fascination with specific, albeit anonymous people manifested itself as well. Miłosz saw them on the New York subway and noted down his observations. His works include several such detailed portraits – he preserved them in his “Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook]. At that time, people to him are human stories. Even though he renounces simple relationships with photography, and he does not believe that the relationship with objects can be improved at the price of renouncing the feelings, experiences, and thoughts of the portraitist, one may ask whether his pictures were not inspired by Walker Evans’ famous photographs. It was said of Evans that he used the camera as a typewriter, that he was a writer, rather than a photographer,<sup>708</sup> and his works were called photo-essays. Miłosz’s literary pictures seem to have a similar status, which used the New York subway, the suburban railway, and the train for their background. Only a few such miniatures are preserved in *Kontynenty*:

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**704** The work by Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*, (first edition New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1945), was an eminent pioneering sociological study devoted to black residents of Chicago in the first half of the 20th century. It described the evolution, socioeconomic and political emancipation, and changing customs of this group from the moment of their settlement, in relation to the urban transformations that took place in their neighborhood under the influence of these changes.

**705** The essay by Walter White (published in Garden City, New York by Doubleday, Doran and Company in 1945) concerned discrimination against black war veterans, and their status in relation to people of color in the other countries the Allies fought for, as well as the future of international policy based on racist principles. White concluded, “See what the United States does to its own colored people; this is the way you colored people of the world will be treated if the Allied nations win the war!” (*A Rising Wind*, *op. cit.*, p. 154). He went on to ask, “Can the United States, Britain, and other “white” nations any longer afford, in enlightened self-interest, racial superiority?” (*Ibidem*, p. 154).

**706** The book by Du Bois *Color and Democracy: Peace and Colonies* (first edition: New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1945) takes up the issues of globalization, post-war democracy and possibilities of introducing it in the countries ruled by colonial powers, the future of the colonies, and the difficult situation of their inhabitants, economic policies based on exploitation of the colonies, the significance of Russia and its ideology in the modern world, the mission of world organizations and the international community in settling armed conflicts and their actions for peace.

**707** In the essay “Valka, ou hors de temps” from 1955 (Beinecke Library, Box 127, Folder 2038) Miłosz recalls his several-day stay in Germany. The essay starts with a recollection of his reading of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and touches on the issue of discrimination against blacks, who are referred to with the French term ‘Negres.’ Miłosz compares the phenomenon of slavery in the United States with forced labor in Germany during World War Two.

**708** Evans collaborated with the weekly *Time* that Miłosz read when preparing his official reports.

An old Negro, with whom I had an argument the previous day, came up to me in the morning and said, "I'm sorry." I asked him why he did this, and whether it was worth remembering such small details. With a cautious movement of his hand, he let me know that there were powers lurking in the air, ready for anger. "You are too young. When it starts, it's small. Then stop it. You will forget, you will let it grow, it will become big, and then it will be too late." He stood in front of me, wearing a blue shirt, with the sleeves rolled up, veins bulging on his hands. His face emerged from the chaos of known shapes and colors, and he was an envoy, and the mysterious smile of a good man meant: "Is it not so? Was I not rightly told at night to warn you?" I saw bloody decks of ships, metal shackles digging into dark skin, and his ancestor, with the same smile, summoning spells of magical leopards that fell down beside him, like pears from an invisible tree. An hour later I tore up a letter, and in this way a matter between me and a certain young girl was finished (*Kontynenty*, 281).

The scene from the composition "Spotkanie" [Encounter] is a synthesis of Miłosz's earlier intuitions. From his scattered writings of the 1940s, this an image of a black American emerges: someone authentic, straightforward, internally free, with strong religious intuitions. One may guess the reasons why the poet observes him so intensely. A descendant of slaves, bearing the historical burden of injustice and the social stigma of a misfit, draws his attention when he manifests his dignity and biblical piety. This piety, growing out of a strong faith in God's providential power, manifesting in respect for God's affairs and his own humanity, touches the poet's most intimate dilemmas. Alongside Native Americans and Mexicans, Miłosz considers African Americans to be the only living people in America. He discovers in the black artist, in the anonymous, accidental passer-by, and in himself, a common trait that allows him to build a different minority, a different community. It is not only their common alienation, deeper than the racial and ethnic condition of exiles, and perhaps – in the figurative sense of the word – slaves. Initially, the poet only sensed this, and later he wrote about it in his letters and articles. In the article "Abstrakcja i poszukiwania" [Abstraction and Searching], he compared Peggy Guggenheim's collection with an exhibition of works by black sculptors and painters. Miłosz consistently upheld his view that, following European surrealism and abstractionism as if the war had never taken place, the mentees of Peggy Guggenheim risked academism. The artists who glanced surreptitiously at the Old World, for fear of rejection, suppressed their own imagination, which turned their art sterile. Black artists, who showed a freer attitude toward the past or, as it were in an act of protest, distanced themselves from white art, whether American or European, sometimes achieved greater independence and originality. The poet was interested here in the combination of three elements: the knowledge of and creative reference to the Western tradition, fidelity to one's own history, understood as a community experience and a personal experience, as well as the sense of sacrum, with a biblical basis, which organized the two previous elements as the superior principle. This was soon to be one of Miłosz's own points of access, and because of this, it is necessary to take into account his inspirations from black art in his own artistic search. He described an exhibition of African American works not

only in relation to the collection of Peggy Guggenheim. He used it as an emblem of his own views in the national discussion on realism, and the tasks and future of art.<sup>709</sup>

One may also set the following requirements: 1) that the artist may present only some things (the subject matter); 2) that they should be “lifelike” in the sense that everyone will point their fingers and say: “Oh! a house. Oh, a general!”; 3) and presented in such a way as to awaken in the greatest possible number of viewers certain feelings and passions, considered beneficial in advance. However, such rules have little in common with considerations about art. This is a sphere of orders and prohibitions, and it is also a matter of ensuring the means that are adequate to effectively force the artists to obey. Of the historical figures who tried to do so, we have made the closest relative acquaintance of Hitler. What theory is attached to such requirements – unrealistic or realistic – is in fact irrelevant.<sup>710</sup>

The author certainly understood how courageous these words were. If one disregards the immediate political context of these comments, another thing is striking – the continuity Miłosz’s imagination and the stability of his beliefs.

In the painting and sculpture of African Americans, in Negro spirituals and in poems of black poets Miłosz discovered the direction in which his own thought was heading. It moved between politics and metaphysics, between history and theology. A synthesis of this practice could be found in the Negro spirituals he translated. He prepared Polish versions of a total of fourteen songs, five of which appeared in Polish press in the 1940s: four in *Nowiny Literackie*<sup>711</sup> and then one at the *Odrodzenie*.<sup>712</sup>

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**709** In the article, Miłosz passes over the issue of realism represented in American painting both by white artists (George Bellows, Georgia O’Keeffe, Charles Scheeler, Edward Hopper, Grant Wood, Raphael Soyer, Philip Evergood, Ben Shahn), and black ones (Norman Lewis, Charles Wilbert White, Hughie Lee-Smith, Romare Bearden). It does not seem that passing over this issue resulted from ignorance. The poet regularly visited museums and art galleries in New York and Washington, hence it is not likely that he did not come in contact with the works of artists who were already well-known at the time. Neither did he mention the American version of Socialist realism. Either the author wanted to build a clear antinomy that would help him formulate his own position in the Polish discussion on realism, or he did not want to mix various realisms stemming from different intellectual traditions. Perhaps he also wanted both at the same time. The differentiation of realism in 20th century world painting is interestingly discussed by Brendan Prendeville in *Realism in 20th Century Painting*, New York: Thames&Hudson world of art, 2000.

**710** Miłosz, Czesław: “Abstrakcja i poszukiwania” [Abstraction and Searching], *op. cit.*, p. 3.

**711** *Nowiny Literackie* of 1948, issue 24, p. 4 published the songs works “Zejdź Mojżesz” [Go Down Moses], “Kiedy złote trąby zagrają” (probably a free translation of “Where Shall I Be When the First Trumpet Sounds”), “Widzę księżyc wschodzi” [I Know Moon-rise], and “O, chciałbym mieć orle skrzydła” [I Wish I Had an Eagle’s Wings].

**712** The song “Jerycho” [Jericho] was published in *Odrodzenie* 1948, issue 12, p. 4. In *Kontynenty, Mowa wiązana* [Fettered Speech, Oratio Vincita] and *Przekłady poetyckie* [Poetry Translations], the collection of translations of *Negro spirituals* (with the exception of the song “Zejdź Mojżesz” [Go Down Moses]) was published in the following order: “Bóg będzie ogniem spalać ten świat” [God’s Gonna set this world on fire], “O, chciałbym mieć orle skrzydła” [I Wish I Had an Eagle’s Wings] “Jerycho” [Jericho], “Mój wojenny strój tutaj złożę” [Going to Pull my War-Clothes], “To ja, o Panie”

All of Miłosz's translations were placed in an anthology submitted for publication, which never appeared as a separate book – nine songs were published in *Kontynenty* and *Mowa wiązana* [Fettered Speech, Oratio Vincita], which were then reprinted in the volume *Przekłady poetyckie*. As can be seen, the translator decided against publishing the *Negro spirituals* “My Blood Ran Icy-Cold,” “Good News,” “The Chariot’s Coming” and “Singing’ Wid a Sword in My Han’,” whose manuscripts he included in the so-called “Black File.” The publication of *Negro spirituals* was also the subject of spirited correspondence.

Apart from the fact that the translations of *Negro spirituals* were not placed in a propaganda context, Miłosz's other requests were not followed. The poet complained about this in a letter to Ryszard Matuszewski, who explained to him that *Negro spirituals* were not being received with enthusiasm:

Recently I was angry with *Nowiny Literackie* for killing my *Negro spirituals* by printing a large introduction and only two or three tiny poems. Perhaps these *spirituals* are not as gripping, as you say, in Polish, but a larger portion of them gives an idea of the aura that gave birth to them, and that is what I wanted to achieve. I made these translations as lyrics to music, and they should be treated as such (*Zaraz po wojnie*, 445).

Miłosz provided his translations with a commentary, which was a synthesis of James Weldon Johnson's and Carl Sandburg's works.

Four of the ten translations were selected for publication, and the first one to be included was “Go Down Moses.” Were the intentions of the editorial office consistent with Miłosz's plan? When asked about the translator's political calculations, we may find several answers that are not mutually exclusive. Although Miłosz did not reveal it in his letters – just as in the case of “Małe wypisy historyczne” – he may have written in Aesopian language, using someone else's voice to comment on the current Polish reality. The commentary to the song does not overlook the fact that *Negro spirituals* united slaves in underground activities, the point of which was not the Kingdom of God... Miłosz perversely seems to provide succor to propagandists in Poland, who exploited the subject of slavery and racism in the USA. Touching on the affairs of the people, and popularizing their work, he additionally pushes the accusation of diversion away from himself. And only the translator knows that he took the *Negro spirituals* out of the political framework in which they were originally put by their well-known collector and researcher, James Weldon Johnson. In the book

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[It's me, Oh Lord!], “Niczyjej tutaj modlitwy nie słyszę” [I Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray], “Kiedy złote trąby zagrają” [probably a free translation of “Where Shall I Be When the First Trumpet Sounds”], “Widzę, księżyc wschodzi” [I Know Moon-rise], and “Czasem ja jestem” [no single original; the first four lines come from a rare version of the spiritual “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child,” while the four lines following the page break are the beginning of “You May Bury Me in de East.”] (cf. Jakubiak, Katarzyna 2011).



*Negro Americans, What Now?* Johnson shares the belief that there is no problem of black discrimination in Soviet Russia, and speculates on the role of communism in combating racial prejudice:

Those who hold this faith point to Soviet Russia as a land in which there is absolutely no prejudice against Negroes. This is unquestionable fact, but I can see no grounds on which to attribute it to communism. There was no prejudice against Negroes in Tsarist Russia. Tsarist Russia was the country that could honor a black Hannibal; the country that could make a mulatto Pushkin its national poet; the country in which university students of St. Petersburg could unhitch the horses from the carriage of Ira Aldridge, the black American tragedian, after his performance of Othello, and themselves draw him back to his hotel. The simple truth is: the *Russian people* have no prejudice against Negroes. (...)

It may be argued that although there is not and has not been any anti-Negro feeling in Russia, it is the country in which anti-Semitism was stronger than in any other; and that oppression and repression of the Jews have been greatly abated or entirely wiped out by Communism. Such an argument goes to prove the possibility that Communism in the United States would wipe out oppression and repression of Negro Americans and give them a status of equality.<sup>713</sup>

Johnson's works – apart from the intention of consolidating the oral tradition of African American culture – had a political goal, if only reduced to a minimum: to appear in the space of culture, in the media, and to provoke discussion. Miłosz made the opposite gesture: firstly, by gathering the sources of for his translations, he showed that black people in America enjoyed freedom of speech, had access to the media, and developed and cultivated their heritage; secondly, he used the voice of former slaves – as they themselves used religious songs – as a political voice to the second power. But, according to his auto-commentary, in the Negro spirituals, he was more attracted by the word interwoven with the Logos, by mediation between man and God. On a deeper level, more important for Miłosz, these songs tell the story of an exile in the broadest and at the same time most elementary sense. Even then, they are for him an achievement of a certain poetic ideal: they tell as much a concrete story of a community, as that of man in relation to himself, the world, and God. Are there no such ambitions – regardless of whether they are fulfilled or interpreted in this way – in *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals]?

In the end, and for the poet this was not an inconsequential matter, Negro spirituals were a manifestation of unrestricted creativity, free from literary fashions and programs. This creativity grew out of the most intimate and authentic sources, effectively resisting any classification. In several places, Miłosz confessed to working on his own collection of poetry of various nations, in which the so-called *African Anthology* was to take an important place.<sup>714</sup> Translation of *Negro spirituals* was

<sup>713</sup> Johnson, James Weldon: *Negro Americans, what now?*, New York: The Viking Press, 1934, pp. 8–10.

<sup>714</sup> In the archival group of Miłosz's *Translations* kept at the Polish National Library, there are the

interesting for Miłosz – apart from the above considerations – as a challenge for his mastery of the Polish language, and a lesson in style. The reader of Whitman and Sandburg appreciated the beauty of phrasing, which imitated biblical verse, the incantational qualities, non-trivial parallelisms, rhythmic contrasts between the chorus sections and the verses constructing the story, expressing the spirit of the psalms of David. Did the *Negro spirituals* influence the translator's own poetry? Yes, although Miłosz obliterated the traces of these influences. An example would be the “Pieśń murzyńska” [Negro Song]:

Red river Perry  
Red river Perry

The Moon rises over the water  
The Moon rises over the water

Cotton dust falling dust on the leaves of acacia trees mocking  
bird hot dusk day and night no respite for us.

Red river Perry

I dreamed that I had wings like an eagle  
And I rose into the blue  
I dreamed I spread my wings  
And I soared over the great plain

The Moon rises over the water

Tree of whisper tree of sorrow in the dust of twilight in the snare of roads  
in the dust of cotton tree of terror

And I shook off my heavy burden  
And I heard the trumpet call  
And I stepped with motionless feet  
Onto the golden ladder of clouds  
Stars of the heavens welcomed me

Red river Perry  
Red river Perry

The Moon rises over the water  
The Moon rises over the water<sup>715</sup>

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poems “Decision” by Owen Dodson, “Megalu” by Helene Johnson, “Return” by Hugh Doston Carberry, “I Don’t Know why you Think, Soldier” by Nicolás Guillén, published in the 1940s in *Odrodzenie*. In the planned anthology of translations, they were included in the part of South American Poets.

**715** Miłosz, Czesław: “Pieśń murzyńska” [Negro Song], *Odrodzenie* 1948, issue 8.

Would it be possible to trace other traces of Miłosz's interest in Negro spirituals, ones that were hidden even deeper? Perhaps it would, if one were to reach into his biography, or compare them more carefully with his work of that time. It is not difficult to reveal the space of dialogue between the poetry and translations of the author of *Daylight*. In the midst of his translations of *Negro spirituals* and his poems, pairs of works are created spontaneously – for example, “Na śpiew ptaka nad brzegami Potomaku” [On a Bird's Song Heard on the Banks of the Potomac] and “Going to Pull My War-Clothes,” “Grób matki” [Mother's Grave] and “It's Me, O Lord,” “Jericho” and “Który skrzywdziłeś” [You Who Wronged].

After the publication in *Nowiny Literackie*, it was the song “Jericho” that Miłosz decided to include in the group of translations under the title „Lud będzie żył. (Przekłady z poezji amerykańskiej)” [The People Will Live On. (Translations from American Poetry)], which was published in *Odrodzenie*. It is not known whether the title came from Miłosz or from the editorial office, but the poet himself added the following comment to the set:

The poems that I am providing in translation have been selected, as is easy to see, according to a certain rule. I wanted to include popular works that were similar in character to folk poetry. Thus, the issue of the date of their creation was therefore left in the background.

“Jericho” is one of the most famous Negro spirituals. These anonymous black songs were only recorded after the Civil War. Since there is no equivalent of the dialect of American Negroes in Poland, I translated them into ordinary literary language. Walt Whitman's poems (1819–1892) exerted, even if not directly, a great influence on the development of Polish poetry. Collecting translations penned by various poets, would be a rewarding task for a discerning publisher. Edwin Markham (1852–1940) wrote the astonishing poem “The Man with a Hoe” in 1899 under the influence of Millet's painting. This poem was translated into almost all languages of the world. Vachel Lindsay (1879–1931), a poet-reciter, using what we could describe as tawdry county-fair motifs in his poetry, in the poem “Simon Legree,” speaks in the language of the imagination of Negro slaves. Carl Sandburg (b. 1878) is considered the continuator and successor of Whitman. The poem “Lud będzie żył” [The People Will Live On] closes the last volume of Sandburg's poem “The People, Yes” dedicated to his “contributors dead and living.”<sup>716</sup>

Miłosz decided against using the criterion of race in his selection of translations. In this group he juxtaposed Whitman, Markham and poets of the Chicago school from the turn of the 20th century with an anonymous *Negro spiritual*. Despite his declarations, the common denominator of the works seems to be the problem of evil, under such names that absorbed the poet the most in the 1940s, and specifically religious, moral interpretations of social evil. The small collection of poems shows how persistently

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<sup>716</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: “Lud będzie żył. (Przekłady z poezji amerykańskiej)” [The People Will Live On (Translations from American Poetry)], *Odrodzenie* 1948, issue 12, p. 4.

and consistently the author of *Rescue* searched in foreign poetry for what already attracted him in the pre-war years.

Now, additionally, he used translation of engaged art with a deeply moralistic basis, in the function of his own voice, for saying things he himself could not utter more strongly. It is difficult to overlook the common tone of this poetic statement – somewhat like Lindsay, whom he translated, through these poems, Miłosz delivers a message of strength and hope, a prophetic speech, taking the office of a teacher, guardian, and defender. Loading political gunpowder into the cannon of propaganda, he engages in a risky game that is least concerned with building a racially and ethnically diverse landscape of contemporary American poetry. Miłosz's functional, metonymic treatment of the Negro issue in the 1940s would thus consist in using it as a costume, helpful in taking a stance in the political and artistic discussions in Poland. However, it would be a simplification to say that this is the poet's only motivation, or at least the main one, in presenting the work of black poets. That this was not the case can be inferred on the basis of the translations published in *Odrodzenie* in 1949, in the small collection być „Przekłady z poezji murzyńskiej” [Translations from Negro poetry].<sup>717</sup> Again, it is not known who suggested the common title, in this case perhaps the most misleading, since the group of eight works included poems by black American female poets, as well as authors from Jamaica, Haiti, and Puerto Rico.<sup>718</sup> Even if the racial criterion indicated here were sufficient for such a grouping of the works, it fails in the case of artists from such diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The basis for this juxtaposition was either an accident – Miłosz added no commentary to it – or the value of their thematic and aesthetic diversity. Four of the poems, by Margaret Walker, Helene Johnson, Luis Palés Matos, and Jacques Roumain, presented a black hero, bore the signs of engaged poetry, and had a more or less exposed metaphysical or religious frame. The poem by Bruce McM. Wright touched on the experience of war, while the works by George Campbell and H.D. Carberry showed almost no interest in current historical or social issues. Such a selection of authors and poems illustrated Miłosz's interests at the time, and simultaneously showed that his reading choices were not politically conditioned. What is more, the poet's intentions transcended mere popularization: one may speculate to what extent the poem of the excellent Jamaican poet reminded him of his last poem from the cycle *The World. (A Naïve Poem)* and to what extent it influenced the choice of title for the volume from 1953.

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**717** Miłosz, Czesław: “Przekłady z poezji murzyńskiej” [Translations from Negro Poetry], *Odrodzenie* 1949, issue 20, p. 8.

**718** Juxtaposing the translations of the above authors is a gesture which predated thinking in terms of the Black Atlantic by far. On this, see Gilroy, Paul: *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

The road, whose culmination is Miłosz's inspiration in the work of poets of many races and languages, also includes emancipation of the African-American issue in his imagination and work during his first stay in the United States.

## Chapter 7: From “No” to “Yes.” Around *Daylight*

Czesław Miłosz was reluctant to return to *Daylight* – he assessed it as a collection that was not well arranged and “quite random.”<sup>719</sup> He said, “I don’t have too much sympathy for the whole, I write it off as a loss. The arrangement is chaotic, a result of a difficult personal situation and the pressure of those political atmospheres which for many years had been pressing me out of poetry.”<sup>720</sup> So far, the collection has been discussed only partially. Most attention has been paid to *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals], and to the poems that caused Miłosz to be regarded as a political poet, but there is still no holistic perspective on the volume.

*The World. (A Naïve Poem)* was added to the first edition, which provided it with a counterpoint or – to use a word that was important to Miłosz at the time – a dialectical character. He claimed to have included this series, as *Rescue* was then difficult to access. He also certainly understood the significance of an arrangement created of poems written under the occupation and immediately after the war. If it is worth reading *The World. (A Naïve Poem)* was and *Voices of Poor People* as a unity of opposites, it is certainly good to combine poems from *Rescue* and *Daylight* in a similar way.

The volume from 1953, with a metaphorical title, not uniform in terms of subject, mood, genre and meter, was certainly difficult to compose. The Beinecke Library Archive contains rough copies of three versions of the arrangement – the version chosen for publication is the fourth one. It combines the elements of all, which is important for interpreting it as a whole. It is worth noting that the original volume was supposed to be called “Portret z połowy XX wieku” [Mid-Twentieth-Century Portrait] – it is not known at what stage of its preparation for printing it was changed.

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719 Miłosz, Czesław: *Podróżny świata* [A World Traveler], p. 83.

720 *Ibidem*. In the note “Od autora” [From the Author] in the 1953 edition Miłosz writes, “The poems I gathered here came from different years, starting from 1945. An exception is one poem from 1943, and the poem “Świat” [*The World*], written in Warsaw during the war. Although it was already published in the volume *Rescue* (Warsaw, Czytelnik, 1945), I decided to include it here. Thus, the book contains three longer pieces, each of a different kind, although they are connected by my attempt to simplify the form. I wondered if I should publish some of my translations of foreign poetry. I stopped at just a few Polish versions of Negro poems, as they fit within the entire collection more easily than the others.” In Miłosz, Czesław: *Daylight*, Biblioteka “Kultury,” volume V, Paris, 1953, p. 5.

Miłosz did not retain chronological order in the collection<sup>721</sup> – “the rule governing the arrangement of the texts in the volume is the order of ideological experiences.”<sup>722</sup> Jerzy Jarzębski notes:

But the experience of America is not yet visible in it, and the subsequent poems from the volume give the impression that the author had not left Poland at all, or at least he had not left Europe. Memories of the war and the time after the war spent in Poland are preserved in the poems so strongly, so great is his need to deal with everything that seemed to the poet to be the devil’s seed, which had grown in European culture and manifested itself in connection with the war, that America, so to speak, could not yet break through it all. It was “unimportant,” trivial, not worthy of interest. This is probably not entirely true, because the chronology of the poems was different from their placement in *Daylight*, but the absence in the first part of the volume of what can be seen through the windows has the character of a provocation.<sup>723</sup>

When the poems from this period are read in their original order, they will reveal meanders of thinking and feeling that become blurred in the achronological composition. It turns out then that the theme of war returned in all these years, and that 1947 was full of works in which the poet tried out various meters, stanzas, and genres, that 1948 brought a series of intimate poems, whose background was family life, that the temperature of the poems from 1949 revealed the condition of an artist torn between an aversion to America and an aversion to Europe, that in 1950 the

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**721** The edition of 1953 contains six parts, with the following poems: I. “Do Jonathana Swifta” [To Jonathan Swift], “Piosenka o porcelanie” [Song on Porcelain], “Dziecię Europy” [Child of Europe], “Portret z połowy XX wieku” [Mid-Twentieth-Century Portrait], “Naród” [A Nation], “Do polityka” [To a Politician], “Siegfried i Erika” [Siegfried and Erika], “Dwaj w Rzymie” [Two in Rome], “Trzy chóry z nienapisanego dramatu *Hiroszima*” [Three Choruses from the Unwritten Drama “Hiroshima”]; II. “Na śpiew ptaka nad brzegami Potomaku” [On a Bird’s Song Heard on the Banks of the Potomac], “Narodziny” [Birth], “Rodzina” [A Family], “Ocean” [Ocean], “Koncert” [Concert], “Podróż” [The Journey], “Pałac moich muz” [Palace of my Muses], “Dzień i noc” [Day and Night], “Odbicia” [Reflections], “Central Park”, “Pamięci Teresy Żarnower” [In the Memory of Teresa Żarnower], “O duchu praw” [The Spirit of the Laws], “Legenda” [A Legend], “Przypomnienie” [A Reminder], “Grób matki” [Mother’s Grave], “Myśl o Azji” [Thinking of Asia], “Do Tadeusza Różewicza, poety” [To Tadeusz Różewicz, Poet], “Nie ma wzroku” [No Sight], “Na małą Murzynkę grającą Chopina” [On a Little Negro Girl Playing Chopin], “Leć niżej, słodki rydwanie” [Swing Low Sweet Chariot], “Dla mego ludu” [For my People], “Nianigo w niebie” [Nāñigo al Cielo], “Jaszczurka” [Lizard], “Doświadczenie” [Journey to a Parallel], “Ziemia” [Earth]; III. *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals]; IV. *The World. (A Naïve Poem)*; V. “Toast” [The Toast]; VI. “Kołodnicy” [Carollers], “Żuławy” [The Fens of Żuławy], “W praojcach swoich pogrzebani” [Buried in Their Forefathers], “Który skrzywdziłeś” [You Who Wronged], “Na śmierć Tadeusza Borowskiego” [On the Death of Tadeusz Borowski], “Poeta” [The Poet], “Paryż 1951” [Paris 1951], “Faust warszawski” [Faust of Warsaw], “Zoile” [Zoiluses], and “Mittelbergheim”.

**722** Jarzębski, Jerzy: “Obrazy Ameryki w *Świetle dziennym* Miłosza” [Images of America in Miłosz’s *Daylight*], *op. cit.*, p. 2. Jarzębski subtly analyzes changes in the content and ordering of the works in the subsequent reeditions of the volume, drawing from them his conclusions on the transforming image of America in Miłosz’s poetic imagination.

**723** *Ibidem*, pp. 2–3.

themes of Poland and of mourning became important, that 1951 brought a settling of personal scores by the asylum seeker, and with the start of 1953, the gesture of fixing his gaze on the concrete and feasting on the beauty of the world returned to Miłosz’s poetry.

The earliest, extremely bitter works, “Do polityka” [To a Politician], “Naród” [A Nation], “Portret z połowy XX wieku” [Mid-Twentieth-Century Portrait] from 1945, and “Dziecię Europy” [Child of Europe] and “Dwaj w Rzymie” [Two in Rome] from 1946 are placed in the first part of the volume, but their significance is modified by the neighboring poems “Do Jonathana Swifta” [To Jonathan Swift] and “Piosenka o porcelanie” [Song on Porcelain] from 1947. The works from 1946 remain under the influence of Tadeusz Juliusz Kroński – when read together, they show their simultaneous intensity and heterogeneity. Located between poems of a different tonality, they do not lose their emotional charge, but they do not illustrate the real evolution of the poet’s views.

The initial poems are the dialogue with Swift and “Piosenka o porcelanie” [Song on Porcelain] – placed side by side as an introduction to the collection – point to the literature of the 18th century, the heritage of the Enlightenment, its artistic conventions, and the possibility of renewing old genres. Fascinated by Eliot and the postulates of New Criticism, Miłosz constructs in this way the sort of image of himself that he wishes to preserve in relation to those years.

The subsequent political poems from 1945 and 1946 are combined with the works on war themes, among which “Siegfried i Erika” [Siegfried and Erika] from 1949 and “Trzy chóry z nienapisanego dramatu *Hiroszima*” [Three Choruses from the Unwritten Drama *Hiroshima*] from 1950 are very strong chords. The landmark accent, located right after this sequence, is the poem “Na śpiew ptaka nad brzegami Potomaku” [On a Bird’s Song Heard on the Banks of the Potomac] from 1947, about which Miłosz wrote: “This is a continuation of my attempts to break away from the past.”<sup>724</sup> The next group of poems, from 1948, corresponds to this intention: “Narodziny” [Birth], “Rodzina” [A Family], “Koncert” [Concert], and “Podróż” [The Journey]. Their common perspective is thinking about history in terms of individual human stories and in terms of natural history, changing generations, limitations to the possibility of transmitting knowledge of the past, solidarity with the dead, and participating in the present of the living. They reveal a self-ironic attitude of the protagonist, clearly emphasizing the shortcomings of his vision and knowledge.

The next thematic sequence is represented by “Pałac moich muz” [Palace of my Muses] (1948), “Dzień i noc” [Day and Night] (1947), “Odbicia” [Reflections] (1942–1948) and “Central Park” (1948). Their protagonist speaks in the landscape of Eliot’s ‘dead land,’ observing the hollow men who resemble insects. The idea of the asymmetry between the human ant and the Cosmos is an impulse for a discussion

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724 Miłosz, Czesław: *Podróżny świata* [A World Traveler], *op. cit.*, p. 86.



about the meaning of passing away. A counterpoint to this collection is the lament “Pamięci Teresy Żarnower” [In the Memory of Teresa Żarnower] from 1950, separating this part from the philosophical poems – commentaries on the evolution of democracy in the West: “O duchu praw” [The Spirit of the Laws] (1947), “Legenda” [A Legend] (1949), and “Przypomnienie” [A Reminder] (1947). Miłosz’s thought then runs toward Europe: this includes his discussions of the duties of a poet, his place in society, his moral obligations toward himself and the community, and ways of saving his dignity in the face of the crushing power of history and nature – these thoughts permeate the poems entitled “Grób matki” [Mother’s Grave] and “Myśl o Azji” [Thinking of Asia] from 1949 and the ode “Do Tadeusza Różewicza, poety” [To Tadeusz Różewicz, Poet] from 1948. At this point, the role of strengthening the author’s voice is played by his translations of *Negro spirituals*, which, by expressing an identification with simple people, complete the message of *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals] and “Toast (Poemat satyryczny)” [The Toast (A Satirical Poem)]. The element of irony and sharp socio-political criticism permeates the works “Nie ma wzroku” [No Sight] (1949),<sup>725</sup> *Traktat moralny* (1947) and “Toast” (1949), and the stylistic naïveté of the pastoral “Kołędniczy” [Carollers] (1949) contrasts with them.

The closing poems come from the years 1950–51 and touch more on the sphere of intimate experiences. In his poems “Żuławy” [The Fens of Zulawy] (1950), “W praojcach swoich pogrzebani” [Buried in Their Forefathers] (1951), the author uses “the telescopic eye,” wandering from continent to continent, from one historical moment to another. However, in the final sequence of poems, he makes the final reckoning in the volume. They are a sort of a note on the margin of the “Miłosz case” as he takes up the subject of the poet’s memory in the poem “Który skrzywdziłeś” [You Who Wronged] (1951), as considers the issue of betrayal and escape in his poetic death knell to Tadeusz Borowski, as he confronts his Parisian youth with the situation of an asylum-seeker in the poems “Poeta” [The Poet] and “Paryż 1951” [Paris 1951], and finally as he deals with the worldview of Tadeusz Kroński in “Faust warszawski” [Faust of Warsaw] (1952), but he does not spare his Warsaw opponents in “Zoile” [Zoiluses] (1950). The entire volume is closed by the poem “Mittelbergheim” (1951) about the vocation of a poet, i.e. what was for Miłosz the proper order of his existence.

A separate collection in the volume consists of scattered poems from the years 1948 to 1953. It is difficult to determine why these particular poems were included and

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<sup>725</sup> In the edition entitled *Wiersze wszystkie* [All Poems] of 2011, after the poem “Nie ma wzroku” [No Sight] comes the poem “Na małą Murzynkę grającą Chopina” [On a Little Negro Girl Playing Chopin], which Miłosz did not want to include in any collection, as he considered it to be socialist-realist in character. Even if we do not surrender to this self-interpretation, we may still understand Miłosz’s decision, as the work unintentionally perpetuates the colonial stereotype of the blessing of renouncing one’s own cultural heritage in favor of participating in Western civilization. It is worth noting, however, that similarly to the first edition of the volume, all of the rough copies of the composition of *Daylight* do include “Na małą Murzynkę grającą Chopina.”

whether they were ordered according to some special rule. Within the horizon of the entire collection, they gain the function of explanatory glosses, as well as links between the volume from 1953 and Miłosz’s later works. These poems mainly include works written after 1950, including those that recur in *Kontynenty* [Continents]: “Notatnik: Pennsylvania” [Notebook: Pennsylvania] “Sobie samemu do sztambucha na nowy rok 1950” [For Myself in the Friendship Book for the New Year 1950] and “Esse”, which emphasizes the connection between *Daylight* and the collection of 1958.

Among the scattered poems, there is a fragment of the work “Do Alberta Einsteina” [To Albert Einstein]<sup>726</sup>. It was published in a version nineteen verses longer only after Miłosz’s death, in 2008.<sup>727</sup> Why was this text, important from the point of view of the poet’s biography, removed from the collection? If it had opened the volume instead of the poem “Do Jonathana Swifta,” we might imagine how it would have affected the construction of the collection, and how it would have changed its tone. Such a gesture would have seemed understandable and desirable from the perspective of the last chapter of *Native Realm*, in which Kroński and Einstein represent the antinomic poles of thought and values important for the narrator. Personal choices, reconstructed by Miłosz in his essay, are first made between the positions held by Adolf Rożek and Father Chomski, and then between those of Einstein and Kroński, who seem to be new incarnations of Settembrini and Naphta from Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain*. Withdrawing the figure of Einstein from the circle of poems included in *Daylight* was an highly significant decision in this context, and replacing him with Swift as the patron of the collection has many consequences – in a way Miłosz once again made a choice between *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. After all, Swift is not an adversary to Kroński, with whom the poet argues so many times. His figure situates the volume in literary space, emphasizing its artistic character, and pushing aside the possibility an autobiographical interpretation of it. Further, Swift expresses the convictions the author held at the time, who deprived himself of the right to lament, sustaining his will to write “against despair.” Perhaps he symbolizes the third way, which would be partly a synthesis of Einstein’s and Kroński’s arguments, and partly a new proposal, which was sufficiently attractive intellectually for the poet. Incidentally, Miłosz’s poem dedicated to the genius of Ulm is worth reading simultaneously with Archibald MacLeish’s poem “Einstein” from 1926 – this laudation also portrays the physicist from his private side, displaying his personal virtues and his love of everyday life.

There are more sketches of poems from this period in the Beinecke Library and they shed additional light on Miłosz’s choices, and certainly confirm that the work

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**726** Cf. Miłosz, Czesław: “Do Alberta Einsteina (fragmenty)” [To Albert Einstein (Fragments)]. In *Wiersze 2*, pp. 147–148; Miłosz, Czesław: “Do Alberta Einsteina (fragmenty)” [To Albert Einstein (Fragments)]. In *idem: Wiersze wszystkie* [All Poems], Krakow, 2011, pp. 360–361.

**727** See Miłosz, Czesław: *Wiersze i ćwiczenia* [Poems and Exercises]. Preparation and introduction by Marek Skwarnicki, Warsaw, 2008, pp. 114–120.

on the collection was a process of selection and arrangement, carried out according to the assumptions made about its expected resonance. However, which is worth emphasizing, as did Zdzisław Łapiński, that

Miłosz’s poetry (...) went through numerous crises and made sudden turns. The writer must be given credit for not allowing such a deep a cut in his biography as the choice of emigration, i.e. entering a completely new literary life, to affect the continuity of his poetry. All of the poems published during the worst years in Poland could be published once again. The poems that never saw the light of day were in full agreement with those that managed to get through the net of censorship. New poems continued the thematic and stylistic line of earlier works.<sup>728</sup>

The way of distinguishing thematic threads in *Daylight* presented above is but one of its many possible interpretations. The poems can be read by emphasizing their place of creation, and the lyrical situations outlined in them – the intersections of these spatial and temporal perspectives give rise to interesting meanings, suggested by the author as an additional source of interpretation. Another key to reading the poems could be the criterion of genre. The volume uses numerous forms: ode, lament, song, treatise, prayer, proclamation, dialogue, elegy, pastoral, poetic letter, sonnet, oration, in addition to many types of stanzas and verses. This is what Clare Cavanagh points out; in her opinion, the influence of English-language poetry on these poems manifests itself discreetly in the choice of phrases, meters, stanzas, and conventions, which makes them all the more difficult to translate.<sup>729</sup> These influences include, for example, inspirations from Robert Browning’s work, shown in the creation of dialogues between adversaries, such as “Dwaj w Rzymie,” and dramatic dialogues, such as “Antygona” [Antigone]. They are also evident in anthropomorphization and personification of ideas, in dramatization of the lyrical monologue similar to the poems of Auden, but also the American poet Edwin Arlington Robinson. Further, they draw on Swift’s concept of irony,<sup>730</sup> and include portraits and dedications, so popular in American poetry of the first half of the 20th century. They are seen in Miłosz’s emphasis on objectivism, which was Eliot’s prerequisite for practicing poetry. They are manifest in his attempts to confront ambitious forms of epic poetry modelled on Karl Shapiro, Randall Jarrell and Robert Lowell, his observations of the relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm, as John Donne and George Herbert saw them. They include his search for historical masks to express present-day questions and concerns, like H.D., including

**728** Łapiński, Zdzisław: “Między polityką a metafizyką. O poezji Czesława Miłosza” [Between Politics and Metaphysics. On The Poetry of Czesław Miłosz]. In *Poznanawanie Miłosza 2. Część pierwsza 1980–1998* [Appreciating Miłosz 2. Part One 1980–1998]. Edited by Aleksander Fiut, Krakow, 2000, p. 24.

**729** See Cavanagh, Clare: “The Unacknowledged Legislator’s Dream.” In *eadem: Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics. Russia, Poland, and the West*, Yale University Press, 2009, p. 246.

**730** See Leavis, Frank Raymond: “Swift’s Negative Irony.” In Swift, Johnatan: *Gulliver’s Travels. An Authoritative Text. The Correspondence of Swift. Pope’s Verses on Gulliver’s Travels. Critical Essays*. Edited by Robert A. Greenberg. A Norton Critical Edition, New York, 1970, pp. 419–423.

the possibility of integrating the personal and collective experience of war. Finally, they take up the subject of work in the optics of Carl Sandburg, with his characteristic humorous distance and respect for human effort.

Following this path, one may read the collection, for instance, through the prism of its poetic letters and conversations – it is highly populated with interlocutors, and the roles in which the poet cast his interlocutors have a significant impact on the collection’s emotional tone. As we know, Miłosz at the time highly valued the ironic “ability of the author to assume the skin of different people and, when he wrote in the first person, he spoke not as himself, but as the person he created.” (*Kontynenty*, 81). However, his dialogues encourage us to ask questions about other interlocutors, hidden in crypto-quotations and allusions – among them there are the prophets of the Old Testament, the authors of the Gospels, Dante, Shakespeare, Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, Eliot, Huxley, and Wells. One may also ask what interpretative results would be brought by reading *Daylight* without *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals] and “Toast (Poemat satyryczny)” [The Toast (A Satirical Poem)]” as independent works, i.e. to what extent a volume speaking more intimately might effectively present the problems that come to the fore in both these poems.

The choice of forms and genres in *Daylight* can be read from a different perspective, as a complex act of subversion: first of all, the author distances himself from the artists wishing after 1945 to renew one of the many pre-war traditions of practicing poetry, but by setting out on this separate path, he simultaneously imposes it on Polish literature. Secondly, this selection of forms and genres is an indirect assault on the doctrine of socialist realism – Miłosz makes the Enlightenment genres vehicles for criticizing all sorts of totalism. This is a paradox if we remember his fascination with the postulates of New Criticism, including its specific version of literary autonomy. However, since the New Critical idiom of genres is at times interpreted sociologically, and Miłosz himself reads many works in this way, his poetry also yields to such an interpretation, when we take into account the historical circumstances of the creation and influence of particular poems. As Jerzy Franczak suggests, it allows itself to be read as:

a series of practices aimed at unmasking and exposing, which serve the purposes of satire that is reformist in spirit (through exaggeration, parody, grotesque, setting in motion stereotypes which criticize stereotypes). (...) The awareness that any political project must start with working in language results in a transition from engaged literature to critical literature. The latter withdraws from diagnosing social tensions and formulating a positive project, avoids confrontation, refrains from identifying sources of oppression and directions of possible reforms. Instead, it develops ironic actions that cause confusion and destabilize discourses.<sup>731</sup>

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731 Franczak, Jerzy: “Literatura I władza” [Literature and Power]. In *Kulturowa teoria literatury 2. Poetyki, problematyki, interpretacje* [Cultural Reception of Literature 2. Poetics, Issues, Interpretations]. Edited by Teresa Walas and Ryszard Nycz, Krakow, 2012, pp. 482–483.

Another way of reading this volume would be to consider the relationship between nature and civilization/culture, biology and history. The concept from the initial poem “Do Jonathana Swifta” represents it. Its protagonist is presented as a sailor, navigating through modern times and history. The journey of life described in the collection is stretched between a sense of homelessness and a desire for finding a home. Man is made homeless by the elements, by the cycle of nature indifferent to the human condition. At this point, the Manichean dilemmas of the past, supported by Darwin’s lessons, meet with current observations on the attitude of Americans to nature, and how they situate their own lives and build their culture in relation to it. The American physiologism that, in the poet’s opinion, does not allow for a deeper historical consciousness, and the masking of nature by means of technology, considered here to be the crowning achievement of civilization, alienate him and intensify his post-war sense of homelessness. The triumph of biology over history, painfully experienced in Europe, where the poem “Przyrodzie – pogróżka” [To Nature – A Threat] was written, is all the more acute in America, because it is devoid of a sense of tragedy – “Trzy chóry z nienapisanego dramatu *Hiroshima*” [Three Choruses from the Unwritten Drama *Hiroshima*] pose this issue particularly sharply, in “Central Park” the sleepy relaxation of New Yorkers is perhaps a sign of acedia, a testimony to the work of the demon of the South. The question about the possibility of planting historical thinking in the ground of American perception recurs in *Daylight* in many places – lack of understanding in this matter forces the protagonist to make the biblical gesture of shaking off ash, although in the poem “O duchu praw” [The Spirit of the Laws], in which it is mentioned, these are ashes from a cigar. Closest to Miłosz in this sense of alienation was probably Karl Shapiro with his poem “Travelogue for Exiles.”

This is probably the source of the poet’s efforts to preserve the memory of the dead. *Daylight* is a collection of many works of mourning, not only because it comes from the post-war period. Miłosz’s disposition to preserve human life in the word and in the history of culture is more permanent in character. The more the poet perceives someone’s life as a constant dying or a persistent confrontation with death, as in the case of Teresa Żarnower<sup>732</sup> or Tadeusz Borowski, the stronger this disposition reveals itself. However, history also betrays man, especially when it plays out in a dimension exceeding the possibilities of human resistance.

One dimension of historical reflection in the volume is Miłosz’s political passion. Much attention has been paid to this issue, also as warning the poet or admonishing him for his excessive involvement in the role of a public speaker. On the other hand, the historical circumstances of the reception of *Daylight* did not create an aura

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732 Teresa Żarnower (1897–1950) – a Polish sculptor, visual artist, scenographer and architect; her work was influenced by Constructivism. In 1941 she arrived in Canada, and in 1943 she moved to New York. She collaborated with Peggy Guggenheim, who organized an exhibition of her works.

conducive for looking at how Miłosz defined the relationship between literature, particularly poetry, with power. What comes to the fore here is the relationship between power understood as institutional authority, against which Miłosz defined himself negatively. The poems “Do polityka” [To a Politician], “Który skrzywdziłeś” [You Who Wronged], and *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals] articulate these issues very clearly and have been discussed from this perspective. An analogous gesture directed toward America, or more broadly, toward the world of racial and colonial inequality, is the inclusion in the collection of translations of Negro spirituals and Black Atlantic poems. The poet spoke out against public authority, responsible for the ideologization of literary life, the deformation of the system of communication with the reader, and against any authority that does not respect democratic freedoms and the social achievements of the Age of Enlightenment.<sup>733</sup>

More interesting are the less obvious levels of the collection. On the one hand, Miłosz understood the ground that the seed of contemporary ideologies fell on – it was not the self-awareness of the lyrical ego of the “Piosenka o porcelanie” [Song on Porcelain], but that of a child of Europe, who embodied the habitus<sup>734</sup> of the post-war generation. In this situation, the crusade against the institutions of power taking over the rule of people’s hearts and minds could not be led naively. Its prerequisite, as Pierre Bourdieu would say, was distance to the *illusio*,<sup>735</sup> a broadening of consciousness guided by the thought, in 1950 deprived of a triumphant note, that “it is probably better to be a devil than a soul” („Sobie samemu do sztambucha na nowy rok 1950,” *Wiersze* 2, 156). “Dziecię Europy,” “Portret z połowy XX wieku” [Mid-Twentieth-Century Portrait], *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals] and “Toast (Poemat satyryczny)” [The Toast (A Satirical Poem)] would be works fulfilling this task. They can be read as works which, according to Jerzy Franczak’s classification, “point to the important role of attitudes (bias), i.e. beliefs and value systems, as well as procedures and rituals that protect the interests of certain social groups”<sup>736</sup> and allow “problematizing the issues of ideological influence, persuasion, propaganda and the influence of authority,”<sup>737</sup> providing a model definition and characterizing the mechanisms of rationalization used after the war to legitimize decisions, choices, and attitudes in various milieus. This applies in equal measure to American reality, as evidenced by the poems questioning the politics of exceptionalism, isolationism and ahistoricism. This disposition of Miłosz is also connected with the observation of the

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**733** Including African-American works was also a sign of Miłosz’s awareness of the twilight of institutionalized colonialism in the West.

**734** In the meaning given to it by Pierre Bourdieu in the book *Zmysł praktyczny* (original title: *Le Sens Pratique*). Translated by Maciej Falski, Krakow, 2008.

**735** See Bourdieu, Pierre: *Medytacje pascaliańskie* [Pascalian Meditations]. Translated by Krzysztof Wakar, Warsaw, 2006.

**736** Franczak, Jerzy: “Literatura i władza” [Literature and Power], *op. cit.*, p. 440.

**737** *Ibidem*, p. 440.

“third face of power,”<sup>738</sup> creating this image of the world and man that members of the dominated group consider to be their own, internal, and natural.

Franczak makes reference to Steven Lukes’ thought:

Power decides which objects appear in the field of consciousness (...) and social coercion is internalized through introjection and turns into internal coercion. (...) Power disperses and materializes; permeating social relations, it determines the smallest, seemingly neutral behaviors. Binding to knowledge, it establishes a binding image of the world, defining the criteria of truth and falsehood.<sup>739</sup>

Analyses of quasi-natural behaviors and worldview choices in *Daylight* are found in the poems “Naród” [A Nation], “Siegfried i Erika” [Siegfried and Erika], “Nie ma wzroku” [No Sight], “Toast,” “W praojcach swoich pogrzebani” [Buried in Their Forefathers], and “Notatnik: Pennsylvania” [Notebook: Pennsylvania], each of which demands a separate reflection within the adopted interpretative framework. In his reckoning with Poland, Polish people, and Polishness, Miłosz additionally takes advantage of the distance afforded by his trans-oceanic perspective, while his sharpened outlook on American civilization is made possible by his European formation. The masterpiece here is the dialogue “Siegfried i Erika” [Siegfried and Erika], whose acerbically ironic potential has not always been recognized. In these works, diagnoses of Polish, European, and American realities are sometimes mixed, revealing the indivisibility of the modern world and its paradoxical ideological cohesiveness. A striking example in this regard is “Central Park,” where the description of resting New Yorkers refers to the poem “Campo dei Fiori,” with its description of idle spectators, indifferent to the execution of Giordano Bruno. They give the poet the opportunity to transcend his own formation and become aware of the existence and operation of this kind of power, whose characteristic turns out to be the fact that it is not recognized and not identified as a form of hegemony.

Considering the issue of power so broadly, Miłosz attributes to literature the ability to “negate negation,”<sup>740</sup> exposing its power in the works relating both to Poland and to the reality of the New World. In the latter case in particular, Miłosz exploits the issue of hidden hegemony, internal coercion, creating descriptions of the devastated landscapes of the ‘dead land’ and portraits of characters deprived of the ability to experience the fullness of humanity. These works illustrate well the relationship between Miłosz’s political thought and his reflections on identity and existence, and his search for alternative centers of power, including authorities, and power over oneself. The poet, as we know, treated the issue of history as a component

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<sup>738</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 440.

<sup>739</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 440–441.

<sup>740</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 451.

of more serious metaphysical considerations, arguing in the essay “Gombrowiczowi” [To Gombrowicz]: “What is pure and eternal is realized only through the temporal and the transient, because there is no other side to history.”<sup>741</sup> However, as Jan Błoński notes:

Miłosz’s muse, however, is not so much history as – not the best word perhaps, but it is difficult to find another – sociology. For where does he search for an “instrument and weapon”? Not in the changes and laws that govern the transformations of the masses, but rather in the permanence of structures – or conventions – that organize relations between people. Family, professional and cultural structures. To him, the symbol of historicity is the wrinkle on the hand holding a jug: and thus work and feasting, a free, and yet communal feast, in which man can also strengthen himself in his humanity. Miłosz turns away with disgust from the Spirit of History, the mechanics of history: he takes comfort in the achievements of history, the tradition of human coexistence, which he seeks more willingly in daily life than in great events.<sup>742</sup>

As the critic suggests, the search for a place to settle down goes on in many dimensions at once. Efforts to rebuild the intimate horizon are revealed in reflection on his mother’s grave, the desire to find a guide in the role of a spiritual father – it is not coincidental that Swift addresses his student with the word “son.” They are also evident in the images of family life in the poems “Narodziny” [Birth], “Rodzina” [A Family], “Legenda,” “Myśl o Azji” [Thinking of Asia], “Żuławy” [The Fens of Żuławy], and “Mittelbergheim”. This is where Miłosz’s beliefs about what civilization is and how history should be understood crystallize. The image of wind-felled roadside trees disfiguring the landscape in “Żuławy” [The Fens of Żuławy], is contrasted with the memory of „heavy clocks, silver bowls, metal-reinforced chests”, technological sterility of life from which „death was substracted” in the poem “Nie ma wzroku” [No Sight] is contrasted with the image of the „luster furbished by a human hand”<sup>743</sup> of things of the earth in the poem “Narodziny” [Birth]. Hence, many works in the volume indirectly or directly concern the beginning of the world in the natural and civilizational sense, how man created himself and his surroundings, gradually harnessing nature. These lyrical parables are equally stories of fraternity, community, solidarity, which in the 20th century had the value of myths and legends.

The image of “cry of children on the floors of stations beyond time” “O duchu praw” [The Spirit of the Laws], also outlines the metaphysical experience of exile: from the order of law, morality, social trust, from his faith in the transcendent dimension of existence, and in the religious purpose of creation and existence, Miłosz spins the yarn of story of exile from the paradise of Judaeo-Christian Decalogue, the European code of social and ethical values. The entire collection, and particularly *Traktat*

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<sup>741</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: “Gombrowiczowi” [To Gombrowicz], *Kultura* 1953, issue 10, p. 14.

<sup>742</sup> Błoński, Jan: *Miłosz jak świat* [Miłosz like the World], Krakow, 1998, p. 179.

<sup>743</sup> Miłosz, Czesław: „Birth.” In: *New and Collected Poems 1931-2001*, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003, p. 92.



*moralny* [Treatise on Morals] is worth reading as a record of the experience of the abyss, or the twentieth century equivalent of Hell in *The Divine Comedy*.<sup>744</sup> Already in the first poem of *Daylight*, the “I” is stylized as a sailor, a helmsman, and finally a ship captain. The invocation also inscribes the volume into the tradition of the ancient epic, and the Pentateuch of Moses, in which the situation of setting out on a journey, abandoning the old world, becomes an archetype of seeking experience, maturity, truth and fulfillment. As the initial poem of the collection, Dante’s first canto tells a story of loss, the search for a path, leadership and authority. The search for authority and the struggle against opponents gains a deeper meaning, as does the postulate of fraternity and integration in a community. These imperatives can be interpreted in the light of the conflict between *être* and *devenir*, the clash of the dream about the existence of an Archimedean unmovable point in the world, with the simultaneous awareness of inevitable transformation. Should it not be possible to establish a balance between these, the obligation that remains there is solidarity, joint participation in pain, whose memory is the distinctive heritage of humankind. Opposing this outlook on the world, Whitmanesque in its spirit, is the attitude of callousness he observed in America. This opposition is presented most sharply in the poems “Nie ma wzroku” [No Sight], “Trzy chóry z nienapisanego dramatu *Hiroszima*” [Three Choruses from the Unwritten Drama *Hiroshima*] and “O duchu praw” [The Spirit of the Laws], whose common denominator is the thought of people’s indifference and creation of the fiction of universal satisfaction. In such a world, whose Huxleyan pedigree is by no means effaced, the protagonist of the volume cannot settle down. He is forced to play another game, that of *illusio*, whose principles are indirectly presented by the lyrical Ego in “The Spirit of the Laws.”

The protagonist of the poem finds himself in a difficult situation, as nobody expects him to fulfil any mission – he is burdened with a distressing sense of uselessness. He would be ready to fulfill his mission against all expectations – the image of smearing the roots with blood refers as much to the commandments of Yahweh from the Book of Exodus as to Miłosz’s dream of instilling historical awareness where it is lacking – but ultimately, he merely taps the ash off his cigar.<sup>745</sup> Blaming himself for silencing the memory, he only allows himself to express his longing for Europe, symbolized by a “red poppy, touched by the ice of tears,” which is perhaps an allusion to the soldiers’ song “Czerwone maki na Monte Cassino”<sup>746</sup> [The Red Poppies on Monte Cassino].

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<sup>744</sup> It is worth pointing out here the affinities between *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals] with the *Spoon River Anthology* by Edgar Lee Masters, where the background of a small town and the portraits of its residents similarly provided the space for articulating moral and metaphysical issues of Dantean provenience. Miłosz mentioned his familiarity with this volume in his “Wprowadzenie w Amerykanów” [Introduction to the Americans. An Essay on American Poetry].

<sup>745</sup> The published English translation of the poem does not have the line: *So I tapped the ash off my cigar* after the line: *Shining with the traces of melting eyelids*.

<sup>746</sup> “Czerwone maki na Monte Cassino” [The Red Poppies on Monte Cassino] – a Polish military song

The volume ends with a symbolic finding of a home – but it is not the Alsatian village of Mittelbergheim. In the scenery of the morning, with daylight shining upon the area, the protagonist describes himself as being in the palm of a hand (it is not clear whether the image refers to the Book of Isaiah, in which the Servant of the Lord speaks of God: *And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me*<sup>747</sup>), under the benevolent care of fire, providing him with a sense of security:

Here and everywhere  
Is my homeland, wherever I turn  
And in whatever language I would hear  
The song of a child, the conversation of lovers  
 (“Mittelbergheim”).<sup>748</sup>

Miłosz’s home is ultimately his poetic vocation, which, since it exists realistically and objectively, has never raised his doubt.

At the level of construction, *Daylight*’s composition is governed by the principle of ebbs and flows, counterpoints separating reflections on the same issues from many perspectives, the rule of repetition, understood as an amalgam of representation and difference – in a way reminiscent of Pound’s *Cantos*, interrelated by contrast, juxtaposition, or variation. It is a record of the history of the inner journey from ‘no,’ articulated in many ways in the initial poems, to ‘yes,’ resounding in “Mittelbergheim”. In such a reading of the volume, the symbolism of light becomes useful, starting from the metaphor of the title, through the images of sunrises and reflections of light scattered in it, allegories of the city of the Sun, which is a utopian Campanella and a sunny Jerusalem, opposite images of shadows, darkness, dusk and cloudiness – in the foreword to the 1953 edition, Miłosz confessed, “The title has a double meaning: There are many things here that I could not publish in Poland; besides, poetry is for me a matter of day rather than night.”<sup>749</sup> The space between ‘no’ and ‘yes’ concerns as much the protagonist of the volume as the man whose rhythm of life from birth to death is one of the thematic ebbs of *Daylight*. The pedagogical tone of the poems, and the maxims contained in them, is related to thinking about a single human life, the duration of historical and cultural phases, and of civilization. Pessimism, which stems from the conviction that nothing can be protected, corresponds to this concern – the ambivalent sense of “Piosenka o porcelanie” [Song on Porcelain] additionally

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related to the battle of Monte Cassino, in which soldiers of Polish II Corps commanded by Lieutenant General Władysław Anders played a decisive role.

**747** Isaiah 49:2. *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. Dallas, TX: Brown Books Publishing, 2004.

**748** Miłosz, Czesław: “Mittelbergheim.” Transl. by Czesław Miłosz and Richard Lourie, In *New and Collected Poems 1931–2001*, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003, p. 104.

**749** Miłosz, Czesław: *Daylight*, Paris 1953, p. 5.

problematizes this issue. What also relates to it is Miłosz’s reflection on human identity – in the post-war reality, it takes the form of a reflection on humanity as an anthill, an individual person as an insect crushed by the machine of history and nature, and at the same time the monster – both an architect and a tool of destruction, both a witness and a participant of events moving between the arguments of Cassandra and Antigone. These antinomic thoughts recur regularly in Miłosz’s works with variable perspectives: from microscopic, narrowing down to individual fates, to macroscopic, with a global reach. This mobility and changeability, so characteristic of Miłosz’s outlook, allows creation of a tension between distance and closeness, coldness and tenderness, building the emotional aura of the volume. Let us say, using Jerzy Jarzębski’s words, that *Daylight*, as a poetic collection standing, so to speak, between the experience of Europe and America, reflected in it not only the clash of images of the two continents, but also – through the selection of poems for the subsequent ‘selections of poems,’ – the evolution of the poet’s attitude to the New World.”<sup>750</sup>

Thus, my intention is not to absolutize any of the modes of reading *Daylight* presented here. Instead, I seek to show that its composition, contrary to Miłosz’s later declarations, was deeply thought through. It became a guideline for interpretation, drawing a line of re-evaluations that the author went through, perhaps *ex post*, in arranging the volume, but which did not take place according to the formula implicitly inscribed in its structure. In other words, at the level of composition, the collection of poems from 1953 is Miłosz’s reassessment of his postwar experience.

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750 Jarzębski, Jerzy: “Obrazy Ameryki w *Świetle dziennym* Miłosza” [Images of America in Miłosz’s *Daylight*], *op. cit.*, p. 9.

## Chapter 8: Around “Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook]

“Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook] is a paradoxical work. Its title and visual arrangement suggest a loose composition and the character of a rough copy, while in fact it is a precise literary and intellectual construction. It consists of thirty-five notes of different lengths, separated by asterisks. It is preceded by the author’s commentary, which is a distinguishing characteristic of the edition that Miłosz himself oversaw. The self-commentary marks the distance between the time when the remarks were written and first published in the press in the 1940s, and the subsequent publication in *Kontynenty* [Continents] in 1958. It reveals the origins and compositional idea behind “Notatnik”, which turns out to be the principle of redistributing the elements of the work. In the commentary, the author admits that not only did he not preserve the chronology of the recorded reflections, but also that he took them out from larger whole works (articles written in the USA and published in Poland) and reorganized them in accordance with the new guiding idea, integrating older reflections. He also reveals that most of the notes date back to 1948, when his observations based on readings and observations made over several years were no longer mere impressions. The last sentence of the commentary, “I did not immediately gain confidence in myself as a viewer and participant,” (*Kontynenty*, 34–35) contains intuitions worth elaborating on. It partially explains why Miłosz called the work a ‘notebook.’ It is a notebook in that it contains a heterogeneous collection of notes, differing in their subjects, genres and styles. The poet wrote them down in a notebook and wove them into journalistic texts. Having become convinced of the accuracy of his own judgments, he proceeded to reveal them, in a refined form.

The most important compositional operation here was rearrangement of the texts in reverse order in relation to the original chronology of their creation. Thanks to this, the new whole gains the value of being devoted to considering a single issue, which did not absorb the author of the first two notebooks to such an extent.

### Construction of “Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook]

One may contemplate the features of “Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook] in *Kontynenty* against the background of Miłosz’s literary output and genealogy. Each part of it is a closed whole, both from the point of view of content and style, so it can be considered separately. This does not mean that it would be possible to change the order of the respective entries, deleting some notes, or inserting a note between two neighboring ones, without damaging the sense of the work. Such interference would disintegrate the notebook’s composition and coherence. This proves the existence of

an overarching principle, to which the number and ordering of the paragraphs are subordinated. The work requires reflection on each individual part, and at the same time a search for a principle that binds the parts reorganized in the new arrangement.

The question Miłosz takes into consideration concerns the modern-day tasks of the writer and of literature. In order to consider it, he uses strategies known from his earlier works and tries out new ones, testing them for the first time. The most important and most frequent of these is the principle of dialectic confrontations, known as the method of constructing and juxtaposing poems in *Daylight*. Neighboring notes seem to be unrelated, those that come later do not follow from preceding ones, and do not supplement previously outlined subjects directly. An example of this method is the adjacency of notes where the first one contains a comparison of Pueblo Indians with Polish highlanders and a reflection on the commercialization of folk art. The second describes a fall morning in New York and the feeling of loneliness in the metropolis at this time of year. On the face of it, these notes have nothing to do with each other, but the relationship between them is more deeply hidden and more complicated. The Indian village in California and New York mirror each other and constitute a cultural system of communicating vessels in which the same ingredients are circulating. The Indian settlement after colonization is a distant echo of the city in which the ideas and values of American civilization were born. Thus, the adjacency of the notes becomes a source of dialectical synthesis resulting from juxtaposing distant images and observations.

Another technique is trying out language that is not normally used for describing certain phenomena and situations, such as the use of theatrical metaphors in descriptions of nature. The poet highlights the artificiality of the literary imagery, and emphasizes the necessity of using conceit in describing reality:

There is a fish here wearing the robes of a Javanese dancer, a dramatic fish, creating theatre by its mere appearance. It wears a mask in black and white stripes, each movement of the mask spreads the draperies of its attire.

There is a fish similar to Odette from Proust’s novel. In an elegant patterned outfit, puffing out its pink lips with the contempt of a woman who doesn’t know the world well and thinks that all matters revolve around the bed. Elegant but not stylish – a stupid fish (*Kontynenty*, 34–35).

By juxtaposing individual parts which use different types of imagery, Miłosz circles around the question of how to present the complications of the present day in art. He needs various linguistic apertures in order to test the possibilities of literary representation. The poet employs them, making use of the benefits offered by the convention of a notebook – he unexpectedly abandons one kind of metaphor, only to return to it later. Thus, the work develops not only in a linear manner, by adding successive links, but in several directions at once, going off like a rhizome in short, blind offshoots. The discontinuity, fragmentary character, and inconclusiveness of the notebook also correspond to ways of thinking – by arranging remarks formulated

in various circumstances, the author organizes them in such a way as to imitate to some extent the process of solving a given problem. Thus, “Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook] offers the possibility of a twofold reading: linear and comprehensive, as well as leaping and selective, which, of course, bring various epistemic effects.

The fundamental constructional principle of the work is creation of micro-cycles which consist of remarks on similar topics, often closed by a paradoxical coda. An example of this strategy is a certain sequence of five notes. The first three parts contain a reflection on beauty and aesthetic experience. The fourth note is an ironic, inapposite complementation of this progression of thoughts – the poet recalls a family trip around New York:

At the top of the city we entered the brightly lit districts of Harlem. A black crowd, colorfully dressed, filled the arcades shimmering with neon lights of cabarets and cinemas. We roared with laughter in unison, noticing that the film entitled *The White Gorilla* was on in one of the theaters we passed (*Kontynenty*, 38).

The remarks are closed with a recollection of New York pop culture and the realities of racial segregation. Miłosz’s self-control and his care to stay close to reality are evident here. There are more such cycles in “Notatnik” [The Notebook] to mention his reflections on nature, civilization, and art appearing in one sequence, or Audrey Carrey’s dialogue with the writer.

The author uses these principles of arranging notes at the micro level, deciding on the order of individual entries, and in the construction of the entire text, which gives it a very clear composition. Cycles of notes are put in pairs of dialectic or complementary arrangements, which results in articulating higher meanings, and more general theses and conclusions.

Also due to the varying strategies of organizing the text, “Notatnik” [The Notebook] can be divided into three fluidly interwoven parts. In the first part, Miłosz examines the issue of beauty and aesthetic experience. In the second, he extends this reflection to considerations of the relationship between culture/civilization and nature. The third part verifies his previous hypotheses by introducing corrections and counterarguments, coming from his various partners.

## Colloquium on the Duties of Writer and Literature

### 1.

The first part of the work begins with snapshot descriptions of landscape. Each has its own title, perhaps to emphasize their literary character. A part of each landscape presented in them is an element of civilization: a road, a multi-story building, an

airplane. Miłosz is intrigued by the way in which man has mastered and managed nature in America. In order to strengthen the effect, he introduces into the coherent whole an element from a different order, so as to emphasize or sometimes enable the transmission of some ideas and meanings. First, he constructs descriptions of the landscape, and then he analyses the method used in these descriptions:

If the beauty of the world was most fully expressed for us in nature, the art of painting the landscape of mountains, forests and the sea would have to be placed highest. However, this is not the case. Those painters who presented the joy and beauty of being the fullest achieved this by putting the accent on man. The rocky mountains and bays painted by Breughel are an expression of Dionysian amazement because they are enlivened by the sail of a ship. Shepherds and shepherdesses are essential for the magic of nature in Watteau’s paintings (*Kontynenty*, 35–36).

In the subsequent parts of “Notatnik” [The Notebook] this is expressed more concisely: “the value of nature comes to light through contrast” (*Kontynenty*, 36). Miłosz is not interested in describing nature itself – he confesses in the note “Cudo natury” [A Wonder of Nature]:

The river has carved a winding canyon here, working for thousands of years. I am not interested in this. I wait until we leave behind us this view from the first day of creation and a tiny, fragile dam appears, which irrigates an area larger than my homeland (*Kontynenty*, 34).

In his descriptions of the peculiarities of American nature, Miłosz assumes the position of someone who has only just arrived in the New World. The cycle of titled notes begins with the simplest, almost phenomenological observations: looking at the overwhelming vastness of the plains, he captures it as a whole, without dividing it into smaller, more familiar elements. He uses enumerations, summing up his impressions without prioritizing them. The scenery he describes seems two-dimensional, and the technique employed in its presentation is listing, as if the poet were not yet able to capture more complicated and more subtle spatial relations. Only in subsequent descriptions does Miłosz pass observations of nature through filters of culture: he calls Death Valley the Valley of Josaphat, an aquarium is presented as a fashion show and a dance theatre. He is accompanied by the realization that in order to describe exotic nature, he must reach for defamiliarization in the formalist sense. He chooses his conceits carefully, aware of his goals – he takes pleasure in attributing to nature the features of a performance, searching in it for seeds of social life not unlike that of humans; in cultural behaviors he traces animal pedigrees. His intention is not to prove that in descriptions of nature man is doomed to employ anthropomorphisms. Rather than this, he is interested in how nature is anthropomorphized in America, where, in his opinion, there is too much certainty that nature can be tamed.

Before he reaches the point where he takes up this issue, he considers the situation of an artist, and the issue of beauty and aesthetic experience. Emphasizing

the historicity of all anthropomorphisms – “In order to paint or describe a leaf or a bird, comparisons and metaphors are, after all, taken from the human era in which one lives” (*Kontynenty*, 36) – he considers Baudelaire’s “painting of customs” to be one of the most serious modes of art, with the proviso that in the twentieth century this postulate includes new duties. The twentieth century saw a significant expansion of culture by elements of the technological civilization. Observing in America the phenomenon of the synonymous treatment of culture and civilization, Miłosz sometimes gives vent to irony: “Then the stewardess in a blue uniform, gracefully swaying her rump, serves breakfast. She is washed and combed, wearing makeup according to all the rules of civilization, and she has never heard of a man named Socrates” (*Kontynenty*, 34). More frequently though, he points out the illusory nature of dreams of technical power: “Marble floors on which the butterfly that flew in from the river is sliding” (*Kontynenty*, 35). This does not mean that the poet remained insensitive to the aesthetic dimension of technology. The immigrant from Central Europe is surrounded by an expansive industrial architecture which arouses his admiration as a manifestation of human ingenuity and efficiency. This is why the New World poses new literary challenges for Miłosz. He muses on civilization, trying to decode the nature of its beauty.<sup>751</sup> In the 1940s, he initiates a reflection on this subject, to develop it over time and formulate more confident observations in *A Treatise on Poetry* and “Trzy rozmowy o cywilizacji” [Three Talks on Civilization]. Bemoaning the disfigurement of the world by technology, he is ahead of local artists, such as Godfrey Reggio for instance.

Miłosz tries to define the beauty of the New World using a cluster of European aesthetic theories. He reaffirms his earlier conviction that it is objective in nature, while at the same time recognizing Baudelaire’s insights into the importance of convention and fashion. He thinks of beauty and its expression in a way similar to that of George Santayana, who maintained that “beauty is pleasure objectified.” In this context, the poet tries to build a definition of the aesthetic experience of the beauty of the New World. He tries to avoid romantic subjectivism – for the term “sense of beauty” (*Kontynenty*, 37) he finds a rational equivalent: “a very high degree of interest” (*Kontynenty*, 37). Not only does his former effort to objectivize impressions not lose its value – in the new circumstances, Miłosz is also still distressed by the wartime dilemma regarding the relationship between beauty and good:

Why am I seeing beauty, i.e. I show interest, if millions of people suffer? (...) A man who suffers physically becomes numb to beauty, that is, he ceases to be curious about what has no relation

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**751** Interesting in this context are Miłosz’s remarks from an article on a New York exhibition of modern painting from 1947: “Classicism is probably also a tendency to become a civilized man, and civilization, in turn, is the knowledge that a certain degree of artificiality accompanies our achievements and that whoever kills artificiality kills art.” See Miłosz, Czesław: “Abstrakcja i poszukiwania” [Abstraction and Searching], *Odrodzenie* 1947, issue 7, p. 3.



to his pain. Art does not withstand confrontation with the condition in which there are only the most tangible necessities. Then even the most beautiful paintings and poems are trampled. The man who understood this contradiction was Tolstoy. He condemned art. I respect him completely. However, when he called Shakespeare an immoral author and writer of drivel, I cannot fail to take the side of Shakespeare, even, or perhaps in particular, today. All that remains is to be consciously indecent. Some people use ploys and want to pretend that there is no contradiction here. There is. Even if someone were I don't know how social an artist, it is there, unless one were to make it clear from the start and decide that art needs to have its neck twisted in the name of higher goals. The only question is whether it would then make someone really happy (*Kontynenty*, 37).

Miłosz participates in a discussion about the duty of art after the experience of war which resulted in beauty in literature requiring additional justifications. Paradoxically, the observer of American culture sees the need to work on beauty in the classical sense and continues his criticism from his essay written under occupation.

At the intersection of nature, culture and civilization, he explores the kind of beauty emerging in new conditions. Nonetheless, not only does he not share the belief that nature can be controlled, but he also recognizes the supremacy of its beauty over the aesthetics of civilization:

And entire cities like Los Angeles or Detroit are acts of violence committed on the elementary sense of aesthetics. I suspect that the beauty I am talking about is largely based on humor and mockery. Nature, however, cannot be laughed at (*Kontynenty*, 37).

Therefore, in metropolises Miłosz finds traces of European culture, places imitating the local peculiarities of the old continent. Not without a sense of nostalgia, he seeks out forms of European culture that are no longer to be found in Europe. The New World reminds him of an incubator in which the old-fashioned coexists on the same rights with various traditions, often in forms impervious to change, along with bizarre mixtures of national cultures with the culture of the United States, most often popular culture – the first part of the work ends with a description of a ride around New York's poor neighborhoods.

In the second part of “Notatnik” [The Notebook] the author enriches his reflections from the first part with a consideration of the relationship between nature and civilization. Miłosz captures this great subject of his oeuvre in a way that is characteristic of many of his later reflections. This issue, as we know, had absorbed the poet from his youth. In this respect, the period of his confrontation with American civilization seems to be extremely intense and fertile, as documented in *Daylight*, and *Kontynenty*, in extracts from the works he read, and in his translations. It would be easy to demonstrate that it was not only in this respect that “Notatnik” played a preparatory role for *Visions from San Francisco Bay* and that in his work on his essay of 1968, Miłosz remembered it as a source of ideas and preliminary solutions to problems that never ceased to trouble him.

## 2.

The second part of “Notatnik” [The Notebook] is more personal and subjective than the first. The narrator repeatedly writes in first-person and admits his feelings and fleeting states of mind: “I feel well only in a city of millions.” (*Kontyenty*, 38), “Here, again, a subject beyond my strength.” (*Kontyenty*, 45), “Electric light, ruffled sheets, I’m hanging on the phone, I feel the aura of this autumn and I’m trying to describe it.” (*Kontyenty*, 45). The distance is shortened, and the reader learns more about who is spinning the yarn of the story. This part, to a greater extent than the previous one, has a fictional character, and contains micro-stories, most often memories from journeys. On a deeper level, they are reminiscences of history and considerations of its mechanisms. The second part of “Notatnik” [The Notebook] provides an insight into Miłosz’s private experiences, remaining a diary of an intellectual written from several points of view: of an amateur ethnographer, describing the customs of Pueblo Indians, a historian of civilization, as he talks about the American-Mexican war and the colonization of California, a poet who does not hesitate to ask questions how to give his experience a literary dimension and what may be the contemporary duties of an artist and the tasks of art.

The framing device used in this part is New York – the reflection on civilization begins and ends there. Movement in space is accompanied by movement of thoughts into the depths of history, including the history of civilization. Not stopping at impressions, in a pioneering way Miłosz names the phenomena which, many years after his remarks, will become the center of political and anthropological reflection. He considers the problem of naturalization of civilization and technology to be of paramount importance:

Civilization is exceedingly strange. It consists in cunningly masking nature and pretending that there is no nature at all. (...) To civilization, man officially begins from the waist upwards; the natural man, unfortunately, stinks. This agreement, as if it were a theatrical convention, also extends to man’s urges, their limit, which is cruelty and brutality, is bypassed (*Kontyenty*, 38–39).

Only in the imagination of agricultural and primitive countries is the technical civilization the reign of the machine. In fact, it is a state in which one does not notice the machine. Only when the use of machines is obvious and their absence, rather than their presence, is cause for astonishment, can one speak of a technical civilization. Technology as nature – that is, for example, automatic central heating, an electric refrigerator, air-conditioning – their absence would be unnatural. The reign of the machine is exercised through the fact that the machine must be there and that thought processes cannot break away from this necessity, encompassing the lives of people who carry water in pails probably only as a reason for pity. (...)

The technological nature of American civilization in relation to the rest of the world is probably like a ratio of 5:1. The atom bomb? Jet planes? Ships? Trifles. Mere by-products. What is important is the average person’s immersion in technology, i.e. having grown accustomed to technology as nature (*Kontyenty*, 46).

Miłosz, who came from a part of Europe lagging behind in terms of civilization, turns the situation of an outsider into an epistemological asset. His advantage is not only his civilizational “innocence,” but also his memory of the war, which appears to him as a triumph of nature and a retaliation against the acts of violence committed against it. Unlike on the old continent, history has not so dramatically exposed the Americans’ dependence on nature, including their own nature. America for Miłosz is a space of the conquest of nature, which is all the more effective, the more blinding it is, as demonstrated by popular culture, which takes away nature’s sacred dimension and dulls one’s sensitivity to its horror:

However, what the cartoons do with the animal world is a real orgy. Those drakes returning home plastered, singing arias, who seem to think that there is an invisible kangaroo in their room. The little pigs looking for a hotel room to no avail. The terrifying rabbit, always victoriously coming out of all predicaments, and cackling with triumphant laughter (...).

This is how one retaliates against nature, asserting that it is not really there. From a dangerous power, which had to be calmed with magical dance, there remain cute animals with entirely human feelings and troubles. Which is entirely not true. Flooding, hail, droughts, plagues, and typhoid fever have so far been for the great human masses calamities no smaller than other people. And when these disasters disappear, their place is taken by cancer and polio, because after all nature does exist (*Kontynenty*, 41).

The limitation to which a sentimental approach to nature leads is all the more glaring after the war. An even earlier reflection suggested to Miłosz the vision of a „Dachau of grasshoppers” oraz „ants’ Auschwitz” which he brings back in an apparently self-ironic commentary to his poetry. Already in the 1930s, the author of *Three Winters* distrusted the secular theodicies and the postulates of overcoming alienation included in the political programs of reconstructing the world, and he was all the more astonished by the fact that after the war in America not only was the recent lesson in history not assimilated, but there was a tendency to succumb to a belief in the power of technology and to pop-cultural images of the world. This was one of the most serious anxieties expressed by the author of “Notatnik” [The Notebook] The point is not about itemizing the instances where Miłosz anticipated diagnoses and intellectual fashions. It is not unimportant, however, to recall that intuitions on the subject of naturalization of technology close to the pre-war caveats of Martin Heidegger or Nicholas Berdyaev predate Michel Foucault’s observations, expressed in another language, or warnings against the consequences of technocracy and cyborgization – from this point of view, the author of *Visions from San Francisco Bay* will read the poets of the Beat Generation.<sup>752</sup>

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<sup>752</sup> In his *Visions from San Francisco Bay* Miłosz uses a motif from Ginsberg’s “Howl” in the chapter entitled *Wizerunek bestii* [The Image of the Beast] devoted to technologization of life in America.

The paradoxical movement of man away from nature in America makes this poet of sights, smells, and tastes pose questions about the shape of the art of which he himself would be a recipient. This is why one of the protagonists of this part of “Notatnik” [The Notebook] is Aldous Huxley, who considers the influence of civilization on people as seriously as Miłosz does. These findings would lead Miłosz in the near future to compile the anthology *Kultura masowa* [Mass Culture], and they would be put on a plane of metaphysical reflection in *The Land of Ulro*. Over the years, Miłosz became increasingly concerned about the need to create art as a means of counteracting the humiliation of *Être*, to use his own words.

The poet sees that Lawrence’s recommendation to return to primitive life is not a way out, as tempting as it may be in America, where nature attracts enthusiasts of robinsonades. The description of his journeys through California and New Mexico rather provide an insight into his sense of alienation. He describes the landscape on the border with Mexico as inhuman: “weathered volcanic rock, desert, sparse gray vegetation, citrus groves over the Rio Grande, where the soil is irrigated artificially” (*Kontynenty*, 43). It does not seem accidental to him that in such an environment “the atom bomb was born.” (*Kontynenty*, 43). Here the author tells for the first time the story of the State of California. This story will be developed and enriched in *Visions from San Francisco Bay*, but the American-Mexican war described here has a Darwinian character for him, as if it was not people fighting for living space, but stronger and weaker species, waiting for the opportune moment when the opponent becomes weak, so as to occupy his territory, take over his feeding grounds. Miłosz takes the side of Pueblo Indians. It sounds like a foreshadowing of the last chapter of *The Captive Mind* summarizing the history of the extermination of the Baltic tribes. As later, in the introduction to *Kultura masowa*, he deplores the use of folklore for propaganda purposes in the countries of the Soviet bloc, so in “Notatnik” [The Notebook] – probably with some influence from Telakowska – he makes similar reflections on the effects of commercialization on Indian art.

The former reader of Cooper does not make a sentimental journey through California. He is struck by the ruthless struggle for survival led by nature, man, and peoples among themselves. In his criticism, Miłosz goes further, or rather returns to the issues of art and the artist, who, in such conditions, seeks ways of communicating with the viewer. The poet does not identify himself with a “handful of ‘miasmatic types,’ ‘madmen,’ ‘decadents,’ and ‘futurists,’ that he did not care about in general, that he mocked, that he did not understand, and that he tried to kick” (*Kontynenty*, 45), he does not accept, however, that “a country is as cultural as cultural are the broad masses of its inhabitants” (*Kontynenty*, 45). Miłosz adds with uncharacteristic helplessness: “In America, I finally doubted the art created according to the tastes of the audience” (*Kontynenty*, 45). What to do in this situation? The former member of Żagary recalls the pre-war disputes between the supporters of engaged art and defenders of autonomous art, including pure poetry, the disputes which he analyzed in the essay “Granice sztuki” [Boundaries of Art]. He maintains his former position

and considers it his duty to create literature that would be a search for objective beauty and truth, wisdom and clarity of expression. This part of “Notatnik” [The Notebook] ends with an interesting observation:

And perhaps the technological civilization does not tolerate ideas? Maybe in the technological civilization as such, not because this is America, all ideas lose their flavor and disintegrate, and only practical solutions remain. Maybe then what we get is what is here in America, a longing for ideas, but an inability to profess them (including religion)? These are merely suspicions. It is all not so simple (*Kontynenty*, 47).

This question returns as one of the most important issues in *Visions from San Francisco Bay*.

### 3.

In the third part of “Notatnik,” Miłosz presents his program in an original way. In comparison to the previous parts, to a great extent, it is a colloquium on the tasks of the writer and literature, because apart from the notes, it contains accounts of conversations, and declarations of the people with whom the narrator confronts his convictions. It also contains a translation of a letter from Audrey Carrey.

Here Miłosz reveals his process of thinking, paraphrases other people’s thoughts, and includes fragments of translations. The notes in this section are longest, full of details of meetings and exchanged opinions. While in the previous parts, he verified the credibility of his observations through skillful juxtaposition, here he confronts his real opponents, who populate the “Notatnik” and *Daylight* alike. Thus, this part of the “Notatnik,” much like *Daylight*, takes on the form of dramatized monologue. Among the speaking voices, there are ‘interlocutors’ from Europe: Tiger (the way Miłosz called Tadeusz Juliusz Kroński), publicists, participants of Polish disputes about poetry, Polish immigrants with whom Miłosz maintained social relations: a family from Brooklyn, and Jane Zielonko, who would later translate *The Captive Mind*. Opposite those who have a European and Polish point of view, Miłosz puts Americans. They are anonymous random people, such as black passengers on the New York subway, and his friends and acquaintances, V., Jewish immigrants from Germany. The most interesting ones include Lowell, with whom Miłosz discussed poetry, and Shapiro, whose poems he translated. This diversity of the voices in the third part of “Notatnik” [The Notebook] should not come as a surprise. The author analyzes here the reality of the New World, so he looks for local partners to objectivize his conclusions. While in the previous parts he collated and juxtaposed his own views, here he confronts external and internal viewpoints – just as in *Manhattan Transfer* and *U.S.A.* by John Dos Passos, where polyphony is the foundation of the narrative. This is completely different from the situation at the outset. Miłosz is no longer merely a learner of the rules of the New World, but someone who is aware of the fact that the

American civilization is also shaping him. The third part also shows that “Notatnik” [The Notebook] is a well thought-out construction – it illustrates the process of growing into a foreign culture, which led Miłosz to formulate his initial assessments and engage in a discussion with the local intellectual and artistic community. This situation creates new opportunities, but it also brings an awareness of limitations – here the poet mainly includes the difficulties of intercultural translation:

The New York Underground State, also known as the Subway. At some stations, such as Times Square, I always get the strange feeling that it has never been described in Polish before. The ability to go beyond the language of a certain civilization is small. *Juke-box, drug-store, cross-town, up-town, down town, shuttle, IRT, BMT* – an entire jargon, as untranslatable as *Wiech* [the urban dialect of Warsaw] into English. Besides, one can probably say as much about this as about the trams in Krakow, i.e. that it exists (*Kontynenty*, 50).

Incidentally, the descriptions of New York in the third part of “Notatnik” also illustrate a deepening of Miłosz’s cognitive perspective. New York is no longer a two-dimensional city watched like an overwhelmingly giant image. The poet discovers its peculiarities and secrets hidden from the eyes of tourists. At the same time, this does not mean that New York comes closer to him. It still seems to be an unreal city, a theatrical set designed hastily and without taste, without the spirit of Baudelaire’s *cit  infernale*. The demonism of this metropolis manifests itself in its machinism, dating back to the Industrial Revolution.

Miłosz does not withdraw from the position of an immigrant-observer – it affords him the epistemological benefits that he does not want to forgo. On the contrary, before he writes “Notes on Exile” he considers the fate of a European * migr * who is not prepared to live in the American reality:

A. also painted a church, but he was met with the criticism that his angels do not show their teeth, and the Mother of God is too serious. Now he paints patterns for scarves. Of course, he is already developing the American complex: if I fail, I am to blame. It is true, however, that to people who come from Europe to earn a living, America is like a glass ball: they bleed their fingers and keep falling. Nevertheless, ambition does not allow them to admit defeat, because everyone here thinks that he is the only one who fails. Everyone believes that tomorrow he will be a millionaire. Always tomorrow (*Kontynenty*, 48).

These remarks resonate with his earlier words, when he bemoaned the pauperization of Polish intellectuals in the United States. The poet enters the role of a mediator between cultures, an advocate of Polish and European affairs. In the third part of “Notatnik” [The Notebook] he complements his own remarks about America with the voices of his interlocutors, often recent arrivals in the United States. They speak in a similar tone about popular culture, about papering over existential fear with entertainment, the cult of the fairy tale infantilizing reality, media politics and the exercise of informational control over society, the tragic sense of civilizational superiority over the rest of the world, the lack of understanding of the mechanisms

of history even in the wake of the experience of the Second World War, the disproportionate development of technology in relation to intellectual culture, and about “breaking the spine of America by the technological revolution.” (*Kontynenty*, 48)

The author gathers sociological and anthropological observations, to finally ask a question about poetry. The most important discussions in the third part of “Notatnik” concern the kind of literature that can and should be created in the changed historical and civilizational conditions. It is interesting that these are the discussions he leads with American artists. On their basis it is possible to reconstruct the negative and positive aspects of Miłosz’s colloquium. What sort of literature does he reject? In short, sentimental, in the sense that Kroński gave to this word, based on a desire to please, building a superficial middle ground of understanding by means of coquetry. And subjectivist, considering an individual in isolation from society and history. Miłosz, as we know, never favored the novel. In the 1940s, he was most concerned about the development of the psychological novel in which he saw the harmful consequences of Romanticism and Freudianism:

In Balzac’s works still the same pattern. But then everything becomes entangled, nothing is left of it in the modern novel. The entire structure of phenomena disintegrates; events exist only as sensations of the characters. In Fielding we know that people aspire to gain riches and to grope some, the contrast between this aspiration and spouting countless stupidities, and the behaviors (ladies fainting, rules of prudishness, etc.) creates comedy. (...) In the nineteenth-century novel, the superstructure becomes so prevalent that its relative nature is forgotten. All of the psychological thrashing about results from treating the superstructure with mortal seriousness, hence most poisonous are those writers who take it most seriously. (...) The obsession of American writers: the search for primitive heroes who are free of the superstructure and therefore free from the sadness of imperfect intercourse (*Kontynenty*, 63-64).<sup>753</sup>

Early on, the author of *Legends of Modernity* began to appeal to the authority of Balzac, who, together with Baudelaire, is the patron of “Notatnik” [The Notebook] Miłosz considered the works of the author of “The Painter of Modern Life,” along with those of Poe, known in Europe thanks to Baudelaire,<sup>754</sup> to constitute a boundary in the development of poetry. His goal was a renewal of poetry in the form it had before the onset of symbolism. He tried to convince his interlocutors, in particular Lowell, about this. Although Lowell was at the peak of his talent and fame, Miłosz did not foretell his further success at the time. Despite their converging observations on literary themes

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<sup>753</sup> At this point Miłosz adds a fragment that is not there in the press version of “Notatnik:” “You know, says Janka, I wonder how many years I lost agonizing, which was mainly the result of the novels I read. It’s poison. Publishing this rubbish should be banned. Fiction has a disastrous influence on upbringing, not to mention the horrors of radio and cinema” (*Kontynenty*, 73).

<sup>754</sup> Miłosz’s views were also influenced by the book by the English academic and poetry connoisseur John Sparrow, *Sense and Poetry: Essays on the Place of Meaning in Contemporary Verse*, London: Constable, 1934.

and the respect he had for the leader of the middle generation of poets, he was more interested in the achievements of Ciardi and Shapiro. However, it was Lowell who drew his attention to an interesting paradox – that Baudelaire, “the creator of the most closed aesthetic theory, from which all ‘art for art’s own sake’ originated, was a vigorous portraitist of customs” (*Kontynenty*, 56). This in turn interacted with his theory of movements across boundaries, which he considered then as the creative method and principle governing the artistic process. He wrote in “Notatnik:”

I am thinking about my theory of “movements across boundaries,” and the fact that that truly good art is created only in periods when contradictory aspirations break through, and the periods when some “official” direction is established are dead (*Kontynenty*, 56).

The entire “Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook] seems to be such a breakthrough of contradictory aspirations. “Movement across boundaries” is the constructional principle in it, and at the same time the idea to which the order of rearranged notes is subordinated. The idea of “movement across boundaries” is thematized in it as an intellectual and formal postulate, but it is also verified through the practical composition of the text.

#### 4.

“Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook] seems to be a polyphonic caprice, in which Miłosz at some points reaches for a strong counterpoint in order to avoid flaws in harmony, while at other times some motifs interweave, imperceptibly giving way to others, to reemerge transformed. Aesthetic considerations are cleverly hidden and deliberately scattered among remarks on other topics. The author emphasizes their incompleteness and lability, provides examples instead of formulating theses, and presents multiple viewpoints. However, he treats this form no less seriously than the essay. Trying to overcome the dispute between the advocates of pure art and socially engaged art, he finds a third way. He reminds us of the eternal belief that achieving beauty in art is a form of shaping civilization:

If they shout that it is now or never, that we are experiencing a breakthrough that humanity has not known since the beginning of its existence, and that nothing else can be dealt with anymore, only the breakthrough – a defender of art and science would do well to suppress in himself and others this scream of what is current. This inhibitory attitude does not mean that he should take the side of those who say that everything has already happened before, that injustice and violence are eternal, and that – regardless of any changes – one should tend to one’s own poetic or academic garden. On the contrary, it may be more appropriate to say that everything is always new, if not in the elements themselves, then in their proportions. Even at the bottom of the fall, reason convinces us that hunger, murder, misery of the masses, and wars are not necessary, although they are here now. The shape of civilization that emerges from the line of a poem, from



the object and from its depiction in works of painting, if it is the real shape of civilization, it awakens hope, and prevents doubt.<sup>755</sup>

Although the historical context of these words must not be overlooked, it is worth noting in them the imperative of which Miłosz tries to convince artists. He does this in the conviction that poetry builds civilization to a degree no less significant than scientific thought. This is why – even though he takes it seriously – he rejects criticism of the American woman who warns him against involvement in what is current and local. If the practice of literature is movement across boundaries, an exploration of the territory delineated by the axes of the present and the historic, of changeability and permanence, then these variables need to be observed conscientiously. “Notatnik amerykański” suggests how persistently Miłosz studies the components of his time: he examines their own varieties of beauty, searches for forms with which to grasp them, locates the critical places of culture, speculates about their origins and warns against the consequences of negative phenomena. Formulating conclusions based on observations made in the United States, Miłosz goes beyond the Polish hinterland, thus exposing himself to misunderstanding or indifference. By presenting an unknown point of view to a literary audience, Miłosz provides it with knowledge about the New World and instruments for analyzing it.

## 5.

“Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook] occupies an interesting and very special place in *Kontynenty*. It is the initial text, opening the part entitled “Ameryka” [America]. It precedes earlier sketches: “List półprywatny o poezji” [A Semi-Private Letter about Poetry] from 1946 and “Wprowadzenie w Amerykanów” [Introduction to the Americans. An Essay on American Poetry], “Z konferencji pisarzy w Bread Loaf” [From the Writers’ Conference in Bread Loaf] and “O przekładach” [On Translations] from 1947. The lack of adherence to the original chronological sequence of the essays is a significant analogy to the construction of “Notatnik” [The Notebook] itself, as well as to *Daylight*. “Notatnik” placed in such a neighborhood loses its topical character even further and encourages the reader to treat it as an autonomous meditation on the tasks and possibilities of art in a series of reflections surrounding this issue. Taken as a whole, this group of sketches presents the poet as a reader, critic, and intellectual, who uses his stay in America mainly as an impulse for reflection on art and civilization.

Turning to the presentation of the translations, Miłosz groups them according to geographical and linguistic criteria: first he presents translations by American authors

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755 *Ibidem*, p. 155.

writing in English, then Polish versions of Spanish (significantly omitting Neruda) and Chinese poems. Among his translations, he again places *Negro spirituals*, even though he had previously included them in *Daylight*. This decision is probably related to his general intention to show the literature of the United States as multi-racial, multi-ethnic and regionally differentiated. Miłosz exposes here the topic of colonization of the continent, racial segregation and cultural divisions related to the Civil War. America in *Kontynenty* gains the value of a multicultural center. The abundance of translations placed here suggests that one of the main roles worth playing in the New World is the role of a translator. Not only does this role not lose its importance, but it continues to radiate onto the part titled “Francja” [France] in which an important place is occupied by the essays “Dwight Macdonald” and “Mówiąc o ssaku” [Speaking of a Mammal], a review of the French anthology of American poetry, which were penned only during his cooperation with *Kultura*, but were intrinsically related to his stay in the United States. Placing the part entitled “Ameryka” in the middle of the three-part division of the book not only corresponds to the historical order of events – it is a way of integrating experiences, including them in the horizon of his intellectual biography, so that they may affect its subsequent phases on an equal footing with other experiences. It is a simultaneous recombination and reevaluation of the meanings of the American postwar period, which is accompanied by a gesture of cleansing, the same as in “Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook]. It manifests itself in two ways: by excluding from the volume many sketches written from 1946–1950, including the series *Życie w USA* [Life in the USA], and by stripping the published texts of their real context – arranged in an order that is not chronological, they acquire different meanings and values.

At the same time, Miłosz resorts to indirect, veiled ways of expressing personal experience. In the first part entitled “Polska” [Poland], he places the translation of Browning’s poem “The Lost Leader,” which can be regarded as deeply self-ironic in the context of his own decision to leave the country. The part entitled “Ameryka” [America] closes with poems entitled “Notatnik: Pennsylvania” [Notebook: Pennsylvania] and “Sobie samemu do sztambucha na nowy rok 1950” [For Myself in the Friendship Book for the New Year 1950] with a similar load of self-irony. In the latter we read:

Kiedy już jesteś w piekle, bądź diabłem,  
co spycha W kocioł biedną duszyczkę,  
która piszczy rzewnie.  
Pobłogosławiać ciebie i Piast, i Rzepicha.  
Lepiej chyba być diabłem niż duszyczką?  
Pewnie (*Kontynenty*, 246).

Once you are already in hell, be a devil that  
pushes a poor soul wailing dolefully into the  
cauldron.  
Then you will be blessed both by Piast and  
Rzepicha.  
After all, it must be better to be a devil than a  
soul? Certainly.

This latter poem seems to be Miłosz’s strong symbolic commentary to his American postwar period.

## Chapter 9: Reassessments of the American Postwar Period

Miłosz worked in the Polish diplomatic service from 1946 to 1950. One issue is getting to know this period, another is analyzing the assessments that he himself subjected it to. Miłosz's reassessments of this five-year period do not only provide further historical and biographical details. His appraisals made further and further in time take on a value of their own: they illustrate the plasticity of the poet's intellectual and spiritual horizons within which he constantly re-positioned past events. How to organize Miłosz's reflections in order to show the main changes in his attitude toward these experiences? The difficulties and the resulting complications are varied.

The first major obstacle in the way to historical reconstruction is that a large number of letters, manuscripts and typescripts of Miłosz's works kept in archives have to this day not been edited. Integrating the poet's thoughts is therefore limited to interpreting his published texts, which, of course, do not treat the subject exhaustively. Putting them in chronological order entails considering the dates of their creation rather than their dates of publication – for instance his correspondence with many addressees was published many years after the actual exchanges took place, and found itself in the circle of reception next to works created at much later stages of the author's life and activity.

Secondly, the body of work dealing with the subject we are interested in represents multiple genres and various discourses. If we were to assume only the simplest, quite insufficient distinguishing criteria, we would at least need to separate poetry from prose, and within prose, we would need to differentiate between letters and essays, extended interviews and memoirs or abecedaries, taking note of the fact that Miłosz expressed changes in assessing his own experience both directly and indirectly – through the literary convention and form which he gave to his statements. At one end, there would be strongly metaphorical works, whose “I” speaks in numerous voices, hiding behind masks and using other people's works, and at the other end, texts in which – despite his oft-declared disbelief in the sincerity of literature – Miłosz reveals the secrets of life and talks about the adventures of his mind. Moving between these separate poles is not entirely satisfying if one remembers the poet's creations in his interviews – it is impossible not to notice that he talked very differently to different interlocutors. As a result, we should take even the most direct of Miłosz's statements with a grain of salt, and underscore their literary character and the fact that they are supposed to build the kind of autobiography of the poet that he wrote about on numerous occasions.

Thirdly, since the choice of arguments and levels of communication in a conversation or in correspondence also depends on the partner in the dialogue and on how Miłosz places that partner in his intellectual hierarchy, the assessment of the post-war years takes place from many perspectives at the same time, including

the dimensions of politics, history, philosophy, literature, and theology, separately or in various configurations. This is because these perspectives also tend to shift: they overlap and change in time. Thus, the image of the American postwar period is constantly changing. If we want to follow Miłosz's fate on the East Coast, we need to use a 'telescopic eye' (*Native Realm*), fulfilling his dream of absolute sight, and this is an exceedingly difficult task in itself.

However, some hypotheses need to be formulated. The most important proposal would be to include the changes in Miłosz's view of this five-year period from the point of view of the development of his work, which is as much a story of his growing fame and international recognition, as that of his personal history. Four phases can be distinguished here, closely related to his work becoming gradually more cosmopolitan, and to the course of his life in exile, but also in relation to his readers in Poland: 1951–1960, 1960–1980, 1980–1997 and 1997–2004.

The first period includes his time under asylum in France, settling the scores with communism and emigration, and his efforts to build his literary position in the West and obtain an American visa. The works created at that time, *The Captive Mind*, *Daylight*, *The Issa Valley*, *A Treatise on Poetry*, *Kontynenty* [Continents] and *Native Realm* illuminate the years of his immediate past in various ways. His translation of *Work and its Discontents* by Daniel Bell, and his work on the anthology *Kultura masowa* [Mass Culture] also shed a different light on them, as did Miłosz's letters. After 1960, when he began teaching at the University of Berkeley, his experiences from the East Coast influenced his Californian discoveries and vice versa; his life in San Francisco helped to verify a number of perceptions from the 1940s. Works written by 1980: *Człowiek wśród skorpionów* [A Man Among Scorpions], *Visions from San Francisco Bay* and *The Land of Ulro* document this circulation of influences. The breakthrough year 1980, which initiated the period of his literary triumph in Poland and worldwide, was the beginning of his new thinking about diplomatic service, which he expressed in conversations and extended interviews. This phase lasted until 1997, when *Abecadło* [Miłosz's ABC's] and *Piesek przydrożny* [Road-side Dog] were published, works in which the intellectual horizon of the poet-scholar and the biographical horizon of the aging *world traveler* started to fuse ever more strongly. From 1997 onward, the American postwar period began to figure in Miłosz's work not as a separate issue, but as an object of existential integration with his other experiences, in connection with his metaphysical reflections. Each of these phases has its own characteristics, not present in the ones that followed.

The first phase is most abundant in reassessments, which is closely related to the poet's personal situation: discussions of "Miłosz's case" which intensified after the poet's famous declaration in *Kultura*, separation from his family, and building his literary position with Polish and foreign readers. However, his earliest reckonings with America occurred even earlier, when in New York and Washington (and later in France) he wrote poems in which he held discussions with himself, often cast in the role of an addressee or interlocutor. Miłosz also settled his scores indirectly, when

in the foreground he was engaged in dialogue with Kroński. He contrasted his own intellectual horizon, extended and enriched in America, with the doctrinal version of Hegelianism. Again, not all works from these years were included *Daylight*, several poems important from our point of view are scattered, placed in later collections, or remain unpublished. They contain common threads: reflections on the peculiarity of the Polish nation in relation to Western nations, considerations of the relationship between immature America and Europe aged by the war, the prophecy of modern nomadism as a human condition in Western civilization, the role of memory as a guarantor of identity negotiated in the melting pot of cultures, and the question of what is left of the past in a world ignoring historiosophic thought and in which,

Looking into history's great book, falsified,  
Whose pages they fill with fabricated verdicts,  
Whosoever may dare to invoke past events  
That they should serve to justify his deeds?  
"Grób matki" [Mother's Grave] *Wiersze 2*, p. 65

The common motif of this poetry is the transition from an intimate confession to a universal conclusion, treating one's own fate as paradigmatic. When the hero of the poems confesses, "And sincere rage casts a glow / On my numerous duties" ("Do Jonathana Swifta" [To Jonathan Swift], *Wiersze 2*, p. 8.),<sup>756</sup> when he talks about America in the voice of Eliot, "Unfortunately, a deceptive land / of cactus shadows" („Pałac moich muz" [Palace of my Muses], *Wiersze 2*, p. 42.), when in the poem "O duchu praw" [The Spirit of the Laws] he speaks ironically about the status of Montesquieu's law in the shadow of the Library of Congress, when he shares his confession, "I am chased by a pack / Of peddlers in good name" ("Faust warszawski" [Faust of Warsaw], *Wiersze 2*, p. 136.) and when he comments,

Borowski betrayed. He ran where he could.  
Before him he saw the smooth wall of the East,  
Behind him the Polish walls of Backward Town  
("Na śmierć Tadeusza Borowskiego"  
[On the Death of Tadeusz Borowski]), *Wiersze 2*, p. 29.

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<sup>756</sup> Incidentally, it is worth recalling Miłosz's thought: "*The Captive Mind* can be considered as a release of a long repressed fury, as a cold vengeance. I tell you this because I am afraid you ascribe to me too high motives. Writing is suspect since love of truth can go together with an urge to oppose our 'I' to the world. If I analyze calmly my scorn of 'them' on either side, I cannot see in myself somebody who is for truth or art. As opposed to their aims such as power or glory. No. My ambition is higher, I take myself for more intelligent and their power seems to me illusory, their glory miserable. That's all." Letter of Czesław Miłosz to Thomas Merton of March 28, 1959. In Merton, Thomas, Miłosz, Czesław: *Letters, op. cit.*, p. 24.

his experiences are parabolic in character – they are inscribed in the broader context of the war and the emigration experiences of intellectuals. *Daylight* can be read biographically, as an intimate diary of Miłosz’s life in America – then the negative aspects of Miłosz’s experience will come to the fore. The poet used similar arguments in his letters to Melchior Wańkowicz, focusing on the political, social and historiosophic aspects of his choice. It is interesting to see how he chose different strategies in his correspondence: he defended and justified his reasoning against those by whom he felt attacked (Melchior Wańkowicz) and shared his doubts with those who would justify him (Thomas Merton).<sup>757</sup>

Miłosz made no correction to his poetic record, although, as I mentioned earlier, he did not publish it in its entirety – the benefits of the years he spent in America were to be revealed only indirectly, in his later works of prose. They were unintentionally elucidated by his resounding ideological declaration “Nie” [No]<sup>758</sup> – his anti-self-criticism made in exile in the years when public confessions of sometimes real, but mainly imaginary errors were a common, humiliating practice in the countries of the Soviet Bloc. Miłosz’s “Nie” [No] was a reminder and a development of Antigone’s “no!” in the poetic dialogue from 1949, and provided an unwritten introduction elucidating the benefits of Miłosz’s five-year American period.<sup>759</sup>

It would be difficult to overlook the fact that one of the intellectual frames of *The Captive Mind* was the reception of communism in the circle of Dwight Macdonald, who was, incidentally, an enthusiastic reviewer of the essay, and in the editorial office of *Partisan Review*, under whose influences from 1947 Miłosz formed his own view that his vision of seduction by the communist utopia owed much to the diagnoses formulated earlier in the West<sup>760</sup> – the relationships between the essay and these reflections have yet to be discussed.<sup>761</sup> This is also the time when the poet appears

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**757** See Letter of Czesław Miłosz to Melchior Wańkowicz, no date, *op. cit.*, p. 15. Also see letter of Czesław Miłosz to Thomas Merton of July 16, 1959, *op. cit.*, pp. 48–49.

**758** Miłosz, Czesław: “Nie” [No], *Kultura* 1951, issue 5, pp. 3–13.

**759** A similar role was played by the essay “Wielkie pokuszenie” [The Great Temptation] of 1951 delivered at the conference of The Congress for Cultural Freedom held from September 10 to 15, 1951 in Andlau near Strasbourg, and published in French in the series “Essais et Témoignages,” Collection de la Reuve *Preuves*, November 1951.

**760** It is not clear if Miłosz had the opportunity to hear the lecture on communism and the European left, delivered by Arthur Koestler in 1948 at Carnegie Hall in New York.

**761** Janusz Sławiński interprets the essay as a way of reassessing the American experience: “Whatever we say about this concept, and also about other conceptions deriving from it that Miłosz developed in *The Captive Mind*, one thing seems indisputable: it was supposed to enable the Poet to explain why he had eaten the red jam (as Czesław Straszewicz put it) during the years before he chose freedom. For Miłosz, such an explanation was of primary importance when he was writing *The Captive Mind*, i.e. at a time when he was experiencing a dramatic repulsion by a large part of the émigré community. He had to convince the exiles (and in a way also himself) that the privileged role he had played in the play directed by the communists could not be treated simply as a banal

in *Kultura* as an expert on American issues: he reviews films and books from across the ocean, comments on the European perspective on the culture of the New World and – importantly – translates the work of Bell, the leading representative of the anti-Stalinist left in the United States, a critic of industrial capitalism, an advocate of a number of social views with which his translator himself identified. Miłosz’s American experience at the time became a source of arguments and methods of analyzing and presenting problems of the contemporary world. It played an equally important role in his literary work, which was manifested in various ways in *Treatise on Poetry* and *The Issa Valley*. Part IV of *A Treatise on Poetry*, entitled “Nature,” is as much a testimony to the charm of nature’s exuberance as a reminder of Manichean dilemmas, a passionate discussion about the relationship between nature and history, and the promotion of Miłosz’s own definition of history in opposition to Hegelianism.

This is not the only source of inspiration for Miłosz. The very idea of the treatise, first realized in 1947, had its origins in the English-language tradition of the long poem<sup>762</sup> – the 1940s saw the publication of several important works written in this convention, including *Paterson* by William Carlos Williams,<sup>763</sup> *The Cantos* by Ezra Pound, *Trilogy* by Hilda Doolittle, *Esthétique du Mal* by Wallace Stevens,<sup>764</sup> *Essay on Rime* by Karl Shapiro, and New Year’s Letter by W.H. Auden. The novel *The Issa Valley*, on the other hand, owes a clear debt to Faulkner in terms of its treatment of personal myth against the background of history, and in terms of style, through its saturation with regionalisms, examples of folk literature, and the particular rhythmization of the phrase, which makes the narrative resemble a prose poem.

A separate and extremely significant place in this period is taken by *Kontynenty* or, as Miłosz himself calls it, a capricious book, in which the American part for the first time functions openly as an integral part of the poet’s intellectual biography.

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manifestation of collaboration with the regime imposed on Poland by the Soviets; that taking it up could not be explained by such common motives as convenience, fear, willingness to be close to those in power or coveting the honors and graces of power; that it should be considered in terms of the Great Spiritual Sickness that afflicted left-wing intellectuals whose exaggerated predilection for reflection on historical necessity and utopian visions of the social order had led them in a more or less straightforward way to supporting totalitarian ideologies and systems. One may reasonably suppose that the concept of the “Hegelian bite” as the source of this disease was – at the outset – an attempt to create a substitute language, in which the poet wanted to account for his troublesome experiences – in such a way as to spare himself the additional unpleasantness arising from a literal description, i.e. calling facts, events and motives of conduct by their names.” In Sławiński, Janusz: “Jeszcze jeden ukąszony, choć poranek świta” [Yet Another One Bitten, Even Though the Day is Dawning]. In *idem: Prace wybrane. Tom III. Teksty i teksty* [Selected Works. Volume III. Texts and Texts], Krakow, 2000, pp. 274–275.

762 Hatlen, Burton: “The Long Poem.” In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature*, *op. cit.*, pp. 489–509.

763 The poet published its fragments in *Partisan Review* 1948, February, Vol. XV, No. 2, pp. 213–216.

764 It was written about in *The Saturday Review of Literature* 1946, March 23, p. 7.

However, this integration takes place at the expense of a strict, self-imposed selection. The author did not include forty texts written in the United States, including the series *Życie w USA* or his articles on painting, cinema, literature and lifestyles in the United States. The American Miłosz of *Kontynenty* is a reader of poetry and prose, critic, translator, and theorist of art. The figures which vanish from the horizon include the diplomat and the press correspondent, theatre viewer, cinema goer, radio listener, reader of the press, visitor of art galleries, bookshop, and patron of libraries, lecturer, speaker, organizer of Polish diaspora events, observer of metropolitan life, customer of fast food joints, subway passenger, and participant of trips to the interior of the continent, which he became known for thanks to his texts sent in the 1940s to *Odrodzenie*, *Nowiny Literackie*, and *Kuźnica*. This amputation is only partly due to the strategy revealed in the self-commentary to “Notatnik amerykański” [The American Notebook]:

In general, these are no longer the impressions of a novice – he writes about his work – so strong in someone wearing a frayed coat and carrying a cardboard suitcase, who came to New York from Poland, a country that had been crushed to a pulp. The impressions of a complete novice elude words: a flight back in a torpedo of time, toward the so-called normality, which, as it seemed, did not exist anywhere any longer. Not immediately did I start trusting myself as a spectator and participant (*Kontynenty*, 35).

It is to a greater extent a way of constructing an image of himself, which was of particular importance at the time when the poet was awarded the European Prize for Literature and sought to obtain an academic position in the United States, while the translation of *The Captive Mind* was already reaching English-speaking readers. Behind it there was also Miłosz’s conviction that a person is different in different situations, which includes understanding oneself differently, and therefore in a way – one becomes somebody else. Similarly, persuasive and creative is the perspective adopted in *Native Realm*. Here, the stories about the history of his home province not only have a clear Faulkneresque quality, but they also contain allusions and terms that make their message more understandable to English-speaking readers. The portrait of the Jewish community in the multicultural city of Wilno, as Miłosz confesses, was taken from books read in New York, the description of his youthful fascination with cinema was facilitated by retrospective screenings of pre-war films in Washington, while his Latin teacher Adolf Rożek was probably called Settembrini under the influence of Thomas Mann’s lecture on Nietzsche. In addition to the fact that *Native Realm* is inlaid with details that found themselves in the essay solely in connection with Miłosz’s stay in the United States, it also contains a separate chapter devoted to it explicitly. This first official and at the same time literary account instills in the reader such ways of thinking about the five American years which Miłosz also cultivated in himself at the end of the 1950s. To some extent, it met the expectations of the critics of *The Captive Mind*, keen to read a chapter devoted to its author – because it is more a reckoning with his own “Hegelian bite” than with America, and in this sense it can be



read in parallel with *Daylight*. Washington in it is merely “an impersonal machine, a pure abstraction” (*Native Realm*, 260). The assumption of the duties of an official and a correspondent is presented from the following perspective:

Worse still were those lady enthusiasts at our receptions in the Embassy, admirers of progress in the East, hens pleading for a few kernels of lying propaganda. A perverse, comic masquerade. For what really preoccupied me were studies on T.S. Eliot and W.H. Auden, anthologies of American poetry, the work of Faulkner and Henry Miller, the poetry of Roben Lowell and Karl Shapiro, periodicals such as *Partisan Review* or Dwight Macdonald’s *Politics*, and exhibits of modern art (*Native Realm*, 264).

My post – as a diplomat in the service of a bankrupt state – obviously did not entitle me to feel superior. Those people, however, who showed a more or less open disgust toward us (who had sold our souls to the devil) did not see the extent of the moral problem. And it could not have been otherwise, as long as they separated “serious” activities (the struggle for power, drawing of borders, international treaties, and so on) from the individual’s physiological existence. While they argued about Roosevelt, Truman, and Stalin, I would shrug my shoulders: “That’s not what it’s about.” In despair they asked me what, then, was it about? Silence. I was not a politician, and despite my daily dose of press clippings I did not measure time by a political yardstick (*Native Realm*, 268).

In *Native Realm*, the author exposed the contradictions among which he moved, which were the source of his anguish in the USA: the intertwining of deep but absolutely secret reflections on history, and the pragmatic principle of being useful, the conflict between *être* and *devenir* in thinking about history and one’s own place in it, the conflict between freedom and necessity, including the dilemmas of the poet’s extent of involvement in and dependence on matters of the community, the contingency of his internal service to the truth on proclaiming official support for the lie. Miłosz’s immediate decisions and actions from a few years before were transferred to the historiosophic and metaphysical plane – the biblical metaphors repeatedly used here in relation to history were meant to emphasize the overriding goal at which all earthly actions are ultimately aimed: “Salvation” (*Native Realm*, 268). This system of intellectual coordinates contains side strands that strengthen this message. They are elucidated by the following admissions, “I wanted to forget” (*Native Realm*, 261), “I wanted to save my childlike character” (*Native Realm*, 272) and “No one will blame me, perhaps, for having sought out authority figures” (*Native Realm*, 282). The first of these, mainly related to Miłosz’s fascination with nature, allows us to think about the “homeopathic” values of experiences in the New World: healing the trauma of war, but poisoning the poet with observations of the physiological existence of the “new race,” as he called the Americans, and the vision of the end of their seemingly secure life. The latter two admissions refer to the most painful experiences commemorated in the poem “Do Alberta Einsteina” [To Albert Einstein], preserved as a manuscript for many years. The essay of 1959 reveals them only partially, in accordance with the logic of settling scores, meant to adjudicate on historical and political questions. It reveals the dilemma of someone who, while wishing to be Settembrini, without elevating

himself “above simple moral rules guarded by the poor in spirit, rather than to choose them as our compass needle amid the uncertainties of change” (*Native Realm*, 301), chooses pussyfooting and wearing masks as the only ways available in the twentieth century to preserve the “love of the Good within you” (*Native Realm*, 269). The process of forgiving his choice at that time would take a long time and was one of the threads of the next reassessment of the five-year postwar period. One may even think about it differently (in due proportions) as a process of recovering one’s own fate in the meaning given to it by Imre Kertész in the paradoxical novel *Fateless* (also translated as *Fatelessness*).

The last work combining the perspective of the Old World and the New World before he left for Berkeley is the anthology *Kultura masowa* [Mass Culture], based on Miłosz’s knowledge of the commercial mechanisms of the pop-culture industry that he acquired in the 1940s. This collection of articles has a high degree of utility – its very creation brings out the benefits from his stay overseas. The effort to provide Polish readers with an overview of America of the 1950s gradually shifts the emphasis in Miłosz’s assessments of his decision to leave Europe and of his experiences in the New World. This shift is illustrated by the following reflection in the letter to Thomas Merton:

I left the United States exactly 10 years ago and this return forces me to look back at those years. My decision then – to go to Europe and to stick, if possible, to Poland – was rationally speaking foolish, but as I see it today, necessary. Staying in America I would have not done in all probability what I succeeded to do; sufferings and European political nervousness pushed and prodded me. My state of mind is that of a great gratitude to God for everything, for many miraculous happenings and narrow escapes.<sup>765</sup>

After 1960, this situation underwent a further transformation. The works created at the time are clearly situated in the context of Anglo-American thought and the landscape of California. The memory of the East Coast is not so much obliterated as it does not come to the fore in a separate recollection or reference. The five-year postwar period is the background for Miłosz’s reflections and questions, shaping the space of his preconceptions about American culture. It would be easy to show, although this is a topic for a separate study, how the experiences of the 1940s become the starting point, background and context of *Visions from San Francisco Bay*. This concerns for instance the myth of America, the relationship between nature and civilization, the triumph of biological sciences in shaping ideas about life and the world, the belief in the abstract nature of the metropolis and the specificity of the province, the influence of the media and popular culture on mentality, the eroticism of life and the consequences of the sexual revolution, the history of California and colonization of Native Americans, the place of Catholicism, the cultural role of Protestantism,

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765 Letter of Czesław Miłosz to Thomas Merton, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

the situation of African Americans, and emigration to the New World. The most interesting and most significant shifts in accent in Miłosz's assessments concern the work of Miller and Jeffers. In this sense, along with yet another reassessment of his postwar experience, a further integration of Miłosz's biography took place on many levels, although this may not be immediately visible to the reader. At an even deeper level, his experience resonates in *The Land of Ulro*, where Oscar Miłosz, William Blake, Emmanuel Swedenborg and Eliot, read in many periods of time come together, accompanied by the overarching idea of the progressive secularization of imagination in the West. This is where the poet's continuity of interests becomes most evident. As he wrote about America as early as the 1940s,

A country with a great deal of religion and a multitude of temples, but quite pagan, because religion is only a ritual of social communion, something to participate in, like going to football games. (...) Religion as charity work, the church as a meeting place for neighbors, an institution as lasting as the institution of gathering for a game of bridge or a dram of whiskey. Not even the fiercest of American atheists would be able to accomplish such a complete destruction of metaphysics.<sup>766</sup>

At the end of the 1970s Miłosz was no longer identified with the United States on account of his postwar chapter there, but as a well-known figure who spoke on American issues. It is not insignificant that his works had become increasingly recognizable there.<sup>767</sup> In Miłosz's perception of reality, the perspective of the inhabitant of unattainable earth formulated as early as 1951, asserts itself ever more strongly in "Mittelbergheim."

But it is also then that a specific paradox was revealed and started to exert a strong influence: since the Nobel laureate could no longer be ignored in his homeland, Polish selections of his poetry were published, and in 1981 he travelled around Poland and met with admirers of his work. Valued abroad, he began to gain a degree of recognition among Polish readers, after his works had been banned from publication for thirty years and thus could not function in the literary consciousness of the younger generation. At that time, Miłosz became increasingly known, and consequently the need arose to explain the circumstances of his postwar trip to the USA and of the return of his diplomatic passport. What proved helpful in this respect were the extended interviews, which became an important source of knowledge about the life and work of the Nobel laureate in the 1980s. In them, Miłosz became an interpreter of his own literary work, commenting on the works in which he summed up his American postwar period. Not only did he cast new light on his experiences, but

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<sup>766</sup> Nowak, J. M. [Miłosz, Czesław]: *Życie w USA, Odrodzenie 1947*, issue 48, p. 1.

<sup>767</sup> On the transformations of the American reception of Miłosz's work, see Karwowska, Bożena: "Poezja Czesława Miłosza w krajach języka angielskiego" [The Poetry of Czesław Miłosz in English-Speaking Countries], *Teksty Drugie 1997*, issue 1/2, pp. 141–152 and "Czesław Miłosz i jego anglojęzyczni czytelnicy" [Czesław Miłosz and his English-speaking Readers], *op. cit.*

he also proposed new interpretations of their old assessments. He talked separately about specific events (in an interview with Aleksander Fiut), and separately about his works (mainly in conversations with Renata Gorczyńska), thanks to which the later responses gained the additional status of commentaries on commentaries.

In his accounts from 1946–1951, the poet returned only to some events and situations, omitting a number of those that perhaps formed him and influenced his actions more clearly:

F. *Sorry to interrupt you: did you publish your memories under the penname “Żagarysta” in Przekrój?*

M. No, in a different magazine. I think it was in *Odrodzenie*.

F. *This I know, but I also heard that apart from this there are some memories of yours from America in Przekrój.*

M. Perhaps some, perhaps some....

F. *But is this possible?*

M. Yes. Actually, it is very difficult to explain to foreigners, but to you I can explain what my role was when I was staying in America. This was the role of a correspondent of the Polish press, masked, not so much masked, but staying there ostensibly as a diplomat. Because actually nothing serious could be accomplished.<sup>768</sup>

F. *Did you meet American poets in person at that time?*

M. I did. (...) And poets? Did you ask me if I met some poets? Yes. I met Robert Lowell. I made friends with Thornton Wilder. Other poets? Jarrell. A well-known outstanding poet who is no longer alive. He committed suicide. And later I also met with Thornton Wilder. Not that long ago, even though he died recently (*Rozmowy z Czesławem Miłoszem*, 109).

He did not mention Frost, Perse, Neruda, and above all Eliot! He was clearly more at ease commenting on the works written at that time or immediately after his return to Europe. Asking about his fascinations, motivations for writing, meanings of poems fragments, poetic lines and titles, Gorczyńska reconstructed the intellectual context for the five-year postwar period. And here he sometimes confused tracks, reducing his role in America to the work of a poet and translator, throwing off the scent of reading Auden and his influence on the form of *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals]:

R. G. (...) *Why did you choose the form characteristic of the Enlightenment, with its tradition of didactic satire, and pamphlets?*

C. M. Where did I get it from? I have no idea. I never thought I had any talent for rhyming. Theoretically, I was looking for a way to extend the reach of the so-called means of communication by constantly referring to other historical eras (*Podróżny świata*, 75).

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768 *Ibidem*, pp. 107–108.

We may ask why Miłosz spoke so little and so reluctantly about his postwar period in America.<sup>769</sup> Was it because he was asked about it so cautiously, or did he think that any new comments would give rise to the need to formulate further clarifications and stipulations, which would have no end, as they would never be sufficient or convincing for everyone? At that time, he included texts from the post-war years in his new selections of essays: „List półprywatny o poezji” [A Semi-Private Letter about Poetry] in *Beginning with My Streets* completed his reflections on changes in the avant-garde, and the sketch “Dwight Macdonald” was brought up in the context of people who influenced Miłosz’s intellectual biography. As I said, in the 1980s, this American experience created the writer’s image on an equal footing with others, which can be compared to the post-war fate of other Central European intellectuals. Additionally, in *A Year of the Hunter* there is an extensive thread of reflections on the years 1946–1951, extended by new details. To what extent was the poet motivated by new analyses of communism and national assessments of the political involvement of intellectuals after 1945? If these issues are not resolved, it is worth considering them as factors that may have influenced the strategies of his new reassessment of the five-year American period. This is accompanied by the following reservation: “After the passage of so many years, what I have managed to achieve in literature is projected backward; that is, the false game of those days is grounded *ex post facto*. At the same time, that historical phase loses its sharpness, and its most important features, perhaps, fade into oblivion” (*A Year of the Hunter*, 116).

Indeed, memory in *A Year of the Hunter* is on the one hand capricious, but on the other, it is consistent: although not bound by the chronology of events and their interrelation, in particular scenes the author reminds us of a number of unknown facts, people and situations from 1946–51. First of all, he returns to the issues already discussed: his friendship with Kroński, the “Hegelian bite,” the circumstances of founding the Department of Polish Literature at Columbia University and the appointment of Kridl as its head, the relationship between nature and capitalism in the United States and the perception of nature by Americans. Secondly, he develops and complements topics that he only signaled elsewhere, or captures them from a new perspective – this applies to his assessments of post-war Marxism in Poland, his visit to Europe in 1949, his acquaintance with Lowell, his return to Poland in 1950, the functioning of the Polish embassy in Paris and his escape from it in 1951, the “Miłosz case,” absorbing writers in Poland and in exile, as well as the origins of *The Captive Mind*. Returning to the same topics, Miłosz does not always maintain his earlier

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769 Miłosz approached this subject from a different perspective in interviews with American interlocutors, where he emphasized his long-standing relationship with America by making references to his postwar years there. See Miłosz, Czesław: *Conversations, op. cit.*, p. 7. Inconsistencies in thinking about his past are revealed in the late recollections – see *Miłosz’s ABC’s*, 59.

opinions. The attitude to emigration after 1945 is a striking example, particularly in *A Year of the Hunter*.

However, many facts are mentioned here for the first time, such as meeting Margaret Storm Jameson, finding an old group from Wilno, his marriage crisis related to disagreement over America, meeting Hannah Arendt in Paris, encountering the writings of Weil and Chiaromonte through *Partisan Review*, involvement in the Congress for Cultural Freedom and acquaintance with Mary McCarthy, reading books by Adamic, and finally his relationship with Jane Zielonko, the American translator of *The Captive Mind*.<sup>770</sup> Even if these memories are in many cases only mentions or references, in *A Year of the Hunter*, Miłosz's America of the 1940s is more populated than anywhere else. This is the first clear development in relation to the previous discussions. The second is the use of a different language in relation to himself from those years – Miłosz writes, “The fanatic Naphta from *The Magic Mountain* makes his bow. Now I am trying to pronounce judgement as objectively as possible, and it certainly does not come easy” (*A Year of the Hunter*, 122). He goes even further, using a key concept from *The Captive Mind* in relation to himself: “My personal Ketman (in my book *The Captive Mind*) was related somehow to the Catholic refusal to serve (speaking metaphysically now) the forces of darkness. I don't know how I would have behaved under a direct threat; I managed to avoid that” (*A Year of the Hunter*, 43).

The culmination is a new reading of a letter from Konstanty Jeleński about his correspondence with Melchior Wańkiewicz:

Kot responded to that document with sadness and insisted that the exchange lowers my image in the eyes of admirers of my poetry and is even more incomprehensible since, at that very same time, I was saying the exact opposite in my poetry. In his opinion, Wańkiewicz was in the right and my arguments were dishonest and marked by an impermissible self-assurance and self-pity (...)

From the beginning, my departure from Poland occurred under the sign of deception, because I was guided by a single desire: to leave. And then we'll see. Before her death, my mother simply ordered me to leave. Later, finding myself in America, I noticed that I had absolutely nothing to do there, in any sense at all (*A Year of the Hunter*, 212).

In a series of works in which Miłosz raises the issue of diplomatic service, *A Year of the Hunter* – possibly as the final settling of scores – occupies a special place. It would be pointless to seek here Miłosz's reassessments of his perceptions of America, its society, culture, economy and politics. These were made mainly in *Visions from San Francisco Bay* and *The Land of Ulro*, in portraits of English and American artists, and in the extended canon of translated poems – it is also worth emphasizing that they are not of primary importance for the poet. In his memory, the years 1946–1951 remain a five-year period of ideological and historiosophic dilemmas and untangling

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<sup>770</sup> See Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier's notes in *Invisible Rope*, p. 13.

himself from these dilemmas did not equate to abandoning America. *A Year of the Hunter* – after *The Issa Valley* – is not only, as mentioned in the introduction, a hint for the biographer, but also an anamnesis, whose aim is to arrange the past in an autotherapeutic way. This anamnesis proceeds differently from that of *Native Realm* – the convention of the essay was conducive for making the self-portrait more cohesive, the fragmentary convention of the journal allowed preservation of the monadic character of partial memories which are not subjected to a common, unified evaluation. The discontinuity, unplanned character, and mosaic structure of the process of anamnesis corresponds to the author’s intention – as suggested by Jeleński – to settle the score with this phase of his life. Miłosz is very far here – as Sławiński wrote in reference to *The Captive Mind*<sup>771</sup> – from rationalizing through irrationalizing, and from replacing autobiographical narration with historiosophic and poetic periphrasis. Similar possibilities are offered by the collections from the 1990s, especially *Abecadło* [Miłosz’s ABC’s] and *Inne abecadło* [Further ABC’s],<sup>772</sup> although the author makes the following reservation here:

Obviously, all biographies are false, not excluding my own, which the reader may be inclined to posit from this ABC book. They are false because their individual chapters are linked according to a predetermined scheme, whereas in fact they were connected differently, only no one knows how. In fact, the same falseness affects autobiographies because whoever writes about his own life would have to share God’s viewpoint to understand those interconnections (*Miłosz’s ABC’s*, 60).

The topic of America is treated more broadly in the abecedary from 1997, in which, in addition to general entries such as “America,” “American poetry,” “American visa,” and “English (language),” Miłosz included many entries related to individual people, including ones devoted to characters he previously portrayed, such as Kridl, Macdonald, Storm Jameson, Chiaromonte, as well as new ones, such as Koestler or Mary McCarthy. Contextual remarks about his first years in America appear in general entries such as “Primavera,” “Anthologies,” “Borejsza, Jerzy,” “Hook,” “Sidney,” “Congress for Cultural Freedom,” and many others. Remarks about America in *Abecadło* have two features in common: they cover the postwar period and the California years

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<sup>771</sup> These are the terms used by Sławiński in the sketch “Jeszcze jeden ukąszony, choć poranek świta” [Yet Another One Bitten, Even Though the Day is Dawning], *op. cit.*, p. 275.

<sup>772</sup> In this chapter I use the edition of *Abecadło* [Miłosz’s ABC’s] from 1997 and the edition of *Inne abecadło* [Further ABC’s] from 1998, rather than the edition published in 2001 in the series *Dziela zebrane* [Collected Works]. The separate collections allow us to better grasp the properties and differences in the workings of memory not only in relation to the five-year American postwar period. If we assume that *Inne abecadło* [Further ABC’s] is not a simple continuation of *Abecadło* [Miłosz’s ABC’s], nor an extended postscript to it but rather, in keeping with the intuition expressed in the title, has its own individual features differentiating it from the previous collection, it is worth treating both these works separately.

together and are not colored by a tone of expiation. Among them there are valuable confessions, “In English, just after the war, I discovered in America *The Cloud of Unknowing*, a guide to contemplation from the fourteenth century” (*Abecadło*, 79), as well as daring hypotheses: “Unavoidable contact with technological civilization and its English terminology forces us to consider what should be kept, what should be Polonized; for example, should *mass media* be translated as, literally, *means of mass communication*? I am afraid that I am the one who introduced that Polonized form when I translated the essays in the volume *Mass Culture* published by *Kultura* in Paris” (*Miłosz’s ABC’s*, 37). The entries in *Abecadło* add new details to our knowledge about his American postwar period (for example, the course of the 1949 World Peace Conference at the Waldorf-Astoria), as well as confirming earlier details (on his New York circle of friends). More interesting are cases when Miłosz placed past events in a new context or new interpretative light. This applies, for example, to his acquaintance with Koestler, whose *Darkness at Noon* he read in the USA – now he does not remind us of his old critical opinions about the novel and sets the writer’s biography in the context of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. This is also where Macdonald’s *The Root is Man* is mentioned for the first time. This work, first published in *politics* and then as a book – is one of Miłosz’s readings whose knowledge and influence he never revealed. A more striking example is the presentation of his attitude toward Wallace. In *Abecadło*, we read that: “In 1948, when Henry Wallace ran for president with the support of lib-labs and communists, Macdonald penned a cruel portrait of this fool, who became famous for his visit to Kolyma, where he found, as he wrote in his report, prisoners in excellent, even luxurious conditions” (*Abecadło*, 166).<sup>773</sup> This comment suggests that Miłosz, regardless of Macdonald, had a permanently negative attitude toward Wallace. Nevertheless, his position did evolve from support for the candidate of the Progressive Party, a potential third force in Congress, to a complete loss of respect for him, among other things under the influence of reading a sketch by the editor of *politics*.<sup>774</sup> The poet went on to say that his own reports for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs “gave him no chance” (*Abecadło*, 167), despite the fact that “the communists in Poland bet on Wallace’s victory, maintaining their mistaken belief due to the strength of their own propaganda” (*Abecadło*, 167). In fact, in the reports we can observe a similar evolution of Miłosz’s views on Wallace and his being fully discredited only in 1947. If we looked at the strategies chosen in the entries dedicated to America in *Abecadło*, what draws attention are corrections and shifts of accents. Miłosz drew on the ecstatic style of Whitman’s poems and put them in quotation marks, expressing

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773 Macdonald’s sketch was published in 1947, and not, as Miłosz wrote, in 1948. The English translation of *Miłosz’s ABC* does not include entry of Dwight Macdonald, therefore the relevant passages from Polish are translated.

774 Macdonald’s sketch was published in installments: “Henry Wallace (Part 1),” *politics* 1947, March–April, pp. 1–38; “Henry Wallace (Part 2),” *politics* 1947, May–June, pp. 96–117.



the contradictions of the New World: “What splendor! What poverty! What humanity! What inhumanity! What mutual goodwill! What individual isolation! What loyalty to the ideal! What hypocrisy! What a triumph of conscience! What perversity!” (*Miłosz’s ABC’s*, 25). Here his American formation begins in childhood, through Hoover’s battle against hunger, and deepens in his youth through cinema and literature. The war is presented as a civilizational conflict of empires proposing various models for the fulfillment of humanity, and the Cold War as its continuation. In a different light, Miłosz puts postwar misunderstandings, “since a lack of enthusiasm for America could be perceived as an inclination toward the Communist side” (*Miłosz’s ABC’s*, 27). The point of access in the story is the moment in the twentieth century, when New York becomes the capital of the world and the USA the leader the West. This perspective also makes it possible to look back to the time when travel by sea was the only available means of reaching America, which symbolically showed the distance between the continents of culture. Traversing the ocean was then most often a life-changing decision, determining the future of the traveler and his place on earth. In part, this was also the case with the poet, who acknowledged: “I realize that had I remained in France I would not have received the Neustadt Prize in 1978 (...), or the Nobel Prize after all” (*Miłosz’s ABC’s*, 27). His fate, set in historical perspective, shows the dependence of a single human life on global civilizational transformations. In the second half of the century, which Miłosz clearly emphasized, the possibility of free movement between continents resulted in the fact that the choice of one’s place in life no longer had the determining power it used to in the past, and this in turn affected the modern identity and perception of the world. Aware of the extent to which the image of America was shaped by the reports of those who succeeded in it and those who failed to fulfill their hopes, he united both of these threads, and confessed how he looked at the New World in the 1940s:

Janka’s father also was one who returned from America. Before World War I Ludwik Dłuski worked for several years in various metallurgical plants on the East Coast. I thought of him when I looked at the rusted skeletons of abandoned factories in the Hudson River Valley north of New York City. In those old-fashioned factories Mr. Dłuski shared the fate of the disinherited of the earth who labor from dawn to dusk, without the rights and privileges won later on by labor unions. In the Warsaw he returned to, life may have been difficult, but without that exhausting labor (he became a court bailiff), and, at least, not so lonely (*Miłosz’s ABC’s*, 28).

The intention to synthesize, which is the premise of the entry about America, is unexpectedly abandoned, and the entry ends with a personal reminiscence with no ambition to generalize. The fluid and arbitrary transition from autobiographical to encyclopedic narration does not allow us to deny that Miłosz’s comments about America have an intimate dimension, but they cannot be considered strictly personal. America in *Abecadło* is as much Miłosz’s America as the America of his generation, with its particular experience of it, and the image of America this generation may accept. The presentation of American poetry takes a different course – Miłosz speaks

here as a reader, translator and poet. Also here he goes back to his childhood years, when fairytale-like stories about Indians were poetry to him, endowing the New World with supernatural qualities, discussing his fascination with Poe and Whitman in the Wilno period, his work on the anthology of English-language poetry, and goes on to mention his translations from the 1940s. Then he leaves reporting mode and expresses a thought which remains valid as one uttered by an old poet, evaluating literary achievements: “of all American poets, I will always have the greatest affinity with Walt Whitman” (*Miłosz’s ABC’s*, 30).

What disappears from the horizon of memory is his lasting interest in Eliot’s work, his post-war fascination with Auden and Jarell, and his recognition for Williams and Frost. Another correction of his position is made here, based on his practice of disclosure and concealment, which governed Miłosz’s work to the very last line. Similar shifts can be observed in *Inne abecadlo* in the entries dedicated to Miller and Frost – the portrait of the poet from New Hampshire does not mention a meeting with him at the conference in Bread Loaf.

*Inne abecadlo* contains a different portrait frame in comparison to the abecadary from 1997 – it is the thought of banishment from Paradise, as a consequence of which every journey of life, and in it every journey and exile, and every experience of alienation and emptiness, has a metaphysical quality. Only in this context can we justify the choice of Miller, Frost, but also Adamic and Edward Hopper as those American figures who are given separate entries in the collection. Adamic is a personally important figure for Miłosz the emigrant, because not only did he not forget about his origins, but he made that an important feature of his identity in the United States. Reflecting on him, Miłosz uses the language of emancipatory movements developed in America, conscious of belonging to a community of white people with European roots. He writes, “I was not meant to experience any discrimination in America; on the contrary, I was immediately part of the white elite. First with diplomatic papers, and during my second stay as a full citizen of the university campus. It agreed with my fate, that of a man of class privilege, who did, however, remain aware of it” (*Inne abecadlo*, 11). As a result, in both abecedaries there is no mention of Americans other than white Americans – Miłosz’s failure to go beyond the circle of Euro-Atlantic culture would be a manifestation of an awareness of the limitations, transcending which may be a utopian postulate, and an awareness of his mission in relation to his own heritage. Even more interesting conclusions can be drawn from the portrait of Hopper, an artist whose imagination was a beacon for Miłosz’s perception of America in the 1940s. This creator of moving images of loneliness considered alienation to be the main feature of American civilization, which agreed with Miłosz’s observations both in relation to the United States and the condition of the modern human in general. Miłosz emphasized this feature of Hopper in the entry devoted to the painter, using his point of view to illustrate his own convictions. In the *ABC’s*, the entries on individual persons not only form an intimate lapidarium, they are also often used as masks, or costumes for presenting attitudes and views close to Miłosz or for objectivizing them. By making

more and more numerous evaluations, the poet revealed what and how much he owed to others, including his American friendships in the 1940s or immediately after his escape to Maisons-Lafitte – this applies, for instance, to Jeanne Hersch. However, he did not cease to refer to the heated discussions on the cooperation between intellectuals and communists that took place in Poland. In 1988, he still explained,

Talking about the “domestic disgrace” of the writers in the Polish People’s Republic ignores the simple fact that they were writers, which means they wanted to publish, and the state was the only publisher. (...) Moralizing now, after the fall of that political system, seems to be based on the slightly absurd assumption that it was the first time in history that a poet came uninvited to a feast of armed Philistines. Of the three bad possibilities, frying in the literary “environment,” emigration, and serving in diplomacy, I chose the third, but the physical distance from what was going on, that is, the rule of terror, did not protect me from guilt. When I came from abroad, my clothes distinguished me as one of the “owners of People’s Poland” and people, taking me for an officer of the Security Service, were afraid of me. As I write openly about it now, it looks like cynicism, but the truth is that I owed being appointed to a diplomatic post not to party zeal, since I was not a member, but to my position as a favored poet. Again, as before the war, my views were inappropriate, but I could only give vent to them by publishing my *Traktat moralny* at the very last minute, just before the introduction of ‘socialist realism.’ However, 1949 was already too much for my stomach (*Inne abecadło*, 81).

Miłosz then returns to his cooperation with Putrament, Borejsza, and Hertz, his friendship with Kroński, his American contacts with Einstein, Macdonald and Neruda, and to reading Wells, Weil, Crane, Gibbon, and Williams. This proves that their work was still an important point of reference for his own intellectual biography. It does sometimes happen, however, that this horizon of the past is so far removed from his current perspective that he depicts it as alien to himself, surprising him with absurdities that did not seem to be part of his own history – an example would be the anti-American propaganda in the years of Stalinism. In perspective, these traces of history in which his own life took place seem so alien and improbable as to be incredible: “I am not making any of this up, I am only talking about what I saw with my own eyes and heard with my own ears.”<sup>775</sup> On the other hand, as Marek Zaleski aptly concludes, Miłosz was exceptionally aware of the “illusory nature of the belief that one who writes, writes the “truth” and one who reads learns “how it really was”<sup>776</sup> – few people, as the researcher emphasizes, understood so deeply the value of creative fiction in presenting reality:

In the end, to put it in Zaleski’s words, he is after all well aware that both he and his reader participate in the production of what is called real fabrication. They do not tell each other the truth, but they do not lie, as if bearing in mind the philosopher’s reminder that just as a

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775 Miłosz, Czesław: *Spizarnia literacka* [A Literary Larder], Krakow, 2004, p. 131.

776 Marek, Zaleski: “Abecadło Miłosza” [Miłosz’s ABC’s]. In *idem: Zamiast*, [Instead] *op. cit.*, p. 136.

contradiction is not a sign of falsehood, so the absence of a contradiction is not a sign of the truth.<sup>777</sup>

The declaration “I am not making any of this up” at best problematizes this issue once more. The last years of his work did not bring any fundamental changes in his approach to his American postwar period over the previous decades – they supplemented his earlier accounts with further, sometimes very colorful details and perpetuated what was said earlier. Their fragmentary character, inconsistency, and randomness, as well as their intentionally partial character correspond at a deeper level to the poet’s disbelief in the possibility of reconstructing one’s own biography. This was Miłosz’s main idea when he wrote in *A Year of the Hunter* that it was not possible to recreate his first years in America on the basis of his writings. Although tempting, it remained a challenge for himself. He understood that returns to the past could not take the form of repetition, and even that personal access to it might not be possible, in short: to no one are the contours of the past visible very clearly.

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<sup>777</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 139.

## Glossary

- Anders, Władysław (1892–1970) – lieutenant general of the Polish Army, from 1944 to 1945 Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces, from 1950 to 1954 successor to the President of the Republic of Poland in exile.
- Andrzejewski, Jerzy (1909–1983) – writer, friend of Czesław Miłosz. In 1945, together with the poet, he co-created the drama film *Robinson warszawski* [Robinson Crusoe of Warsaw], inspired by talks with Władysław Szpilman. Miłosz withdrew his name from the credits because of the changes made to the film.
- Bez oręża* [Blessed Are the Meek] – novel by Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, was published with the subtitle *A Novel About St. Francis of Assisi* (translated by Rulka Langer) at Roy Publishers publishing house in New York in 1944. In the United States it was then selected as book of the month by the Book of the Month Club in April, 1944 and became a bestseller.
- Bieńkowski, Zbigniew (1913–1994) – poet, critic, essayist, translator, especially of works by Apollinaire and Baudelaire.
- Biuro Nadzoru Estetyki Produkcji [Production Aesthetics Supervision Bureau] (BNEP) – established in 1945 on the initiative of Wanda Telakowska (1905–1985), who worked at the Ministry of Culture. In 1948, Miłosz had the opportunity to observe Telakowska’s activities in the United States, where she had come in search of a market for Polish textiles, with designs inspired by folk handicraft.
- Borejsza, Jerzy (1905–1952) – journalist, publisher and communist activist. From 1944 to 1948 he was President of the Czytelnik Publishing Cooperative, and from 1948 to 1950 worked as editor-in-chief of *Odrodzenie*.
- Borowski, Tadeusz (1922–1951) – poet, writer, journalist, prisoner in the Auschwitz concentration camp. Having learned of his suicide, Miłosz dedicated to him the poem entitled “Na śmierć Tadeusza Borowskiego” [On the Death of Tadeusz Borowski].
- Bór-Komorowski, Tadeusz (1895–1966) – Major General of the Polish Army of the Second Polish Republic, commander of the Home Army (1943–1944) responsible for the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising, in the years 1944–1947, Commander-in-chief of the Polish Armed Forces. From 1947 to 1949 the Prime Minister of the Polish Government in exile. In 1946 he visited the United States on the invitation of the Polish-American Congress.
- Breza, Tadeusz (1905–1970) – prose writer, essayist, literary and theater critic.
- Czapski, Józef (1896–1993) – painter and essayist, inmate of Soviet Gulags, soldier in the Polish Army in the USSR. After 1945, he stayed in Paris. He was a co-founder of *Kultura*.
- Dąbrowska, Maria (1889–1965) – novelist, essayist, playwright, translator, author of the novel tetralogy *Noce i dnie* [Nights and Days] (1931–1934), for which she was nominated for the Nobel Prize several times.
- Dygat, Stanisław (1914–1978) – prose writer and playwright, columnist.
- Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza* [The Polish Daily & Soldier’s Daily] – a popular magazine among Polish émigrés in Great Britain, established in London in 1944 as a result of the merger of *Dziennik Polski* [The Polish Daily] (published in London from 1940) and *Dziennik Żołnierza* [Soldier’s Daily] (published in Glasgow from 1940).
- Gajcy, Tadeusz (1922–1944) – poet, playwright, prose writer and critic, co-founder and editor of the magazine *Sztuka i Naród* [Art and Nation], soldier of the Home Army. He died in the Warsaw Uprising. Miłosz dedicated the poem “Ballada” [A Ballad] to him in the volume *Król Popiel i inne wiersze* [King Popiel and Other Poems] (Paris 1962).
- Gatczyński, Konstanty Ildefons (1905–1953), poet, satirist. In 1946–1950 he published a series of small satirical scenes *Teatrzyk “Zielona Gęś”* [The Green Goose Theater] in *Przekrój*. Miłosz portrayed him as Delta in *The Captive Mind*.

- Giedroyc, Jerzy (1906–2000) – publisher, politician, columnist. After World War II, he remained in exile. In 1946, he founded the Literary Institute, the most important Polish émigré publishing house, and in 1947 the monthly *Kultura*, of which he was the editor-in-chief.
- Gielgud, Val (1900–1981) – English actor, writer and director. He was associated with BBC Radio after 1929 (also as the author of the first radio plays) and BBC Television after 1930.
- Gojawiczyńska, Pola (1896–1963) – prose writer, author of novels on social issues.
- Gombrowicz, Witold (1904–1969) – prose writer, playwright and essayist. After 1939 in emigration, first in Argentina and then in France. He cooperated with the Literary Institute and *Kultura*, and corresponded with Czesław Miłosz.
- Grynberg, Henryk (b. 1936) – prose writer and poet. After 1967, he lived in the United States, collaborating with the Voice of America and émigré literary magazines.
- Hertz, Aleksander (1895–1983) – sociologist, living in the United States after 1940, where he published several works in English, including *The Rise of Peasant Democracy* (1957). Co-worker of the Paris-based magazine *Kultura*. He was Miłosz's acquaintance during his work in radio before 1939.
- Hertz, Paweł (1918–2001) – poet, essayist, critic, translator and editor.
- Iwaszkiewicz, Jarosław (1894–1980) – poet, prose writer, essayist and translator, who fascinated the young Miłosz. The poet dedicated to him a poem “O młodszym bracie” [On a Younger Brother] in the 1930s. After the war, he corresponded with him extensively.
- Jak pantera, co w złotej klatce...* [Like a Panther in a Golden Cage] – a tango. The song *Złota pantera* [Golden Panther] from 1929 was composed by Jakub Kagan to lyrics written by Andrzej Włast.
- Janta-Pończyński, Aleksander (1908–1974) – writer, journalist, translator, author of travel reports; after the war he settled in the United States.
- Jeleński, Konstanty Aleksander (1922–1987) – essayist, critic, translator, worked with *Kultura*, friend of Czesław Miłosz.
- Kassern, Tadeusz Zygfryd (1904–1957) – composer. After 1946 he stayed in the United States.
- Kisielewski, Stefan (1911–1991) – prose writer, columnist, music critic, composer, Home Army soldier. His journalistic work was signed by the literary pseudonym Kisiel.
- Kossak-Szczucka, Zofia (1889–1968) – writer, social activist, co-founder of underground organizations during the occupation: Front Odrodzenia Polski [Front for the Rebirth of Poland] and the Żegota Council to Aid Jews.
- Koussevitzki, Sergei (1874–1951), Russian-born conductor. In 1924 he emigrated to the United States and he was appointed musical director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (until 1949).
- Kowalska, Anna (1903–1969) – novelist, author of short stories. After the Second World War she lived in Wrocław, where she co-edited *Zeszyty Wrocławskie*.
- Kraśiński, Zygmunt (1812–1859) Polish Romantic poet and playwright, one of the three Polish bards of the Romantic period.
- Kridl, Manfred (1882–1957) – historian and theorist of literature, in 1932–1939 professor at Stefan Batory University in Wilno. After 1940 in exile. In 1948, he took over the Chair of Polish Literature at Columbia University, founded by the government of the Polish People's Republic, where he taught until 1957.
- Kroński, Tadeusz Juliusz (1907–1958) – philosopher, historian of philosophy, Marxist. He exerted a strong influence on Miłosz's worldview. The poet devoted to him, among other things, a chapter of *Native Realm* entitled “Tygrys” [Tiger].
- Kultura* – a Polish émigré monthly published in from 1947 to 2000, initially in Rome, and from 1948 onward in Paris, by the Literary Institute, which was a cultural and political center for the Polish émigré community after the Second World War.
- Kuryluk, Karol (1910–1967) – journalist, political and cultural activist, editor. He edited the weekly *Odrodzenie*, published from December 1944 to March 1950, from the magazine's creation until February 1948.

Kuśniewicz, Andrzej (1904–1993) – prose writer. He was a Polish consul in France from 1946 to 1950. *Kuźnica* – a social and literary weekly, published from 1945 to 1950. It represented the milieu of left-wing intellectuals and writers associated with the Polish Workers' Party, whose work was supposed to promote Marxist philosophy and the principles of state cultural policy. The editorial office included Kazimierz Brandys, Stanisław Dygat, Paweł Hertz, Mieczysław Jastrun, Jan Kott, Ryszard Matuszewski, and Adam Ważyk. In 1950, the magazine was merged with *Odrodzenie*, thus forming the weekly *Nowa Kultura* in its place.

Lechoń, Jan (1899–1956) – poet, prose writer. He lived in the United States after 1940.

Matuszewski, Ryszard (1914–2010) – literary historian, literary critic, essayist and translator from French. He was the secretary of the editorial office of *Kuźnica*. (1946–1950), then head of the criticism department (1950–1960) and deputy editor-in-chief of the weekly *Nowa Kultura*. (1952–1956). Author of a memoir book *Moje spotkania z Czesławem Miłoszem* [My Encounters with Czesław Miłosz] (2004).

Mickiewicz, Adam (1798–1855) – Polish national bard, author of the national epic *Sir Thaddeus* (1834). For his work against the tsarist autocracy, he was forced to emigrate, where he was an activist in intellectual and political life.

Mikołajczyk, Stanisław (1901–1966) – politician, social activist, Prime Minister of the Polish government in exile. In June 1945 he returned to Poland. He was the leader of the Polish People's Party (PSL), Member of the Sejm, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture in the Provisional Government of National Unity. After the falsified elections to the Sejm in 1947, threatened with arrest, he secretly left Poland and emigrated to the United States. PSL members became victims of brutal repression by communists.

Natkowska, Zofia (1884–1954) – writer, author of psychological and social novels.

Niemcewicz, Julian Ursyn (1757 or 1758–1841) – writer, publicist, soldier. He stayed in the United States in 1797–1807, after the defeat of the Kosciuszko Uprising.

Norwid, Cyprian Kamil (1821–1883) poet, playwright, draftsman, one of the most outstanding Romantic artists, whose poetics inspired avant-garde artists of the 20th century.

*Nowiny Literackie* – a literary weekly published in 1947–1948. Its editor-in-chief was Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, who harkened back in its pages to the pre-war weekly *Wiadomości Literackie*.

*Odrodzenie* – the first post-war social and literary weekly published from 1944 to 1950. Initially, the magazine did not represent a clear ideological option, only after 1948, when Karol Kuryluk ceased to be its editor-in-chief, did it begin to promote socialist realism. From 1948 until the magazine was shut down, its editor-in-chief was Jerzy Borejsza.

Osmańczyk, Edmund Jan (1913–1989) – Polish publicist and political scientist, deputy to the Sejm of the Polish People's Republic.

Polish II Corps – in 1943–1947 an organizational unit of the Polish Armed Forces in the West, formed to fight together with the Allies. In 1943, the Corps took part in the Italian campaign, including the Battle of Monte Cassino, battles near Piedimonte, liberating Ancona, breaking the Gothic Line, and taking part in the Battle of Bologna. In 1946, the soldiers of the Second Corps were transported to Great Britain, where most of them decided to remain. The Corps was disbanded in 1947.

Pickett, Virginia – a friend of the Kridl family who took care of Miłosz and his wife during their stay at Smith College.

Pruszyński, Ksawery (1907–1950) – writer, essayist, reporter. During World War II he served in the Polish army in the West and worked in the diplomacy of the Polish emigration government. After 1945, he returned to Poland, worked in the diplomatic service of the Polish People's Republic; he died in a car accident in Germany.

*Przekrój* – a socio-cultural magazine published from 1945 to 2013 in Krakow as a weekly and again since 2016 in Warsaw as a quarterly.

- Przyboś, Julian (1901–1970) – an avant-garde poet. From 1947 to 1951 he was a diplomat of the Polish People’s Republic in Switzerland.
- Przybyszewski, Stanisław (1868–1927), a leading writer and creator of the program of early modernism, one of the initiators of Expressionism.
- Putrament, Jerzy (1910–1986) – prose writer, publicist, party activist. In 1945–1947 he was a diplomat of the Polish People’s Republic in Switzerland, and from 1947 to 1950 Ambassador to France.
- Różewicz, Tadeusz (1921–2014) – poet, playwright, prose writer and screenwriter. Czesław Miłosz translated his poetry into English.
- Sandauer, Artur (1913–1989) – literary critic, essayist and translator.
- Schulz, Bruno (1892–1942) – prose writer, literary critic, graphic artist, painter and illustrator of Jewish origin, shot to death by a Gestapo officer during the war.
- Słonimski, Antoni (1895–1976) – poet, publicist, critic. In exile from 1939 to 1951. In 1942–1946 he was editor-in-chief of the emigration cultural and social monthly *Nowa Polska*, published in London. It was a magazine with a socialist leaning, distinguished by its extensive literary section.
- Szmaglewska, Seweryna (1916–1992) – prose writer, author of works for children. In 1945, her book *Dymy nad Birkenau* [*Smoke over Birkenau*] was published (Warsaw, Czytelnik).
- Słowacki, Juliusz (1809–1849) – poet, playwright, epistologist, one of the three bards of Polish Romanticism.
- Sprzysiężenie* [The Pact] – a novel of reckoning, written by Stefan Kisielewski, published in 1947, Miłosz read the manuscript during the occupation, when he became friends with its author.
- Straszewicz, Czesław (1904–1963) – writer, journalist and radio broadcaster. In the summer of 1939, with Witold Gombrowicz, he left Poland and found himself in Argentina. In 1939–1944 he served in the 10th Armored Cavalry Brigade under General Stanisław Maczek, and later as an editor at a radio station. In 1945 he settled in Uruguay, in the 1950s he worked for Radio Free Europe.
- Sym, Igo, born Karol Antoni Juliusz Sym (1896–1941) – Polish, Austrian and German actor, a *Volksdeutscher*, one of the most famous Polish collaborators with the Third Reich, who was the director of German propaganda theatres in occupied Warsaw. He was shot after being sentenced to death by Związek Walki Zbrojnej (Union for Armed Struggle – Polish underground army).
- Szpilki* – a satirical weekly founded in 1935, which contained a rich literary section.
- Szumiały mu echa kawiarni* [He Heard the Echoes of the Café] – a waltz composed by Jerzy Boczkowski, to his own lyrics, in 1915. Miłosz recalls this song, sung at his parents’ house in Wilno in the spring of 1920 in *Osobny zeszyt* [*The Separate Notebooks*] (1977–1979) and quotes its fragment in the closing lines of the first part of *A Treatise on Poetry* (1957).
- The World Conference of the Teaching Profession – took place in Endicott, New York, August 17–30, 1946. The conference and was dedicated to teaching children and young people in countries destroyed during World War II.
- The World Conference of the Teaching Profession – took place in Endicott, New York, August 17–30, 1946. The conference and was dedicated to teaching children and young people in countries destroyed during World War II.
- Titina* – a French song, *Je cherche après Titine*, composed in 1917 by Léo Daniderff, which Charlie Chaplin used in the film *Today* (1936). In 1939 the song, with new words by Marian Hemar and performed by Ludwik Sempoliński (*Ten wąsik, ach, ten wąsik* [The little mustache]), was a hit of the Warsaw cabaret Ali Baba.
- Turowicz, Jerzy (1912–1999) – journalist, publicist, friend of Czesław Miłosz. After 1945 he was the editor-in-chief of *Tygodnik Powszechny*: a Catholic weekly.



- Twórczość* – a critical-literary monthly, published from 1945 in Krakow, and then since 1950 in Warsaw. In those years, its editor-in-chief was Kazimierz Wyka, a friend of Czesław Miłosz, who presented contemporary Polish literature in its pages.
- Tygodnik Powszechny* – a Catholic social and cultural weekly founded in 1945.
- Wańkiewicz, Melchior (1892–1974) – journalist, author of reportages, memoirs and novels, war correspondent of the Polish II Corps in Italy.
- Ważyk, Adam (1905–1982) born Ajzyk Wagman – avant-garde poet, prose writer, translator of modern literature (e.g. works by Cendrars, Appollinaire) and ancient literature (Horace's odes).
- Węgiński, Tomasz Kajetan (1756–1787) – poet and satirist of the Enlightenment period, traveler. Author of numerous lampoons ridiculing those in power. He visited the United States in 1783.
- Wiadomości Literackie* – a cultural weekly published by Antoni Borman and Mieczysław Grydzewski (editor-in-chief) in Warsaw, from 1924 to 1939. The magazine's main collaborators were members of the Skamander literary group.
- Wierzyński, Kazimierz (1894–1969) – poet, prose writer, lived in the United States from 1941 to 1964.
- Witkiewicz, Stanisław Ignacy (1885–1939) – playwright, prose writer, painter, philosopher and theorist of art; committed suicide after the Soviet invasion of Poland.
- Wittlin, Józef (1896–1976) – poet, prose writer, essayist, translator, friend of Czesław Miłosz. After 1941 he lived in the United States.
- Wnukowa, Józefina (1911–2000) – painter, weaver, academic lecturer.
- World Congress of Intellectuals in Defense of Peace (August 25–28, 1948) – organized by a Polish-French committee. Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz was the chairman of the Polish commission. As a result of opposition from the Soviet delegation, Albert Einstein's memorandum addressed to the governments of the countries of the world and calling for control over nuclear energy and universal disarmament was not read out during the session.
- Zagórski, Jerzy (1907–1964) – poet, essayist, translator. He served as cultural attaché of the Polish Embassy in Paris from 1947 to 1948.
- Zapolska, Gabriela, the pen name of Maria Gabriela Janowska, née Piotrowska of the Korwin noble family (1857–1921) – Polish actress, playwright, novelist and columnist. A representative of Polish naturalism, she mocked the moral hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie; she wrote satirical comedies, dramas and novels.

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- . "Polska z Nowego Jorku." *Przekrój*, no. 66, 1946.
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<sup>1</sup> Quotations in this book are taken from literary press. In 2018, the journalistic pieces have been edited in one volume titled *W cieniu totalitaryzmów. Publicystyka rozproszona z lat 1945–1951 oraz teksty z okresu II wojny światowej*. Collected and edited with the supervision of A. Fiut: M. Antoniuk, S. Bill, K. Jarzyńska, E. Kołodziejczyk, M. Woźniak-Łabieniec, Kraków 2018.

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