

MAKING SENSE OF CZESLAW MILOSZ:
A POET'S FORMATIVE DIALOGUE WITH HIS TRANSNATIONAL AUDIENCES

By

Joanna Mazurska

Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

History

August, 2013

Nashville, Tennessee

Approved:

Professor Michael Bess

Professor Marci Shore

Professor Helmut W. Smith

Professor Frank Wcislo

Professor Meike Werner

To my parents, Grazyna and Piotr Mazurscy

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the members of my Dissertation Committee: Michael Bess, Marci Shore, Helmut Smith, Frank Wcislo, and Meike Werner. Each of them has contributed enormously to my project through providing professional guidance and encouragement. It is with immense gratitude that I acknowledge the support of my mentor Professor Michael Bess, who has been for me a constant source of intellectual inspiration, and whose generosity and sense of humor has brightened my academic path from the very first day in graduate school.

My thesis would have remained a dream had it not been for the institutional and financial support of my academic home - the Vanderbilt Department of History. I am grateful for the support from the Vanderbilt Graduate School Summer Research Fund, the George J. Graham Jr. Fellowship at the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities, the Max Kade Center Graduate Student Research Grant, the National Program for the Development of the Humanities Grant from the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education, and the New York University Remarque Institute Visiting Fellowship.

I wish to thank to my friends at the Vanderbilt Department of History who have kept me company on this journey with Milosz. I owe my deepest gratitude to my close friends involved directly in this project: Vivian Finch, Amanda Johnson, Lindsay Johnson, Angela Sutton, Jeremy DeWaal, and Agnieszka Wozniak. My work has also benefited from the intellectual guidance of Professor Jerzy W. Borejsza and Piotr Kloczowski. Nobody has been more important to me in the course of pursuing this project than the members of my family. I would like to thank to my parents, my grandparents, my brother Krzysztof and my fiancé Karol for their unwavering support and love.

CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	1
Milosz: Biographical Sketch	25
1. “What has a poet to do if he cannot express commiseration and terror?”: Milosz’s Dialogue with his Polish Audience in the 1940s	32
Poet diplomat	34
A writer and “The Reader”	48
People’s Poland’s supreme poet	52
A treatise on ironic loyalty	67
Nowhere to publish, nothing to write	73
The last battle over poetry	82
2. Neither East nor West: The Poet and Cold War Politics	96
The transatlantic intellectual community	98
In a jar with spiders	108
A story of one sickness	119
On the Galapagos Islands	128
“Voices of Disillusion”	139
Toward the garden of poetry	152
3. Beyond Nationalism: Milosz in a Dialogue with East Central European Intellectuals	161
<i>Gente Lithuanus, natione Polonus</i>	165
“I have to admit, to Polishness I am allergic”	172
Private obligations	190
Looking for a center	210
4. Found in Translation: Milosz and his American Audience	221
A poet in exile	224
Pains of addressing an American audience	229
The poet of aftermath	236
Getting rid of a historic mask	246
“My name was made in America”	255

“Yourself disconsolate, you comfort us with your poetry”	261
5. “Fortunate the Nation that has a Poet”: The Reception of Milosz in Poland in the 1970s and 1980s	268
The invisible rope	272
The émigré poet, the censor, and the underground publisher	278
Father and sons	290
“That morning, people lined up for bread and for Milosz”	302
“On the purring breast of the nation...”	310
Conclusions: What is an Author?	326
Bibliography	332

INTRODUCTION

“I am Milosz, I must be Milosz
Being Milosz, I don't want to be Milosz,
I kill the Milosz within me
To be more Milosz.”¹

MAKING SENSE OF MILOSZ

In 1981, after thirty years in exile, Czeslaw Milosz returned to Poland, hailed as a national hero. This event reveals the particularly Eastern European phenomenon of entanglement between literature and politics, through which a writer becomes a spiritual leader whose words exercise quasi-demiurgic power over his fellow citizens. In my dissertation, I investigate the mechanism of the politics of poetry in Central and Eastern Europe, and argue that within this paradigm, the writer's position is only superficially privileged. In fact, the audience infringes on the author's creative freedom by subordinating the literary value of his work to a narrowly political reading. With poetry having always been closely linked to the political life of the Polish nation, and the position of the leading poet carrying a strong symbolic value, Milosz's Polish audiences strived to create an image of Milosz that would serve as a useful tool in their political battles: from supporting a nascent socialist system in Poland in the 1940s to boosting the 1980s anticommunist opposition.

¹ Witold Gombrowicz, "Przekleste zdrobnienie znowu dalo się mi we znaki (Obroncom poezji w odpowiedzi)," *Kultura* 7-8 (1952).

Rather than focusing on Milosz's individual perception of his task as an intellectual, this dissertation aims at revealing how his intellectual responsibility emerged through a dialectical process of engagement with five distinct constituencies among his readership. The principal methodological innovation of my project consists in thinking of intellectuals such as Milosz as products of a give-and-take process in which their identity is gradually shaped and catalyzed in dialectical interaction with their audiences. I argue that Milosz's audiences deployed Cold War politics in order to co-author the poet's identity according to their political needs. In a dialectical process, the readers of Milosz's poetic and prose works tried to impose certain conflicting intellectual images on Milosz – that of the leading poet of socialist Poland, an anti-communist political writer, or of the Polish national poet. While some of Milosz's friends played an instrumental role in supporting his poetic work and in the crystallization of his artistic self, the other twentieth-century audiences tended to approach Milosz's work through the lens of their own political interests.

The aim of this project then is to show an intellectual "in the making" by investigating the following questions: What did it mean to be an Eastern European poet and intellectual in the twentieth century? Why were Milosz's readers invested in creating his artistic and intellectual image? What mechanisms did they apply in order to make sense of Milosz? My dissertation suggests a different picture of the role of the twentieth century intellectual, as it offers approaches that focus primarily on Milosz's interaction with his audiences rather than on the author himself. In this sense, I use Milosz's example not only as a vantage point for reflection on the role of intellectuals, but also because it provides an insight into the critical issues of the era: nationalism, communism and

globalism in the context of the remarkable realignment of power and society that took place in the century's final decade.

Since the main purpose of my dissertation is to explore the role of audience in the creation Milosz's image, I examine five different audiences of Milosz and their dialogues with the poet in the second half of the twentieth century. In each of the five chapters my purpose is to reveal the nature of each particular audience, the character of the exchange it entered into with Milosz, and the contribution it made to Milosz' intellectual image. In the first chapter, I look at the dialogue between Milosz and Polish writers and editors in the years 1945-1950 – at a time when ideological pressure first forced Milosz to compromise his literary image, and eventually made him choose exile rather than accept the position of a leading figure of social realist poetry. In chapter two, I discuss Western intellectuals who engaged in debate over anti-communism after Milosz's 1953 publication of *The Captive Mind*, and through the lens of Milosz's audience in the CCF, I examine Milosz's contribution to contemporary political critique. My third chapter examines Milosz's debates with his friends from the Polish émigré monthly *Kultura* and with other East-Central European intellectual exiles over defining their role against the currents of nationalist rhetoric – a dialogue that went on from the 1960s to the 1980s. Next, in chapter four, I discuss the reception of Milosz's poetry by the American literary audience after 1973 - from Milosz's initial skepticism about finding readers for his poetry, through his efforts to promote Polish verses to the American audience, his translation of his own poems, and finally, engagement of a broader poetry readership in a dialogue. Finally, in chapter five, I investigate how underground editions of Milosz's works contributed to shaping dissident discourse in Poland in the 1970s and 80s, and

explore Milosz's interaction with his broad Polish audience who hoped that Milosz, a recent Nobel Prize recipient, would become the Polish national poet.

In 1989, one of his young readers, Andrzej Chrabolowski, wrote to Milosz from Poland, making a discerning comment about Milosz's constant dissatisfaction with his public image. "I sense," Chrabolowski said "that you would like to be treated like a stone that has several edges, and each of them is different, of each something different can be said."² Like Chrabolowski, other readers of Milosz recognized his efforts to project to his audience such an image of himself as would perfectly mirror his own idea of who he was. The poet often claimed that he had been forced to put on different masks throughout his life, and that people tended to misunderstand or distort his intentions. Since the early years of his career as a Polish poet, Milosz's had been going to considerable lengths in order to convey to his readers a certain message about the place of his work in the Polish literary tradition and its historic undercurrents. Since Milosz himself had a dualistic nature and was a man torn between intellectual and poetic callings, the matter of his self-presentation was highly complex. In a letter from the 1960s to his friend Jan Blonski, Milosz wrote: "Writing poetry stands in stark contrast to all intellectual activity. In order to write poems, I have to sleep a lot and write down what is given to me... yet, I am constantly hindered by the avidity to read, comprehend, or act."³

This contradictory nature of Milosz's artistic life is encapsulated in the motto of this introduction, which comes from Witold Gombrowicz – another great figure of twentieth-century Polish literature and a friend of Milosz's. Gombrowicz emphasized that subsequent stages of Milosz's career, when he cut himself off from his previous artistic

² Andrzej Chrabolowski's letter to Milosz, 10/11/1989. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; b. 12, f. 229 (further cited as Czeslaw Milosz Papers).

³ Czeslaw Milosz's letter to Jan Blonski, n.d. 1960s. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 9.

goals, allowed Milosz to attain spiritual freedom, and to develop intellectually and artistically. In my investigation of the contradictions involved in Milosz's intellectual role, I side with Clare Cavanagh's words that "[Milosz's] life's work might be seen as an oscillation between the demands and seductions of engagement, on the one hand, and the necessity for distance – be it aesthetic, ethical, or some combination of the two – on the other."⁴ It was only through this distance that Milosz could refrain from playing the role of the Polish national poet, worshipping the nation's martyr history. My dissertation will not only reveal his audience contribution to creating his image, but also the enormous effort Milosz made to remain in control of his public image.

In my dissertation, I will use audience reception theory that emphasizes the reader's contribution to the creation of a text's meaning. Among others, I will refer to Hans Robert Jauss' hermeneutical theory of reception, as it enables me to discuss the extent to which Milosz's texts exerted a transformative power over his audience. According to Jauss' theory, rather than analyze the effects of authorial intended meanings in a text, it is important to examine how meanings are created by readers. Jauss argues that the only proper approach to literary history is the aesthetics of reception, which emphasizes changing receptions of literary works. Jauss points out that a historian should approach a literary text as a reader-critic, who is aware of the tradition of interpretations and textual evaluations of a given text. She must also recognize that reception is a process in which texts are reproduced and recreated by readers. Consequently, the major task for a historian is to consider the historical "relevance of literature" diachronically,

⁴ Clare Cavanagh, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics: Russia, Poland, and the West* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009), 253.

synchronously, and in the “relationship of the immanent literary development to the general process of history.”⁵

A detailed biographical sketch of Milosz follows this introduction.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

This dissertation engages several historiographies, each of which is linked to the specific historical and social circumstances of particular audiences. Consequently, I engage four principal areas of study: exploration of the role of intellectuals in the twentieth century; studies of Milosz’s literary works, scholarly discussion on Polish national discourse; and the sociology of dissident movements. Both the literatures on intellectuals and on Milosz constitute an overarching thematic framework for this dissertation.

Milosz had always been torn between his responsibilities as an intellectual and as a poet. Raised in the Eastern European ethos of the intelligentsia’s social engagement, throughout his life Milosz navigated between his civic passions and his devotion to poetry. Throughout his life he repeatedly asked himself: “What are the duties of a Polish writer?” After his 1951 exile, Milosz became an intellectual forerunner exposed to Western ideas that for a long time had remained inaccessible to contemporary intellectuals in Eastern Europe. He was thrown into a world that had little understanding of the developments on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Milosz’s position as a mediator between the two Cold War worlds was to some degree quintessential of the role of an

⁵ Hans R. Jauss, Timothy Bahti, and Man P. De., *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 20; Hans R. Jauss, "The Identity of the Poetic Text in the Changing Horizon of Understanding," In: *Identity of the Literary Text*. Ed. Mario J. Valdes and Owen Miller (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1985): 146-174.

intellectual. At the same time, Milosz's example embodied the dramatic tension between an Eastern European intellectual's sense of duty toward his country and his understandable self-interest in going into exile. Although he spent half of his life in exile, Milosz, much like figures such as Vaclav Havel and Andrei Sakharov, accumulated enormous moral capital in his homeland. One of the goals of this dissertation is to explain this phenomenon, and reflect on the costs and benefits of intellectual activity in exile for an individual and for the culture of his country.

Since all the audiences discussed in this work assigned intellectual duties to Milosz, the question of the role of intellectuals in the twentieth century is closely interwoven with the structure of this dissertation. For this purpose, I am using Seymour M. Lipset's definition of intellectuals as "all those who create, distribute, and apply culture, that is, the symbolic world of man, including art, science, and religion."⁶ The problem is investigated with an eye to the discourse about the moral obligations of intellectuals, exemplified by the works of Julien Benda, George Orwell, Leszek Kolakowski, and more recently Edward W. Said, Michel Foucault and Vaclav Havel.⁷ According to these authors, an intellectual is obliged to assess reality critically, "to speak truth to power," and "to be provocative by being independent."⁸

In his crucial text on the sociology of intellectuals, *The Treason of the Intellectuals* (1927), Julien Benda claimed that contemporary intellectuals had begun to pursue national, racial and class interests, and consequently, that they "betrayed their

⁶ Jerome Karabel, "Toward a Theory of Intellectuals and Politics," *Theory and Society* 25 (1996), 208.

⁷ Julien Benda, and Richard Aldington, *The Treason of the Intellectuals: (La Trahison Des Clercs)* (New York: W. Morrow & Company, 1928); George Orwell, "Writers and Leviathan," in: George B. de Huszar, ed. *The Intellectuals: A Controversial Portrait* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1960); Leszek Kolakowski, *Marxism and Beyond: On Historical Understanding and Individual Responsibility* (London: Paladin, 1971), and "Intellectuals Against Intellect," *Daedalus* (Winter 1972); Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (New York, 1994); Michel Foucault, "The Intellectuals and Power," *Telos* 16 (1973): 103-9; Vaclav Havel, *Disturbing the Peace: A Conversation with Karel Hvizdala* (New York, 1991).

⁸ Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, 92; Havel, *Disturbing the Peace*, 167.

duty, which is precisely to set up a corporation whose sole cult is that of justice and of truth.”⁹ The only guarantee of intellectual independence, Benda argued, was to remain “uprooted,” i.e. alienated from particular class interests. Five decades later, Leszek Kolakowski and Thomas Molnar claimed that an intellectual’s involvement with power was altogether wrong.¹⁰ Benda’s approach has been criticized for making the distinction between a “good” intellectual who refrains from politics and a “bad” one who gets involved. In his *Prison Notebooks* (1932), Antonio Gramsci scolded Benda for ignoring the role of intellectuals in the state, arguing that every social group had its own intellectuals, and consequently, that intellectuals could not be fully independent from the interests of particular social groups.¹¹ Karl Mannheim, in turn, furthered this debate with his book *The Sociology of Intellectuals* (1932), in which he stated that the main task of intellectuals should be to work toward understanding among social classes.¹²

An attempt to assess the role of intellectuals in the ideological turmoil of the twentieth century was the 1991 collection of essays, *The Political Responsibility of Intellectuals*, in which Ernst Gellner argued that for an intellectual to “disregard consequences [of politics] in the name of purity of principle can itself often be a kind of indulgence and evasion.”¹³ That, precisely, was the problem that Milosz encountered in the late 1940s, when he served as a diplomat representing the Polish communist government in the hope of contributing to the cultural reconstruction of his war-devastated country. While some scholars would see Milosz’s service as fulfilling the

⁹ Benda, *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, 55.

¹⁰ Kolakowski, “Intellectuals Against Intellect;” Thomas Molnar, *The Decline of the Intellectual* (Cleveland, 1961).

¹¹ Antonio Gramsci, and Joseph A. Buttigieg, *Prison Notebooks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

¹² Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949).

¹³ Ernest Gellner, “La trahison de la trahison des clercs,” in: Ian Maclean, Alan Montefiore, and Peter Winch, *The Political Responsibility of Intellectuals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

intellectual's duty to engage with power, they would divide into two camps when it came to its evaluation: those who see intellectuals as potentially effective in exercising power; and those who want them to oppose power, exclusively. Speaking of intellectuals in government, Edward Shils pointed to a disjunction between intellectuals' ideals and the concerns of society; however, this disjunction, Shils argued, should not stop intellectuals from playing the role of rulers. Shils did not condemn intellectuals who had legitimized communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe; he warned, however, that involvement in politics could have a detrimental effect, because "political actions and intellectual actions are different kinds of actions and they cannot be practiced simultaneously."¹⁴ Edward W. Said fell into the second camp, defining an intellectual as a rebel who does not submit to powers if he does not think them right. In his book, *Representations of the Intellectual*, Said defined the public intellectual as "someone whose place it is publicly to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (...), to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug."¹⁵ An intellectual, Said argued, should remain an independent agent who does not sacrifice his critical attitudes for the sake of serving power or particular social groups, but speaks to issues of a general interest, rather than pursues a narrow path of intellectual specialization.

While in my research on Milosz I focus on the *normative* approach in the study of intellectuals, I also acknowledge the *analytical* approach, which investigates intellectuals in the context of sociological processes. This literature, represented by the works of scholars such as Bourdieu, Brym, Gouldner, Lipset, Mannheim, Michels, Mills, and

¹⁴ Edward Shils, "The Intellectuals and the Powers: Some Perspectives for Comparative Analysis," in: *The Intellectuals and the Powers and Other Essays* (Chicago 1972): 3-22.

¹⁵ Said, 11.

Szelenyi, does not abandon the question of intellectuals' responsibility, but focuses on the position of intellectuals within social structures.¹⁶ It does not assume that rebellion is the intellectual's natural proclivity.

The problem of the role of intellectuals in Eastern Europe is especially pronounced in the literature of the subject for three reasons. First, as Zygmunt Bauman explains in his article "Love in Adversity: On the State and the Intellectuals, and the State of the Intellectuals," it was Eastern Europe which in the mid-nineteenth century became a cradle of the intelligentsia, a social group of critically thinking individuals who by definition were to bear certain moral tasks: critical opposition, or even rebellion against the authorities.¹⁷ Secondly, in Eastern Europe there has always been a popular belief that intellectuals are the "conscience of the nation," and therefore obliged to fulfill an extraordinary historical mission. Many Polish intellectuals recognized this historic mission in embracing Marxist ideology and engaging in politics.¹⁸ Those who cooperated with the communist regime influenced the cultural and political events of their time through diplomacy, writing and political engagement. Thirdly, although many members

¹⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), "The corporatism of the universal: The role of intellectuals in the modern world," *Telos* 81 (1989): 99-110; Robert J. Brym, *Intellectuals and Politics* (Boston: George Allen and Unwin, 1980); Alvin W. Gouldner, "Prologue to a theory of revolutionary intellectuals," *Telos* 26 (1975): 3-36, *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), and *Against Fragmentation: The Origins of Marxism and the Sociology of Intellectuals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Seymour M. Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Base of Politics* (Garden City, N.J.: Anchor Books, 1963); Seymour M. Lipset and Richard B. Dobson, "The intellectual as critic and rebel: With special reference to the United States and the Soviet Union," *Daedalus* 103 (1972): 137-198; Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949), and *Essays on the Sociology of Culture* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971); Robert Michels, "Intellectuals," in Edwin R. A. Seligman, editor, *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan, 1937), vol. 8; C. Wright Mills, *Power, Politics, and People: The Collected Essays of C. Wright Mills*, ed. Irving Louis Horowitz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963); Ivan Szelenyi, "The intelligentsia in the class structure of state-socialist societies," *American Journal of Sociology* 88 (1982): 287-326, and "The prospects and limits of the East European new class project: An Auto-critical reflection on The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power," *Politics and Society* 15 (1986): 103-144; George Konrad and Ivan Szelenyi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power: A Sociological Study of the Role of the Intelligentsia in Socialism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979).

¹⁷ Karabel, 225.

¹⁸ Marci Shore, *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life and Death in Marxism, 1918-1968* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

of the intelligentsia acted in support of the communist regime, dissident intellectuals across Eastern Europe greatly contributed to the collapse of the Soviet bloc in the late 1980s.

The second literature that runs through this dissertation as a whole, are studies on Miłosz's life and work – a broad and rapidly growing literature, mainly in Polish and English, whose strength is the literary analysis of Miłosz's oeuvre, although it fails to put his work in historical context. The scattered character of this literature, with volumes of essays dealing with particular literary problems, provides little analytical perspective on Miłosz's intellectual contribution in light of the cultural and political problems shaping the twentieth century. Scholarly interest in Miłosz is relatively new, and has recently benefited from scholars' use of archival resources pertaining to Miłosz, placed by the poet in his archive at the Beinecke Library at Yale in the 1980s. The trend that I find misleading in studies on Miłosz is scholars' reliance on Miłosz's autobiographical prose, such as *A Year of the Hunter*, *Miłosz's ABC*, and Miłosz's interviews, for facts and their interpretation.¹⁹ The several collections of interviews with Miłosz: *Rozmowy polskie 1979-1998* [The Polish Talks], *Czesław Miłosz: Conversations (1980-2001)*, *Czesława Miłosza autoportret przekorny* [A Teasing Self-portrait of Czesław Miłosz], *Conversations with Czesław Miłosz*, are an important source.²⁰ However, in these interviews, because of the substantial gap in time, events from the past and their analysis are to some degree distorted and clearly influenced by Miłosz's ex post-facto analysis.

¹⁹ Czesław Miłosz, and Madeline G. Levine, *A Year of the Hunter* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994); Czesław Miłosz, and Madeline G. Levine, *Miłosz's ABC's* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001).

²⁰ Czesław Miłosz, Renata Gorczyński, Aleksander Fiut, Richard Lourie, *Conversations with Czesław Miłosz* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987); Czesław Miłosz, and Aleksander Fiut, *Czesława Miłosza autoportret przekorny* (Kraków: Wydawn. Literackie, 1988); Czesław Miłosz, and Cynthia L. Haven, *Czesław Miłosz: Conversations* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006); Czesław Miłosz, *Rozmowy Polskie 1999-2004* (Kraków: Wydawn. Literackie, 2011).

An example of such an approach is the first Polish biography of Miłosz, written by Andrzej Zawada, which, addressing a broad audience, provided only an outline for a discussion of literary, historical and political problems pertaining to Miłosz's life.²¹

It is only Andrzej Franaszek's 2011 monumental biography of Miłosz, written in Polish, that makes use of the archival material at Beinecke, provides a thorough analysis of Miłosz's life and work in the context of socio-political changes taking place in twentieth-century Poland, and throws light on hitherto murky aspects of Miłosz's life. Franaszek, who benefited from his appointment as Miłosz's official biographer, and worked within a wide network of Miłosz's friends, produced a book which is mainly focused on the early period of Miłosz's life. Franaszek's *Miłosz: A Biography* is nonetheless the best general source for studies on Miłosz, and will probably remain one until the publication of Miłosz's biography by the American scholar of Eastern European poetry Clare Cavanagh.²²

The existing literature on Miłosz does not give satisfactory answers to questions about the role of the audience in Miłosz's intellectual work; nor does it compare the reception of Miłosz's works in different cultural circles. The responses of Western intellectuals to Miłosz's writing in the 1950s are only briefly discussed by Mirosław Supruniuk in the introduction to the Polish edition of *La Grande Tentation: Le Drame Des Intellectuels Dans Les Démocraties Populaires*, and Andrzej Walicki in *Zniewolony*

²¹ Andrzej Zawada, *Miłosz* (Wrocław: Wydawn. Dolnośląskie, 1996).

²² Andrzej Franaszek, *Miłosz: Biografia* (Kraków: Wydawn. Znak, 2011). Among the publications released as part of 2011 Miłosz Year in Poland, perhaps the most insightful contributions came from young Polish intellectuals in *Rodzinna Europa: 5 Minut później*, and in *Miłosz: Przewodnik Krytyki Politycznej*. Anna Kałuża, and Grzegorz Jankowicz, *Rodzinna Europa: Pieć Minut Później* (Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art, 2011); Magdalena Błędowska, *Miłosz: Przewodnik Krytyki Politycznej* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2011).

umysł po latach [The Captive Mind after Years].²³ In his essay “The Exile as Writer: A Conversation about Sorrow and Joy,” Wojciech Karpinski deals with Milosz’s lifetime perspective on the problem of the exiled intellectual, striving to maintain dialogue with his compatriots.²⁴ George Gasyna, in a study called “The Dual Exile of Czesław Milosz,” discusses Milosz’s exile as an unusual opportunity offering a new vantage point for the intellectual to think about his proper role.²⁵ The Slavic literatures specialist Irena Grudzinska-Gross discusses the problem of acquired language and the search for an audience in her book *Czesław Milosz and Joseph Brodsky: Fellowship of Poets*. Grudzinska-Gross traces the lives of both poets and compares their attitudes toward the two Cold War empires, history, memory, and language.²⁶ The question of Milosz’s reception in America has been addressed in a more systematic manner in works by Bogdana Carpenter, Clare Cavanagh, Donald Davie, Bożena Karwowska, Leonard Nathan, Arthur Quinn, and others.²⁷ Consequently, a feature that sets my project apart from the majority of literature on Milosz, is that it aims to show the multifaceted character of Milosz’s intellectual endeavor, and the variety of perspectives within Milosz’s audience that resulted in the emergence of several “Miloszes.”

My analysis of Milosz’s dialogue with his Polish audience will contribute to the study of Polish nationalism and its various currents in the twentieth century. Building on

²³ Mirosław Supruniuk, “Introduction,” in: Czesław Milosz, *Wielkie Pokuszenie: Bieliński i jednorożec* (Torun: Archiwum Emigracji, 2002); Andrzej Walicki, *Zniewolony Umysł po latach* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1993).

²⁴ Wojciech Karpinski, “The exile as writer: a conversation about sorrow and joy,” in: John Gład, *Literature in Exile* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990).

²⁵ George Gasyna, “A Mind Divided: The Dual Exile of Czesław Milosz,” *Russian Literature* 52 (2002): 355-377.

²⁶ Irena Grudzińska-Gross, *Czesław Milosz and Joseph Brodsky: Fellowship of Poets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

²⁷ Bogdana Carpenter, “The Gift Returned,” in: Halina Stephen, *Living in Translation: Polish Writers in America* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003): 45-76; Cavanagh, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics*; Donald Davie, *Czesław Milosz and the Insufficiency of Lyric* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986); Bożena Karwowska, “Czesław Milosz’s Self-Presentation in English-Speaking Countries,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 3-4 (1998); Leonard Nathan, and Arthur Quinn. *The Poet’s Work: An Introduction to Czesław Milosz* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991).

research by Brian Porter, Timothy Snyder and Andrzej Walicki, amongst others, I will discuss Milosz's work in light of different notions of nationalism that emerged in Polish domestic and émigré circles in the twentieth century. In his study, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland*, Brian Porter addresses the evolution of Polish nationalism from the late 18th to the early 20th centuries, and traces the roots of the peculiar nature of modern Polish nationalism. Porter argues that at the turn of the twentieth century, at a time when Polish nationalism was undergoing democratization, the National Democratic Party (*Endecja*) successfully promoted a chauvinist and anti-Semitic version of nationalism which soon came to dominate Polish nationalist discourse.²⁸ Yet another historian, Timothy Snyder, analyzes the emergence of four modern nations: Belarus, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine, and the mechanisms of how elite patriotism was replaced by ethnic nationalism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Snyder discusses the multi-cultural history of the Lithuanian part of the *Rzeczpospolita*, explaining the *natione Polonus, gente Lithuanus* notion. The historian puts forward the idea of selective national discourse, showing that it was mainly the elites of these four countries that constructed each national discourse by appropriating select events from the past.²⁹

When discussing the question of Polish nationalism, one has to acknowledge the role played by the literature and philosophy of the Romantic period – when Poland remained under the partitions – in constructing and stimulating national discourse, as well as in establishing a repertoire of national symbols that remained pivotal for the next two

²⁸ Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth Century Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁹ Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

centuries. In his study, *Literature and Nationalism in Partitioned Poland, 1795-1918*, Stanislaw Eile explores the role of Romantic Polish literature for the development of modern nationalism in Poland. Eile analyzes the notion of national messianism present in the works of the Romantic poets Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Slowacki, and Zygmunt Krasinski, explaining how this concept became a core element of Polish national discourse – a fact which remained pertinent over the next two centuries of Polish history.³⁰ In her work *Goraczka romantyczna* [The Romantic Fever], the literary scholar Maria Janion explains that the Polish Romantic poets overstepped their competencies in response to the social demand for “ideological thinking.” Janion argues that Romanticism in Poland, and more precisely Romantic poetry, undertook the task of modernizing social consciousness and of providing individuals with rules for constructing an image of the world so as to find their place in the new reality.³¹ The historian of ideas, Andrzej Walicki underlines the significance of Romantic philosophy for the development of Polish nationalism in his book *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism: The Case of Poland*. Walicki’s main argument is that nineteenth-century Polish nationalism was political, not linguistic or ethnic, which had to do with the fact that the pre-partition Polish nation was a multilingual and polyethnic community. Tracing the messianic elements in Polish Romantic philosophy, Walicki states that the national philosophy and Romantic messianism were related, yet distinct “approaches to the same problems of religious and national regeneration.”³²

In her book *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics: Russia, Poland, and the West*, the

³⁰ Stanislaw Eile, *Literature and Nationalism in Partitioned Poland, 1795-1918* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, in association with School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, 2000).

³¹ Maria Janion, *Goraczka Romantyczna* (Krakow: Universitas, 2000).

³² Andrzej Walicki, *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism: The Case of Poland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 240.

literary scholar Clare Cavanagh investigates the intersection of poetry and national identity in Poland, emphasizing the fact that since the nineteenth century poetry had been intrinsically linked to the political life of the Polish nation. Cavanagh explores the realm of lyric poetry from the perspective of the eastern and western side of the Iron Curtain, including the concept of the Polish national poet, his privileged position in the collective imagination, and his relation to Polish national discourse.³³ Since Polish literature had been an essential carrier of political messages, its powerful dynamics became a tool in the hands of the postwar communist regime, states Carl Tighe in his book, *The Politics of Literature: Poland 1945-1989*. Tighe investigates the politics introduced by the Polish authorities in order to compel writers to create literary works that would advance first the socialist, and then the communist project. Tighe explains his definition of politics of literature, saying: “As such, literature is of profound interest not only to free and independent readers, but also to any government attempting to monitor and change the life and thought patterns of its citizens. (...) To any regime, but particularly an authoritarian one, literature is an important gauge of popularity and civil ambition, a record of success, a target for correction and suppression.”³⁴ In his study, Tighe explores not only the mechanism of politics of literature, but also oppositional or conformist positions taken by writers working in communist Poland in the second half of the twentieth century.³⁵

³³ Cavanagh, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics*.

³⁴ Carl Tighe, *The Politics of Literature: Poland 1945-1989* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 62.

³⁵ More on the relation between literature, collective imagination and Polish national discourse in: Jan Prokop, *Universum polskie: literatura, wyobraźnia zbiorowa, mity polityczne* (Kraków: Universitas, 1993); Nikodem Boncza-Tomaszewski, *Zródła narodowości: powstanie i rozwój polskiej świadomości w II połowie XIX i na początku XX wieku* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2006); Joel Burnell, *Poetry, Providence, and Patriotism: Polish Messianism in Dialogue with Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Pickwick Publications, 2009); Maria Janion, Maria Zmigrodzka, *Romantyzm i historia* (Gdańsk: Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, 2001); Eugenia Loch, Jan Adamowski, *Między literaturą a historią: z tradycji idei niepodległościowych w literaturze polskiej XIX i XX w.* (Lublin Wydawn.: Lubelskie, 1986).

Discussing the role of Milosz's writing for Polish dissidents, my dissertation will also engage the historiography of the dissident movement in Poland, with a focus on three topics: first, the role of intellectuals in creating dissident discourse in Poland; second, the importance of the underground press for nurturing an alternative culture; and, third, sociological theories of the mechanisms of social movements. Scholars writing on the Polish dissident movement usually focus on the role of particular actors, such as local intellectuals, working-class dissidents, the Catholic Church, and John Paul II for the emergence of dissident discourse. Timothy Garton Ash, in his book *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*, points to the importance of the dissident intelligentsia for the creation of a widespread opposition to the communist regime. Individual intellectuals, as Gale Stokes claims, first became disillusioned with the regime after the Prague Spring, which only later resulted in the emergence of dissident discourse.³⁶ The shift in the intellectual perception of the regime was symbolized by a 1971 text by Leszek Kolakowski, "Hope and Hopelessness," in which the author appealed to Polish intellectuals to have a critical attitude toward the system, asking them to "live an ethical life in which we are not silent in the face of knavery."³⁷ The specter of intellectual dissidence haunted Eastern Europe.

Barbara Falk investigates the political agenda and ideals of the intellectuals who contributed to the collapse of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe in her book *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe: Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings*. Falk examines dissidents from Poland: Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuron, and Leszek Kolakowski; Czechoslovakia: Vaclav Havel, Jan Patočka, Vaclav Bende; and

³⁶ Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity* (New York: Scribner, 1984).

³⁷ Leszek Kolakowski, "Tezy o nadziei," *Kultura* 6 (1971): 3-21. The text was also published as: Leszek Kolakowski, "Hope and Hopelessness," *Survey* 3 (1971): 37-52.

Hungary: Gyorgy Bence, Janos Kis, and Miklos Haraszti. The intellectual work of these dissidents was, as Falk argues, not only an essential component of the freedom discourse in Central and Eastern Europe, but also an essential lesson for the West, as it introduced a nonviolent mode of political change, and redefined “civil society” as a political agent shaping historical events.³⁸ Scholars tracing the roots of democratic discourse in Poland look closely at the contribution of Polish intellectuals to the 1989 revolution by revealing their relationship to another crucial factor of the transformation: the workers. Michael H. Bernhard, the author of *The Origins of Democratization in Poland: Workers, Intellectuals, and Oppositional Politics*, examines how the 1976 creation of the Workers Defense Committee allowed the intelligentsia to express their support and organize help for persecuted workers, which set the organizational scene for the emergence of *Solidarity* in 1980.³⁹ Similarly to Bernhard, Robert Zuzowski argues that the Committee symbolized a shift in the understanding of the role of the dissident intelligentsia. When people such as Kuron or Michnik called for the intelligentsia’s social and political engagement, Zuzowski argues, they strengthened the dissident camp by relating to the tradition of the Polish intelligentsia, while bringing together actors from opposite sides of the social spectrum.⁴⁰

In order to understand the significance of Milosz’s writing for Polish dissident intellectuals, it is necessary to reveal the mechanism of dissidence, as discussed by theorists of social movements. In her book *Solidarity and Contention: Networks of Polish Opposition*, Maryjane Osa unearths the background of the Polish social movement of

³⁸ Barbara J. Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe: Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003).

³⁹ Michael H. Bernhard, *The Origins of Democratization in Poland: Workers, Intellectuals, and Oppositional Politics, 1976-1980* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

⁴⁰ Robert Zuzowski, *Political Dissent and Opposition in Poland: The Workers' Defense Committee "KOR"* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1992).

Solidarity by tracing the anti-government opposition in Poland from the 1950s to 1981. In her study, Osa emphasizes that inter-organizational networks were critical for the success of the political opposition in Poland.⁴¹ Mariusz Wilk's study *Konspira: Solidarity Underground*, complements these theoretical investigations with a series of interviews conducted with Polish dissidents after the introduction of martial law in December 1981, which further reveal the mechanisms of interpersonal and inter-organizational networks in a time of intensified political persecution. Wilk also poses a question about the sources of intellectual inspiration for people who were forced to spend months in partial seclusion, often with a copy of an underground publication in their hand.⁴²

My discussion of the intellectual inspiration of the Polish dissident movement will also relate to the recent shift in studies of social movements, which is characterized by a move from resource mobilization theory toward the discussion of political and cultural models. Scholars, among them Charles Tilly, have developed a social psychology of social movements; consequently, they have focused on the definition of the actor, the social context within which meanings are developed, and the cultural content of social movements. In his book, *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography, and Creativity in Social Movements*, James M. Jasper proposes a four-fold schema of resources, strategy, biography, and culture for the study of social movements. Jasper addresses the intellectual currents of social movements, saying: "[...] meaning, feelings, and judgments are shared, usually because they are embodied in texts or images or reinforced by

⁴¹ Maryjane Osa, *Solidarity and Contention: Networks of Polish Opposition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

⁴² Maciej Łopiński, Marcin Moskit, and Mariusz Wilk, *Konspira: Solidarity Underground* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

expectations.”⁴³ Texts certainly play an important role for understanding the revolution of 1989, and one has to look to the underground literature as providing the intellectual underpinnings of the dissident movement. Garton Ash claims that the Polish dissident movement owes its success to the revolution in consciousness that was deeply anchored in the institution of the underground press – a forum for dissident political thought and for banned masterpieces of national literature.⁴⁴ Victor Sebestyen, in turn, refers to one of the traditional lines of interpretation, when he emphasizes the fact that the dissident potential of people such as Jacek Kuron or Adam Michnik was unleashed because of their disillusionment with the regime’s lies about the economy, society, and culture.⁴⁵ The independent underground press and literature, including Milosz’s writing, were instrumental in revealing those lies. In his study *Samizdat and the Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe*, Gordon Skilling focuses on the role of *samizdat* in nurturing dissident political thought and providing a basis for the emergence of civil society. Neither Skilling, nor Justyna Błazejowska in her book *Papierowa rewolucja*, look closely at the way the content of particular works was woven into the fabric of dissident discourse.⁴⁶

Situating my dissertation within the realm of the literature discussed will add to our understanding of dissidence by juxtaposing external intellectual exile with its mirror image – an internal dissident movement. My discussion of Polish dissidents reading Milosz’s texts will examine how literary and seemingly apolitical texts gain strong

⁴³ James M. Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography, and Creativity in Social Movements* (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

⁴⁴ Ash, *The Polish Revolution*.

⁴⁵ Victor Sebestyen, *Revolution 1989: The Fall of the Soviet Empire* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2009).

⁴⁶ H.G. Skilling, *Samizdat and an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989); Justyna Błazejowska, *Papierowa Rewolucja: Z Dziejów Drugiego Obiegu Wydawniczego W Polsce 1976-1989/1990* (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej--Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2010).

political undertones when read as illegal underground material in a country with curtailed political and human rights. So far, the role of exiled writers in domestic dissident discourse has not been fully addressed by scholars; therefore, my dissertation will shed light on the cultural factors of the 1989 revolution via analysis of the presence of Milosz's works in the country.

OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

In the five chapters described below, I explore Milosz's dialogue with his audiences, from his flight from Stalinist Poland in the 1950s to his subsequent involvement in debates over anti-communism in the West, and finally to his 1981 return to Poland as a moral hero of the *Solidarity* dissident movement. In the first chapter, I argue that the dialogue between Milosz and his Polish readers in the years 1945-1950 created ideological pressure that at first forced Milosz to compromise his literary image, and eventually forced him into exile as the only way of securing his moral integrity and artistic freedom. In the immediate aftermath of World War II, Milosz hoped that socialism would bring social justice to Poland and invigorate the reconstruction of Polish literature and culture. Over the years that followed, however, as the political influence of the communists in Poland became increasingly heavy-handed, he grew ever more troubled by the moral and aesthetic compromises he was being compelled to make. For Milosz, this ultimately proved unacceptable: he came to find himself in the sort of morally anguishing position experienced by Western figures like George Orwell, Albert Camus, and Ignazio Silone – moderate leftists who believed deeply in real democratic processes, and who utterly rejected the totalitarian methods of the Stalinists. Ultimately,

for Milosz, this problem could only be resolved by defection from Poland, and permanent exile. As a result, this phase of his life and work provides an insight into the profound tensions between art and politics, patriotism and ideological allegiance, that confronted European intellectuals in the decade after 1945.

In the second chapter, I look at Milosz's 1951 arrival in the West, a phase of his life that posed questions about the political responsibilities of an intellectual who had abandoned his communist country and chosen a life on the other side of the Iron Curtain. I discuss Western intellectuals who engaged in debate over anti-communism after Milosz's 1953 publication of *The Captive Mind*, in which the author exposed the mechanisms of intellectual enslavement within communism. Almost overnight Milosz became a star of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) – the transatlantic milieu of politically engaged intellectuals. Through the prism of the CCF audience, I examine Milosz's leftist yet anti-Stalinist position. My research has shown that the CCF intellectuals established Milosz as the frontrunner of an intellectual quest for a “third way,” as Milosz navigated between the Scylla of communist suppression and the Charybdis of Western consumption-driven capitalism. In this chapter, I explore how Milosz's writing during the 1950s foreshadowed many of the concerns about the transition from communism to capitalism that were articulated by Eastern European intellectuals such as Vaclav Havel and Adam Michnik in the 1980s.

My third chapter examines Milosz's debates with Central and Eastern European émigré intellectuals over defining their role against currents of nationalist rhetoric – a dialogue that went on from the 60s to the 80s. The main question of this chapter is: How does Milosz's stance on nationalism fit within the East-Central European tradition of the

moral responsibility of intellectuals? Milosz, who had lived in the melting pot of interwar Eastern Europe, defied nationalist ideology and defended the multicultural heritage of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Therefore, drawing on his correspondence, I argue that Milosz's intellectual role was shaped according to his loyalty toward Polish literature and history, rather than toward a nationalist hybrid of Polish culture, as designed by the communist authorities. Building on Brian Porter's research on Polish nationalism, this chapter also examines the attacks on Milosz from ultra-nationalist circles within the Polish community in London and adds to our understanding of Polish nationalist discourse in the second half of the 20th century. Finally, my examination of Milosz's interaction with Joseph Brodsky and Milan Kundera explains how a group of East-Central European intellectuals contributed to the reemergence of the idea of "Central Europe" – a powerful cultural concept, anti-Soviet in nature.

Next, in chapter four, I discuss the reception of Milosz's poetry by American literary audiences – a point of departure for exploring Milosz's role as a poet outside of the political context. I argue that in order to reach American audience Milosz introduced a number of literary strategies of self-presentation. Not only did he introduce twentieth-century Polish poetry to an American reader, but he also carried out multiple projects to explain its historical context. While in its first phase American critical reception of Milosz focused on the historical aspect to his poetry, it would later construct a more versatile image of the Polish poet. Reading Milosz's poetry, translated into English in the 1970s, American audiences could recognize the author's quest for a welcoming place in a world characterized by blurred notions of center and periphery, where many emerging problems are no longer local but global in nature. While this chapter unearths Milosz's

construction of a poetic space with interspersed elements of the Lithuanian and Californian landscape, it also investigates an example of intellectual adjustment to what scholars describe as the twentieth-century shift from two-dimensional space to a multidimensional global space with unbounded sub-spaces.

Finally, in chapter five, by examining the papers of Polish dissidents in the 1970s and 1980s, I investigate how underground editions of Milosz's works contributed to shaping dissident discourse in Poland. My dissertation is the first study to address the subversive impact of Milosz's works, which were smuggled into Poland by the Literary Institute in Paris, and then disseminated by the domestic underground press. I illuminate the role of Milosz's writing for the construction of cultural pluralism and for the political thought of future subverters of the communist regime, such as Adam Michnik. My research shows that for the Polish Generation of '68, Milosz was an icon – a compass in their search for a way out of communism, and someone who spoke the language of freedom without resorting to a nationalist rhetoric. Ironically, in the early 80s Milosz's broad Polish audience tended to see him exclusively through the lens of his nationality, as a Pole who had recently been honored with the Nobel Prize. By deploying the cultural reservoir of Polish Romanticism, this audience forced Milosz once again to negotiate the tension between his poetic vocation and his national sentiment. Concluding the dissertation, in this chapter I explore how the pressure of anti-communist sentiment on the part of Milosz's readers once again put his poetry at risk of serving purely political ends.

MILOSZ: BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Czeslaw Milosz was born on June 30th, 1911 in Szetejnie, in present-day Lithuania, into the nobility family of Weronika and Aleksander Milosz. His birthplace bears testimony to the troubled twentieth century history of the region. Part of the Russian Empire upon Milosz's birth, it was (forcibly) attached to Poland during most of the inter-war period, fell under Soviet rule after World-War II and is now part of Lithuania. Milosz gathered echoes of the October Revolution, when as a child he traveled through Russia with his father – a bridge construction supervisor in the Tsarist army. The sensual recollections of scents and flavors of Milosz's childhood spent in Szetejnie, as well as the pastoral landscape of his beloved Lithuania always remained present in his poetry.

Milosz claimed that the move to Vilnius at the age of ten was his first exile. Since his family, as most of the local gentry, spoke Polish, Milosz received his education and started composing verses in Polish. However, in the 1920s, as a school boy, then a law student at the Vilnius University, Milosz was exposed to the multicultural atmosphere of Vilnius with Polish, Yiddish, Belorussian, and Lithuanian languages reverberating on the streets. In 1931, with Teodor Bujnicki, Jerzy Putrament, and Jerzy Zagorski, Milosz started publishing the monthly *Zagary* – which soon became an outfit for young leftist poets and intellectuals.⁴⁷ Even though the poets of *Zagary* were socialists, “the visionary politics of the Marxists were unacceptable to them, so too was aestheticism of the earlier generation of Polish poets, the so-called *avant garde* that (...) aspired to the formalism of

⁴⁷ The editorial board also belonged: Stefan Jedrychowski, Antoni Golubiew, Aleksander Rymkiewicz, and Henryk Dembinski. 16 issues had been published.

art for art's sake."⁴⁸ In *Zagary* Milosz wrote a polemic against what he called "those sterile games called pure poetry."⁴⁹ In the summer of 1931, taking a break from literary engagement and political debates, he got a first glimpse of the Western world while travelling to Prague and Paris.

At the age twenty-two Milosz debuted as a poet with the volume *Poemat o czasie zastyglym* [A Poem on Frozen Time]. Three years later, in 1936, his next poetry volume - *Trzy zimy* [Three Winters] - was enthusiastically received by the leading Polish literary critics and opened to Milosz the doors of major poetry events in Warsaw. Shortly before graduating from the law faculty and departing for a scholarship in Paris, Milosz parted ways with his girlfriend Jadwiga, leaving her pregnant.⁵⁰ Upon returning to Poland in 1935, he took a job at the Polish National Radio in Vilnius, but was soon demoted by local officials for spreading leftist views. Warsaw, where Milosz transferred to another branch of the National Radio, emerged from his recollections as a dark and hostile city. Yet, it was in Warsaw that Milosz fell in love with his future wife – Janina Czekalska - and made many new literary acquaintances, benefiting especially from the mentorship of writer Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz.

Upon the outbreak of WW II, Milosz was temporarily separated from Janina and first evacuated to Bucharest; but after a few months, he managed to return to Warsaw using fake documents. During the war, as a member of the socialist underground, Milosz published clandestine volumes of his own poetry and of wartime Polish poetry, and also translated from Jacques Maritain, Shakespeare and T.S. Eliot. In the first days of the

⁴⁸ Robert Hass, "Reading Milosz." *Ironwood* 18 (1981): 141-160.

⁴⁹ Leonard Nathan, and Arthur Quinn, *The Poet's Work: An Introduction to Czeslaw Milosz* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991), 25.

⁵⁰ Andrzej Franaszek, *Milosz: Biografia* (Kraków: Wydawn. Znak, 2011).

Warsaw Uprising, Milosz escaped the city with Janina, finding harbor at Jerzy Turowicz's house near Krakow. The wartime experience, combined with Milosz's attraction to Marxism inculcated by his friend the philosopher Tadeusz Kronski, distanced him from the Messianic and Romantic literary traditions. Having abandoned his prewar avant-garde poetics, Milosz revealed a new program for Polish poetry in the 1945 volume *Ocalenie* [Rescue]. In November 1945, the month his mother died, Milosz left with Janina for the United States to take a diplomatic post and represent the Polish socialist, and later communist government.

While working as a cultural attaché in Washington, Milosz regularly published poetry and articles in the Polish press, and developed connections in American intellectual circles. In 1950, when the Polish authorities transferred him to Poland's embassy in Paris, Milosz had to leave his pregnant wife and three-year old son Antoni in the USA and traveled to Poland. The visit to his homeland only confirmed Milosz's worst presumptions: that he would be forced to write for political purposes, and that life behind the Iron Curtain was dreadful. Milosz managed to get his passport back from the authorities, and departed immediately to Paris, where in February 1951 he broke ties with the Polish communist government, and was granted asylum in France.

This exile had far-reaching consequences, as Milosz made his decision to emigrate during a high point of the Cold War, when extreme tensions between the two blocs were in effect. While the Warsaw regime called Milosz a traitor, and French communist intellectuals castigated him for having left 'the promised land,' the West suspected Milosz of being a communist spy, which in the era of McCarthyism prevented Milosz from entering the USA. Janina's letters to her husband are the crushing evidence

of the ordeal Milosz's family had gone through until they were reunited again in France in 1953. In the years following his exile, Milosz worked as a free-lancer making important contributions to the Polish émigré monthly *Kultura*. Milosz's friends from *Kultura*: Jozef Czapski, Jerzy Giedroyc, Zofia and Zygmunt Hertz, and Konstanty Jelenski cherished him, and supported his work on the 1953 book *The Captive Mind*. This book, in which Milosz explained to a Western reader the mechanism of intellectual seduction with Marxism, placed him at the heart of a discussion on communism within the transatlantic milieu of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, where he became friends with Hannah Arendt and Ignazio Silone. Yet another of Milosz's books, the novel *Zdobycie władzy* [The Seizure of Power], on which he worked with a lady-friend the philosopher Jeanne Hersch, received the 1953 *Prix Littéraire Européen*. Also in 1953, Milosz had his first émigré volume of poetry published, and started writing the poetic novel *Dolina Issy* [The Issa Valley]. In the coming years, Milosz would publish an autobiographical prose piece *Rodzinna Europa* [Native Realm], a volume of essays, and multiple translations. The difficulties involved in supporting his family when writing for the tiny *Kultura* audience, and under ideological pressure from the CCF, propelled Milosz to accept the position of a professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literature at the University of California at Berkeley. In 1960, the Miloszes moved to the USA, which for their two sons Antoni and Piotr was a return to the place where they had been born.

Milosz's quick appointment to a tenured position secured the welfare of his family; yet the American existence proved demanding for the poet. Since Milosz's writing was banned in Poland, he longed for an audience, and missed the sense of

belonging to an intellectual community. His true calling – that of a poet – remained unknown to his American surroundings. In the 1960s, in his house overlooking San Francisco Bay, Milosz completed a number of prose works: *Człowiek wśród skorpionów* [Man among Scorpions], *Widzenia nad Zatoką San Francisco* [Visions from San Francisco Bay], and poetry volumes: *Król Popiel i inne wiersze* [King Popiel and Other Poems], *Gucio zaczarowany* [Gucio Enchanted], *Miasto bez imienia* [City Without a Name], as well as the anthology *Postwar Polish Poetry*, and a textbook *The History of Polish Literature*.⁵¹ It was only after 1973, when Milosz published a volume of his poetry translated into English, *Selected Poems*, that he slowly started gaining recognition in American literary circles. In 1973 Milosz became a grandfather to a baby girl, the daughter of Antoni. The late 1970s were a period of Milosz's professional successes, with the 1976 Guggenheim and 1978 Neustadt Prizes awarded to him, and the second volume of his poetry in English translation *Bells in Winter* out in 1978; but it was also a time of upheaval in Milosz's personal life.⁵² Janina suffered from depression and her condition was steadily worsening, while Milosz's younger son Piotr was diagnosed with mental illness. On top of that, three of Milosz's close friends died: Zygmunt Hertz, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, and Józef Szaniński.

The sea change in Milosz's life came upon his receipt of the 1980 Nobel Prize in Literature, which not only made him famous in America, but also brought his name back to the public sphere in Poland. In the prior three decades in Poland, Milosz had had loyal followers, who read his poetry at clandestine meetings and since the mid-1970s

⁵¹ These books were written in Polish.

⁵² In the 1970s, Milosz published several books in Polish and English. The ones addressed to the Polish audience were: *Prywatne obowiązki* [Private Obligations] (1972), *Gdzie wschodzi słońce i kedy zapada* [The Rising of the Sun] (1974), *Ziemia Ulro* [The Land of Ulro] (1977), and *Ogród nauk* [The Garden of Science] (1979). Milosz also published a collection of essays for the Anglophone audience, entitled *Emperor of the Earth. Modes of Eccentric Vision* (1977).

distributed it via the underground press. However, for the majority of Poles the news came as a shock. How could they not know about the greatest living Polish poet? Milosz's subsequent 1981 visit to Poland was an extraordinary event for the poet who after thirty years in exile could meet his friends and readers and return to the places he loved. For Poles, even if they had not read his poetry, Milosz's success boosted national pride, already strong with the recent emergence of the "Solidarity" movement and the appointment of the Polish Pope. Traveling in Poland with his sons, Milosz enjoyed talking to people who knew his writing despite the ban; however, he strived to draw a line between the world of literature and that of national matters. The early 1980s were graced with happiness that Milosz found in a relationship with the Polish journalist Renata Gorczynska. The relationship, "as happy as one could only imagine," as Milosz described it, inspired the 1984 poetry volume *Nieobjeta ziemia* [Unattainable Earth]. In 1986, three years after Gorczynska had left Milosz, his wife Janina died. At her funeral Milosz was accompanied by his future wife Carol Thigpen.

While Milosz's American literary career further developed, his moral authority was sought after as he emerged as the leading intellectual voice from East Central Europe. The 1988 publication of Milosz's *Collected Poems* met with warm reception among a broad American poetry audience. Involved in multiple intellectual projects, poetry readings, and honorary duties as a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Milosz remained a very prolific author. After 1989, Milosz developed closer links to Polish publishers and readers, and become an active and prominent participant in intellectual life in Poland. In his Krakow headquarters, accompanied by his wife Carol, Milosz worked on poetry and prose pieces, wrote for the press, gave interviews, and from

there traveled to receive distinctions and literary awards.⁵³

He did not neglect California, where in the early 1990s he would spend half of each year. In 2002, Milosz for the last time went to America to bid farewell to his wife Carol, whose death was soon followed by the passing away of Milosz's younger brother Andrzej. Having survived most of his friends, Milosz spent the next two years in Krakow, where he lived surrounded with great care and admiration. He died in his Krakow apartment on a quiet afternoon of August 14th, 2004, at the age of ninety-three.

⁵³ After 1980, Milosz published the following books: poetry volumes *Hymn o perle* (1982), *Nieobjeta ziemia* (1984), *Kroniki* (1987), *To* (2000), *Druga przestrzen* (2002); a lecture series *The Witness of Poetry* (1983); prosaic works *Zaczynajac od moich ulic* (1985), *Rok myśliwego* (1990), *Szukanie ojczyzny* (1992), *Na brzegu rzeki* (1994), *Jakiegoz to gosci mielismy. O Annie Swirszczynskiej* (1996), *Legends nowoczesnosci* (1996), *Abecadlo Milosza* (1997), *Piesek przydrozny* (1997), *Inne abecadlo* (1998), *Wielkie pokuszenie: Bielinski i jednorozec* (2002), *Spizarnia literacka* (2004). Many of the prose works were later translated and published in English. Two years after Milosz's death the volume *Wiersze ostatnie* was published.

CHAPTER 1

“What has a poet to do if he cannot express commiseration and terror?”: Milosz’s

Dialogue with his Polish Audience in the 1940s.

That I wanted good poetry without knowing it

That I discovered, late, its salutary aim,

In this and only this: I find salvation.

Czeslaw Milosz, “Dedication”⁵⁴

- You! The last Polish poet! - drunk, he embraced me,

My friend from the Avant-Garde, in a long military coat,

Who had lived through the war in Russia and, there, understood.

Czeslaw Milosz, “1945”⁵⁵

On February 1st, 1951, Czeslaw Milosz committed suicide - at least that was what he said afterwards. The acclaimed poet, who for the preceding five years had served as a diplomat for People’s Poland, had now decided to break with the communist Polish government and flee his homeland. This dramatic decision testified not only to Milosz’s ideological stand, but also revealed how deeply the sphere of Polish literature, and the

⁵⁴ Czeslaw Milosz, “Dedication.” In: Czeslaw Milosz, *New and Collected Poems 1931-2001* (New York: Ecco, 2001), p. 77.

⁵⁵ Czeslaw Milosz, “1945.” In this poem, written in 1985 in Berkeley, Milosz recalls his encounter with a Polish poet Adam Wazyk in Krakow in 1945. During the War, Wazyk fought alongside Soviet troops on the Eastern Front. In 1945, he founded *Kuźnica*, a Marxist literary weekly, to which he served as the editor from 1946 to 1950. Wazyk was initially a strong supporter of Stalinism, but he eventually rejected the Stalinist doctrine in Poland at the time of its impending disintegration.

realm of East European politics, had been transformed since the poet's 1944 flight from Warsaw.

In this chapter I argue that the dialogue between Milosz and his Polish readers from 1945 to 1950 created an ideological pressure that forced Milosz to negotiate and compromise his literary image for the sake of his artistic freedom. In the decade following 1945, Milosz was one of the East-Central European intellectuals who confronted the conflict between patriotic and ideological allegiance. He had to either comply with communist orthodoxy enforced by Stalin's regime, or withdraw from the official cultural life of his homeland. This eventually displaced Milosz's writing from the realm of poetry into the sphere of politics, a phenomenon that provides a lens into the consequences of the politicization of culture for the intellectual and artistic milieu of postwar Eastern Europe.

The scholar Clare Cavanagh, in her recent book, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics. Russia, Poland and the West*, claims that American scholarship has not yet addressed the significance of literary and political entanglement in the history of Eastern Europe.⁵⁶ Juxtaposing the notion of poetry in the West and in the East, Cavanagh establishes lyrical poetry in Russia and Poland as inherently linked to the political life of the two nations. In the context of political persecutions shaping twentieth-century Poland and Russia, lyric poetry, far from being a journey into a poet's self, functioned as oppositional political commentary. It is, in this respect, a mode quite distinct from Western poetry, for the poets of Eastern Europe, "Lyricism in and of itself was a deeply

⁵⁶ Clare Cavanagh, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics: Russia, Poland, and the West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 5.

ethical stance.”⁵⁷ Cavanagh argues, however, that the West has it wrong when it represents the poets as spokespersons for their nation exclusively.⁵⁸ Cavanagh investigates how the poets of “the generation of ‘68” in Poland struggled against the Romantic tradition, trying to resist the pressure of “the collective,” *and* the burden of the position of national leaders. In this chapter, I argue that in the late 1940s Milosz was a forerunner of this quest for poetic sovereignty. I reveal Milosz’s resistance toward both the aesthetic of socialist realism and the Romantic tradition by exploring his objection to lyric poetry serving the political needs of the Polish national collective.

POET DIPLOMAT

In the fall of 1945, Milosz found himself, along with millions of Poles, facing what Jean Paul Sartre famously called “year zero.” This war took a toll on the population of Poland, especially its Jewish citizens, whose fate afterwards posed a question about the limits of evil and an irredeemable end to the prewar world. Even before the war, Poland had been a country beset by serious ethnic and socioeconomic problems, to which Milosz had always been attentive. In 1945, however, Poland seemed to be, due to human loss and territorial shift, a lost land. As a citizen of Warsaw, Milosz had been a direct witness to the events of WW II, as the Polish capital was turned into a prison for its Jewish population, and then a grave for the 1944 Warsaw Uprising militants. In his poetry, Milosz responded to the 1943 Uprising in the Warsaw ghetto, which was a dramatic fight put by the Jews against the genocidal Nazi policies. In his 1943 poem, *Campo dei Fiori*,

⁵⁷ Ibidem, 22.

⁵⁸ Ibidem, 4.

Milosz juxtaposed the flames and salvos from the ghetto wall against the careless fun of couples enjoying a spring day on the Aryan side. Milosz wrote:

*I thought of the Campo dei Fiori
In Warsaw by the sky-carousel
one clear spring evening
to the strains of a carnival tune.
The bright melody drowned
the salvos from the ghetto wall,
and couples were flying
high in the cloudless sky.
[...]
Those dying here, the lonely
forgotten by the world.⁵⁹*

Scholars have fought over what actually happened just outside the walls of the Warsaw ghetto, but to pursue the question of this poem's historical accuracy is to miss the point. The Jews must have felt abandoned when facing their death, while the world beyond the ghetto walls seemed to go on as usual. The same feeling must have been shared by those murdered in their houses and on the battlefield, those who had lived through WW I, and those who were too young to understand what war was. This might have been a share of six million of Milosz's compatriots who perished at the hands of German and Soviet aggressors, in death and labor camps, in the streets and fields of the "Bloodlands."⁶⁰ In

⁵⁹ Initially, the poem was entitled *Campo di Fiori*, but upon translating it into English Milosz decided to fix his previous mistake, and entitled it *Campo dei Fiori*. Czeslaw Milosz, "Campo dei Fiori," In: Milosz, *New and Collected Poems*, 33.

⁶⁰ Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

WW II Poland, there often was some kind of a wall, invisible or tangible, constructed by people's indifference to their fellow man's suffering. Milosz would later describe this psychological condition, saying: "In normal times, had he [a man] stumbled upon a corpse on the street, he would have called the police. A crowd would have gathered, and much talk and comment would have ensued. Now he knows he must avoid the dark body lying in the gutter, and refrain from asking unnecessary questions..."⁶¹

A year after the 1943 Uprising in the ghetto, Milosz escaped the city, where the Warsaw Uprising militants got involved in a deathly combat with the German troops in order to retake Polish capital before the Soviet troops would enter it. Milosz was fleeing the city, which was soon razed to the ground with the insurgents buried under its ruins. The poet recollected that in his hands he had held a volume of T.S Eliot's *Wasteland*. Milosz wrote about his flight upon finding shelter in Jerzy Turowicz's house in Goszyce, near Krakow:

*When we were fleeing the burning city
And looked back from the first field path
I said: "Let the grass grow over our footprints,
Let the harsh prophets fall silent in the fire,
Let the dead explain to the dead what happened.
We are fated to beget a new and violent tribe
Free from the evil and the happiness that drowsed there.
Let us go" – and the earth was opened for us by a sword of flames.*⁶²

⁶¹ Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind* (1953; Penguin, 2001), 26–29.

⁶² Czeslaw Milosz, "Flight," In: Milosz, *New and Collected Poems*, 74.

As Milosz and others describe it, when the war was finally over, one dreaded looking for one's friends, as one constantly learned that yet another of them had been killed on the front, had died in the Warsaw Uprising, or perished in the Soviet Union. A man looking around himself would see the ruins of towns; he would come across remnants of concentration or death camps or stumble upon hollow dwellings whose inhabitants had left never to return. To look inside oneself must have been equally dreadful. What could one find in one's heart when one was forced to witness mass violence in silence? Milosz pondered while walking the ruins of annihilated Warsaw, and in the following poem:

What are you thinking here, where the wind

Blowing from the Vistula scatters

The red dust of the rubble?

[...] and the heart

Is a stone in which is enclosed,

Like an insect, the dark love

*Of a most unhappy land.*⁶³

Yet, history did not stop here for the country, which lost virtually an entire generation of its poets in the war.⁶⁴ While the spotlight was on those Nazis who were being judged in the Nuremberg Trials, in the background the Soviets were designing a new geopolitical order for Eastern Europe. In the fall of 1945, Milosz and his wife Janina were preoccupied starting their lives over in Krakow. For Milosz, a recognized poet with a law school diploma, whose prewar leftist leanings were well known, the possibilities were at

⁶³ Czeslaw Milosz, "In Warsaw," In: Milosz, *New and Collected Poems*, 75.

⁶⁴ The following poets, many of whom young and promising, died at the hands of the Nazis: Jozef Czechowicz, Tadeusz Boy-Zelenski, Andrzej Trzebinski, Stanislaw Strojnski, Tadeusz Gajcy, Karol Irzykowski, Krzysztof Kamil Baczynski, Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski.

every corner. Not only was he a candidate for a governmental position, but he could easily get a job in the literature industry in Warsaw, Krakow or Wroclaw. There, his literary colleagues enthusiastically joined cultural ventures of the new government, dividing their time between writing for newly-established periodicals and creating literary works that sought to describe the war experience. The authorities made an effort to develop the literary and publishing sector early on, and to provide writers with good living conditions. This, subsequently, lured many of Milosz's colleagues into full collaboration within the framework of the state-organized literary industry. In 1945, Milosz, along with other writers, was given an apartment on Saint Thomas Street in Krakow and was writing for the new periodicals, such as *Dziennik Polski* [Polish Daily], *Odrodzenie* [Renaissance], and *Przekroj* [Section].⁶⁵ While Milosz was still researching job opportunities and taking care of such mundane chores as furnishing his new apartment, the giant structures of the Cold War order were coming into being.

In late 1945, Milosz applied for a diplomatic post, as it satisfied both his need to remain present in the burgeoning Polish literary scene, and his desire to be free from current political clashes in the country. At that time there still were democratic forces on the Polish political scene, communism and its institutions had not fully penetrated the state, and the political landscape was ideologically diverse. The final stage of WW II proved to be decisive for postwar order in Poland - in 1944, as Nazi Germany was losing its footing in the war, the Red Army slowly took control over Polish territories to subsequently cede them to the Polish communists. Since right-wing politicians stationed in the official Polish Government were exiled to London, and the domestic rightist forces

⁶⁵ Rimma Volynska-Bogert, and Wojciech Zalewski, *Czeslaw Milosz, an International Bibliography, 1930-1980* (Ann Arbor: Dept. of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Michigan, 1983).

had been decimated in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, opposition to these developments was difficult. Additionally, the West was interested in sustaining Soviet military help; for that reason, Churchill and Roosevelt had left Eastern Europe in the Soviet sphere of influence at the February 1945 Yalta conference. Succumbing to Stalin's demands, they agreed that a new Polish provisional and pro-communist government would be formed, ignoring the Polish Government in Exile. As a result, on December 31st, 1944, the Provisional Government was created by the communist-controlled Polish Committee of National Liberation. It was headed by a socialist, but the majority of key posts fell to communists. A few months later, in June 1945, the new Polish Provisional Government of National Unity had been formed, and a leader of the Polish People's Peasant Party Stanislaw Mikolajczyk became its prime minister. The imposed character of this government reflected in the rivalries that emerged between the Communist Party and their opponents: Mikolajczyk's party and the right-wing veterans of the Polish Home Army. The political fight was far from fair, since Polish communists controlled the security forces and were backed by a huge contingent of the Soviet Red Army stationed in Poland. Communists also dominated the Polish Workers' Party, which was Poland's main political party at the time. As it was the case in the region, the postwar political situation in Poland was tense, but the regime was effective in upholding the illusion of democracy, and Poles were all too concerned with the socio-economic exigencies of postwar daily existence to engage in political fights. The war was finally over, and people hoped that the advertised socialist system would bring stability and welfare to the devastated country.

The eclectic character of Polish political life in the initial postwar period also applied to intellectual and literary circles to which Milosz belonged. A taste of this

exuberant and somewhat lunatic cultural world, born in the ruins of war, is conveyed in this description of life in Polish Literary Union house in Krakow:

Only in Krakow, in the house administered by the Polish Literary Union (22 Krupnicza Street) ...could representatives of all attitudes toward the new system live side by side. Creators of revolutionary rhetoric, literary henchmen of the new power and editors of *Tygodnik Powszechny* [Universal Weekly] (published under the auspices of the Church and opposed to the new government) borrowed salt and vodka from each other.⁶⁶

Acting against his mother's will that her son leave Poland forever, Milosz decided to live abroad temporarily as a diplomat on behalf of People's Poland. This position would guarantee him room for maneuvering in the future. Milosz justified his decision in a letter to Jerzy Andrzejewski, in which he wrote: "I will leave with grief and nostalgia, because I am very attached to the country. I think it shouldn't do me bad. I have to get some fresh air after these stuffy years of occupation. Not in the least do I intend to break up with the country; besides, it is not so easy to do."⁶⁷

Certainly, Milosz's drive was more complex than just striving for artistic freedom, since he truly believed in socialism and wanted to serve the government as well as contribute to the cultural reconstruction of postwar Poland. We can learn more about the motivation of Milosz's 1945 involvement with the socialist government from his post-factum writing, such as his 1951 article "Nie" [No], or the 1953 book *The Captive Mind*. Both texts were published in the West, which enabled Milosz to freely express his opinions. In *The Captive Mind*, Milosz commented on his 1945 political attitude:

⁶⁶ Adam Michajlów, *Literary Galicia: From Post-War to Post-Modern: a Local Guide to the Global Imagination* (Krakow: Oficyna Literacka, 1991), 28.

⁶⁷ Czeslaw Milosz's letter to Jerzy Andrzejewski, 11/24/1945. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; Box 1, folder 2. (later cited as Czeslaw Milosz Papers). Jerzy Andrzejewski (1909-1983), a prolific Polish writer, member of the communist party from 1950 to 1956. In 1976, co-founder of oppositionist movement KOR (Workers' Defense Committee). He was a friend of Milosz from their time in Nazi-occupied Warsaw.

The state of things in [*prewar*] Poland inclined me towards left-wing ideas. My point of view can be defined negatively rather than positively: I disliked the right-wing groups, whose platforms consisted chiefly of anti-Semitism.(...) My experience in those years [of the Nazi occupation] led me to the conclusion that, after the death of Hitler, only men true to socialist program would be capable of abolishing the injustices of the past, and rebuilding the economy of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.⁶⁸

After the war, Milosz, along his colleagues of left-wing affiliation, approved of social reforms introduced by the new government, such as lower class students' enrollment at universities, the industrialization of Poland, and change of its agrarian structure. As a group characterized by socialist sentiment Milosz and many of his friends had been hostile toward the social structure of interwar Poland, and, as Milosz put it, genuinely praised the postwar regime for "terminating its semi-feudal structure."⁶⁹ Additionally, Milosz's cohort had been nurtured on the strong tradition of social engagement of the educated class, and they could not picture themselves alienated from current stream of socio-political life.⁷⁰ This tradition, combined with a robust reconstruction of Poland's cultural life, turned Milosz into a cautious yet sympathetic supporter of the new regime.

In his 1945 application to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Milosz emphasized that he had not belonged to the underground movement during the war, and called on influential figures of the new regime for recommendations: Stefan Jedrychowski, the Minister of Navy and Overseas Trade, Jerzy Sztachelski, the Minister of Commerce, and Zofia Dembinska, a vice-director of the publishing house "Czytelnik" [The Reader].⁷¹

⁶⁸ Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, VIII.

⁶⁹ Czeslaw Milosz, "Nie," *Kultura* 5 (1951): 3-13. Yet another source of information about Milosz's political views at that time is his correspondence with friends in Poland. The correspondence, however, soon became censored, and consequently could not fully reflect Milosz's stance.

⁷⁰ I thank Irena Grudzinska-Gross for pointing for me the importance of this tradition. An interview with Irena Grudzinska-Gross, Princeton, 03/07/2012.

⁷¹ A draft of Milosz's application to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature, Warsaw, Poland. Files pertaining to Milosz. Milosz had his works published in underground press, but he did not participate in underground political or military activity. As it is explained in the biographical sketch, Milosz was

Milosz asked to be sent to Bern in Switzerland, but the authorities decided that because of his command of the English language, Milosz would promote Polish culture as an *attaché* in the United States. A 1945 internal Ministry file spoke favorably of Milosz's political allegiance. It read: "A very talented poet. (...) He has edited an underground poetic anthology *Song of Independence*, characterized by a progressive worldview. Since the first days after liberation he has been an advocate for the PKWN [Polish Committee of National Liberation]." ⁷² Milosz's clearance, however, was not granted without doubts, as Jakub Berman, a chief of the notorious State Security Services recalls. Berman says: "There were serious reservations as to Milosz's leaving, because he quite freely expressed what I would call oppositionist opinions. Yet, Zygmunt Modzelewski, who at this point was a decisive figure in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, asked my advice, and I finally agreed that there was no need to force Milosz to stay in the country." ⁷³

Berman had a good sense as to the complexities of Milosz's decision to serve the new government. Milosz genuinely held to the above motives, but he also knew Soviet Russia, and had serious worries about the extent of Poland's democratic freedoms and continued sovereignty in coming years. ⁷⁴ Additionally, as Milosz later recollected, his decision to serve the country as a diplomat bore a certain moral weight:

I went to America under the patronage of Putrament and Borejsza. Putrament warned me: remember you are making a pact with the devil.

critical of the Warsaw Uprising organized by the Polish underground in 1944, in which he did not take part. Throughout his life, he commented critically on the motivation of people who went to the Uprising, distancing himself from this kind of messianic national sentiment. In a job application letter, he probably mentioned this fact, since it fostered his candidacy. The new regime looked for people who were disassociated with the interwar right-wing movements and the Polish Government in Exile, and who would not contest the new political and territorial outlook of Poland. The new status was guaranteed by the USSR, which imposed the new socialist regime onto Poland and other satellite countries according to the decision made at the Yalta and Potsdam peace conferences in 1945.

⁷² PKWN - the Polish Committee of National Liberation. "Biuletyn of the IPN" 2004, NR 11(46), p.78.

⁷³ Emil Pasierski, *Milosz I Putrament: Żywoty Równoległe* (Warszawa: Wydawn. W.A.B, 2011), 194.

⁷⁴ "The period from July 1944 to December 1948 was a time of civil war when a large proportion of the population resisted the imposition of an illegitimate Moscow-backed government. (...) From December 1948 to October 1956 Poland was effectively a Stalinist state." In: Carl Tighe, *The Politics of Literature: Poland 1945-1989* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 65.

And it was undoubtedly a devilish pact, considering what was going on. No ignorance protected me. Millions of people in Gulags, deportations after the year 1939, Katyn, Warsaw Uprising, terror in Poland – I was aware of all that.⁷⁵

Milosz was lumped together with people active in culture and politics who, as existentialists would have it, were free to make a choice about their attitude towards the government. Some Polish intellectuals followed the path of an inner exile or left the country, while others chose opposition, which usually resulted in a prison sentence. Many intellectuals decided to work with the new authorities in the spirit of “wait and see.” After many years, the Polish writer, Juliusz Zulawski, explained the intellectuals’ attitudes toward the socialist and later communist governments, saying: “I believe that many Polish communists were afraid of Russia and some acted in a double way: they wanted it to be seen that they were very good communists, but at the same time they were also Poles, and they also tried to preserve what they could of the Polish identity. (...) Double thinking, double acting.”⁷⁶

For Milosz, paradoxically, the only way to escape the immediate pressure of politics in literature and negotiate a higher level of independence was to yield to the political circumstances and cut a deal with the Polish socialist government. In a 1946 letter to Jerzy Andrzejewski, he said: “It is the sad cretinism of the circumstances: in

⁷⁵ Czeslaw Milosz, *A Year of the Hunter* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York 1994), 80.

Jerzy Putrament (1910-1986), writer, revolutionary Marxist before the war. In the years 1945-50 the Polish ambassador to France. An active member of ZLP (Committee of Polish Writers), editor and advocate of socialist realism. He was Milosz colleague from their time in Vilnius. Jerzy Borejsza (Benjamin Goldberg), (1905-1952), professional journalist. Active in left-wing organizations in France and Spain 1922-27, joined Polish Communist Party in 1929. He was a key figure in the post-war cultural/political set-up, head of the “Czytelnik” publishing house, responsible for restructuring Polish intellectual life.

⁷⁶ Milosz’s letter to Jerzy Andrzejewski, late 1946. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 1, folder 2. Among the intellectuals who decided to support the regime in postwar period were: Tadeusz Kotarbinski, Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, Tadeusz Manteuffel, Kazimierz Wyka, Maria Ossowska, Maria Dabrowska, Leon Schiller, Antoni Slonimski. Some intellectuals became party members or supported the regime in early years: Leszek Kolakowski, Oskar Lange, Krzysztof Pomian, Witold Kula, Kazimierz Brandys, Adam Wazyk, Jerzy Andrzejewski, Julian Przybos, Wiktor Woroszyński, Bronisław Geremek, Jerzy Jedlicki. In: Tighe, *The Politics of Literature*, 68.

Anna Bikont and Joanna Szczesna provide a fascinating analysis of Polish intellectuals’ involvement into communism in their book *Lawina i Kamienie: Pisarze wobec Komunizmu* (Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 2006).

order to broaden the horizon of my work I had to go abroad, but I have to pay a lot for it, there is no doubt about it...”⁷⁷

Janina and Czeslaw Milosz left Poland in December 1945, and travelled through London to the United States, where Milosz commenced his service, first in the Polish Consulate in New York, then as a cultural *attaché* and secretary in the Polish Embassy in Washington, D.C. In his very first days in office, Milosz experienced a certain aura of mistrust on the American side regarding dignitaries from the Eastern bloc. Through his work, though, he tried to prove that this was secondary to his main purpose, which was the promotion of Polish culture. In a report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he noted: “I would like to point out that the fact that I came here as an office worker, and not as a writer makes the matter more complicated – I came across difficulties while organizing the contemporary Polish poetry evening - a couple of ‘neutral’ people refused to come saying that they cannot perform in the presence of the consulate’s office workers.”⁷⁸ In the United States, people perceived Milosz first and foremost as a political representative of a government from behind the Iron Curtain, because very few knew about his poetic work.

Analysis of Milosz’s diplomatic service shows that while promoting Polish culture, he found himself between Scylla and Charybdis: the official Polish ideological bias against the USA often halted his efforts, and the Americans were suspicious about the political content of Milosz’s cultural agenda. In his reports to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Milosz repeatedly complained about the scarcity of Polish materials he could use

⁷⁷ Milosz’s letter to Jerzy Andrzejewski, late 1946. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 1, folder 2.

⁷⁸ Czeslaw Milosz, *Report*, New York, 4/01/1946. Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, zespół 21, wiązka 87, teczka 1186, 343-348. In: Czeslaw Milosz, *Raporty z Ambasady RP w Waszyngtonie (1946—1950)*, ed. Marek Kornat, unpublished. Courtesy of the editor.

for cultural propaganda. In a letter to the leading Polish culture policymaker Jerzy Borejsza, Milosz ridiculed mistakes of the propaganda department in their efforts to win the support of Poles living in the USA, saying: “It seems to me, that no one can expect me to present the Polish priests here with *Kuznica* [Forge],”⁷⁹ which was a strongly socialist magazine. Milosz often underlined that decent information about the cultural renewal in Poland and wise promotion of its newest literature might change the attitude toward Poland on the side of both Americans and the Poles living in America. He also insisted on having the right to sign contracts for Polish writers, whose works he promoted to be published or staged in the USA.⁸⁰ In a May 1946 report Milosz wrote: “A number of active Polish community members from among my New York City friends are doing an about-face regarding Polish matters. I would like to underline that this takes place not through a revision of political views, but through interest in cultural life of Poland.”⁸¹

The nuances of Milosz’s diplomatic service also shed light on his homeland’s complex political situation at the dawn of the Cold War era. In 1946, shortly after Milosz gave a warmly received speech on the measures taken by the Polish authorities against anti-Semitism, the pogrom in Kielce took place. This pogrom was an outbreak of violence against the Jewish community perpetrated by citizens of a Polish town Kielce, which resulted in the killing of forty-five Jews. Milosz noted: “Number 45 – the number of people killed in Kielce - is more evocative than 6 million people killed by Nazis.”⁸²

⁷⁹ Milosz’s letter to Jerzy Borejsza, early 1946. Jerzy Borejsza Archive (with his son Jerzy Wojciech Borejsza), Warsaw, Poland.

Kuznica (Forge) was a socio-political weekly, published first in Lodz, then in Warsaw. It was focused around a group of writers and artists of Marxist sympathies. The main editors were Stefan Żółkiewski, and Paweł Hoffman, and among its contributors were: Mieczysław Jastrun, Zofia Nałkowska, Leon Kruczkowski, Jerzy Putrament, Kazimierz Brandys, Adam Ważyk, Jan Kott.

⁸⁰ Ibidem.

⁸¹ Milosz, *Report*, New York, 05/1946. Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 21/87/1182, 20.

⁸² Milosz, *Report*, New York, 07/11/1946. Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 6/85/1328, 34.

At the time when Milosz was organizing an exhibition of Polish children's drawings, Americans read in the press about a ban on jokes introduced in Polish schools.⁸³ His lobbying for establishing contacts between publishing houses, universities, and libraries in both countries was useless when Americans discovered that sending prints to Poland was not permitted.⁸⁴ At the time Milosz kept his close Polish friends informed about the world power-balance, which certainly affected the situation in Poland. In an official report written shortly after Winston Churchill's famous March 1946 speech, Milosz commented on the emerging Cold War system:

The absolute conviction about the superiority of American system and ostracizing those who are inclined to discuss socialism seem to characterize at this moment the mentality of the majority of USA population. Therefore, the conflict of Russia and America takes shape of a conflict between two completely impermeable and homogeneous blocs and I think that people do not take enough notice of what can be called American fanaticism.⁸⁵

The life of a diplomat was busy, but Milosz kept writing poetry and articles for the Polish press at night, and strived to carve out time for tracing American literary and intellectual life. Before turning to a discussion of Milosz's works, it is worth looking at his extraordinary societal position, which allowed him to function overtly in Polish literary and political elites, while he discreetly tried to reach out to members of American intellectual circles. At a time when socializing with "the red" official was inconvenient, if not risky for Americans, Milosz managed to establish personal contacts with some American intellectuals. In Princeton, Milosz had long discussions with the famous

⁸³ Milosz, *Report*, New York, 05/1946. Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 21/87/1186, 326-331.

⁸⁴ Milosz, *Report*, New York, 05/1946. Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 21/87/1186, 326. In his report, Milosz complained about Polish insularity, which was caused by cultural alienation of Poland from Western Europe during WW II. Milosz tried to overcome this problem by building cultural and academic ties between his homeland and the USA. One of his big successes was establishing a Polish Faculty on the Columbia University, which was led by his former Vilnius professor Manfred Kridl.

⁸⁵ Milosz, *Report*, New York, 09/1946. Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 21/87/1182, 198.

physicist Albert Einstein, while Milosz's little son Antoni played on the patio of Einstein's house. One of the leading New York intellectuals and the editor of *Politics* magazine, Dwight MacDonald, kept correspondence with Milosz. Both Einstein and MacDonald recognized Milosz as a talented poet and as an intellectual whose views exceeded the content of the political instructions coming from the Warsaw headquarters. Their intellectual exchange also touched on Milosz's struggle to balance the political power linked to his diplomatic service with the intellectual power of his critical and poetically sensitive mind. While in 1948 Milosz's supervisors spoke favorably of his accomplishments, they nevertheless underlined their uneasiness about Milosz's political work conflicting with his poetic nature. The opinion read: "Milosz is an extremely well placed official and a real expert in cultural issues. (...) He needs to be monitored during political work due to his poetic easiness to drift away from the hard facts - however, he is getting better day by day."⁸⁶ Interestingly, Jerzy Putrament, another Polish diplomat and writer, sensed as early as June 1946 the signs of Milosz's ideological doubts, which might have remained invisible to those who evaluated Milosz's performance. On the basis of his correspondence with Milosz, Putrament warned Borejsza that the poet was not fully reliable as a diplomatic official. Putrament wrote: "I think it would be good to get Milosz back to the country. He is unquestionably our best writer at present and in the future, but a longer stay in America will totally 'un-rifle' him, as the Russians say. Do not allow that bunch of impotents to strangle him (...) it would be a crime."⁸⁷

⁸⁶ An opinion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 01/28/1948. After: Andrzej Zawada, *Milosz*, 243.

⁸⁷ Jerzy Putrament's letter to Jerzy Borejsza, 06/27/1946. Jerzy Borejsza Archive. In his book, Pasierski argues that Putrament put Milosz in a bad light in order to take advantage of Milosz's return to Poland, where Putrament would use Milosz's writing for political purpose and win gratitude of the authorities.

A WRITER AND “THE READER”

While Milosz struggled to walk the fine line between sincerely promoting masterpieces of Polish culture and fulfilling his duties as an official of a socialist regime, Polish authorities took serious measures to ensure that Polish citizens would be bombarded with the proper cultural message.⁸⁸ For that purpose, among other measures taken, a major publishing house - Czytelnik [The Reader] - was set up in October 1945 under the iron grasp of Jerzy Borejsza. He designed the publishing policy of his “paper empire,” controlled the literary market, and took care of the writers, in turn luring them into the new regime and disciplining them, if necessary.⁸⁹ Czytelnik remained under constant pressure from socialist authorities, who, in October 1947 openly expressed their dissatisfaction with Czytelnik’s work and the political agenda of its director. Their letter to Borejsza read: “The party members working in Czytelnik have not succeeded in proper methods of popularization of the Polish-Soviet friendship as well as of the accomplishments of the Soviet Union.”⁹⁰ In order to satisfy the authorities’ craving for intellectual legitimization of their totalistic ideological message in the press, and to avoid consequences much worse than just being fired, Czytelnik needed the right tool: devoted writers.

⁸⁸ The publishing industry in Poland was organized through the Ministry of Culture’s Department of Books. The Central Committee Department of Culture and the Central Committee Department of the Press took control over all matters relating to publication. In July 1946 the censor was initiated as the Main Office for the Control of Press, Theatre and Exhibitions. Its initially minor function was expanded in 1949. For the writers, the most important organization was Professional Union of Polish Writers,

⁸⁹ More on Jerzy Borejsza in: Eryk Krasucki, *Międzynarodowy Komunist: Jerzy Borejsza, Biografia Polityczna* (Warszawa: Wydawn. Nauk. PWN, 2009). Borejsza is also known for his idea of a “gentle revolution” - a moderate introduction of socialist ideas into the culture control. In my research I have come across documents which show that Borejsza was not only an influential political figure working in cultural department, but in the period 1945-50, he was himself a semi-institution to which writers turned in need for material help such as an apartment, money or a job. Some even asked his assistance in solving family problems. Borejsza’s major accomplishment, besides organizing the publishing giant of “Czytelnik,” was the 1948 Congress of Peace in Wrocław, with Pablo Picasso and other communist fellow-travelers participating. In 1950, the authorities removed Borejsza from his office, later he went through a serious car accident and died in 1952. Milosz would later write about him, “I was in his stable, we all were.” Czesław Milosz and Madeline Levine, *Milosz’s ABC’s* (Macmillan, 2002), 55.

⁹⁰ A decree no 52 of the secretary of KC PPR (Central Committee of the Polish Workers Party) pertaining to “Czytelnik” and the press published, Warsaw, October 1947. Archive of New Acts, Warsaw, Poland.

For many Polish writers, in addition to intellectual and material incentives, the “sex appeal” of power played a decisive role in their collaboration with the regime-sponsored cultural institutions. It is little wonder that Borejsza was so successful in his “implementation of literary talents into the socialist agenda,” when he was luring writers with a certain charm, saying:

In Poland during the reign of Pilsudski’s followers the role of a writer was reduced to a background figure. (...) Yet the literature of regenerated and renovated Poland will do without statism and coercion in the field of culture. The course of events and the distribution of social forces compel the writer to give up his false attitude and to return to the leading position in the making of great changes.⁹¹

In his appeal, Borejsza alluded to the idea of “a writer as an engineer of a human soul,” a line expressed by Stalin in the 1930s. This concept echoed the role ascribed to the *intelligentsia* in nineteenth-century Eastern Europe, and particularly the Russian *intelligentsia* during the spread of revolutionary ideas prior to 1917. Stalin’s description became an official line for the culture policymakers in the postwar Soviet bloc.⁹² Surely, to be “an engineer of a human soul” came not only with prestige, but with the whole package: an apartment in the center of Warsaw, vacation vouchers, ample food allowances, and for the most loyal, a magic document for which thousands yearned, a passport.⁹³ As George Steiner notes in his *Language and Silence*: “They [the writers] have taken communism seriously because *it* has taken them seriously.”⁹⁴

⁹¹ Jerzy Borejsza, “Lagodna rewolucja” (Gentle Revolution), 1945. A copy from the “Czytelnik” Archive. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 1, folder 7.

⁹² The phrase, coined by Yury Olesha, was used by Stalin, who said «Как метко выразился товарищ Олеша, писатели — инженеры человеческих душ» (“As comrade Olesha aptly expressed himself, writers are engineers of human souls”). “Speech at home of Maxim Gorky,” 26th October 1932. Later, Andrei Zhdanov developed this into the concept of Socialist realism.

⁹³ Certainly, writers’ access to socialist and later communist cultural structures was a complex phenomenon. Aleksander Wat, among others, points to its inward factors, saying: “The entire illness stemmed from the need, that hunger for something all-embracing. In fact communism arose to satisfy certain hungers. (...) One of those hungers was for a catechism, a simple catechism. That sort of hunger burns in refined intellectuals much more than it does in the man on the street...” Aleksander Wat, and Richard Lourie (trans), *My Century: The Odyssey of a Polish Intellectual*

Why would the regimes across postwar Eastern Europe care so much about the writers? And why was Milosz, in particular, a precious figure for the Polish government? In order to understand the rules of interaction between powers - in this case Polish government, and the intellectuals, the Polish writers - one has to look closer at the traditional role of a writer in the region.⁹⁵ Traditionally, in Eastern Europe, writers belonged to the category of the *intelligentsia*. The term *intelligentsia* emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century to describe a community of educated people of various social backgrounds, who were engaged in creative and mental labor, such as doctors, lawyers, artists, teachers, and writers. The *intelligentsia*, which first came into being in the Russian Empire, was also traditionally defined as a social group functioning in opposition to the autocratic regime. Early on, the *intelligentsia* across Eastern Europe had ascribed to themselves a role of the “conscience of a nation,” with all the respective privileges and obligations.⁹⁶ It had become a widespread belief that the cultured and well-educated were characterized by a strong sense of moral principles, and should take moral responsibility for the fellow citizens, society, and humanity.⁹⁷ For the purpose of this chapter I will focus my discussion on one section of the *intelligentsia*: writers.

The tradition of *intelligentsia* created a powerful dichotomy for power relations in postwar Eastern Europe, especially at the intersection of literature and politics. On the

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 55. See also: Ian Maclean, Alan Montefiore ed., *The Political Responsibility of Intellectuals* (New York 1990).

⁹⁴ George Steiner, *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman* (New York: Atheneum, 1967), 351.

⁹⁵ Milosz himself admitted that his case is a great starting point for a discussion of the relations between the power and the world of literature in the postwar East-Central Europe. Milosz, *A Year of the Hunter*, 128.

⁹⁶ See also: Jerome Karabel, “Toward a theory of intellectuals and politics,” *Theory and Society* 25 (1996): 205-239; Martin Malia, “What Is the Intelligentsia?” in: Richard Pipes ed., *The Russian Intelligentsia* (New York, 1961; D.N.); Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii, *Literaturno-kriticheskie raboty v dvukh tomakh* (Moskva 1989). More on the definition and etymology of the term intelligentsia in: Christopher Read, *Culture and Power in Revolutionary Russia: The Intelligentsia and the Transition from Tsarism to Communism* (New York, 1990); Vladimir C. Nahirny, *The Russian Intelligentsia: From Torment to Silence*; Andrei Sinyavsky, *The Russian Intelligentsia*. Translated by L. Visson (New York, 1997).

⁹⁷ Alexei Elfimov, *Russian Intellectual Culture in Transition: The Future in the Past* (London, 2003).

one hand, the *intelligentsia*, and writers in particular, cherished a tradition of social engagement for the educated class, and thus they desired to create postwar order. That met a sympathetic response from new regimes, which were interested in exploiting the moral capital of the *intelligentsia*. On the other hand, when accepting the benefits offered by the power, members of the *intelligentsia* had to stay wary as to whether or not they were betraying their ethos. In the initial postwar period the Moscow-imposed East-European governments exploited the socialist rhetoric that things were done “for the people,” further complicating the situation for the *intelligentsia*. Polish writers, as Carl Tighe rightly notices, at first believed that they put their *intelligentsia* ethos to use by creating an independent Polish socialism, and later, when facing increasing suppression from Moscow, they hoped they would be able to turn communism into a force for good: “For many writers the postwar years started with a brief honeymoon period, followed by increasing disenchantment with the authoritarianism and boorishness of the Party.”⁹⁸ Not until late 1948, and the complete suppression of Eastern Europe by the USSR, had it become clear for the Polish writers and East-European *intelligentsia* in general that collaborating with now-communist regimes meant abandoning their traditional role.

On top of the writers’ traditional *intelligentsia* ethos, yet another set of rules was ascribed specifically to the role of a poet in the period of Polish Romanticism, leading to a *quasi*-deification of his position. As was the case for other European Romantic literatures, Polish tradition defined the poet as a talented individual whose source of inspiration was of mysterious character, and who had access to truths or visions of the future that remained covert for his contemporaries. In the 19th century, when Poland was under the partitions, and thus a nation without a state, Polish poets used their verses to

⁹⁸ Tighe, *The Politics of Literature*, vii.

convey an irredentist message, and their readers took poetry as a forum of political debate. Tighe comments on the phenomenon of the great Romantic Polish poets of the Romantic era:

The works of Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Slowacki and Zygmunt Krasinski reached the height of their influence between the insurrections of November 1830 and January 1863. It is precisely at this period that the Polish word *wieszcz* (possibly derived from the Latin *vates*) came to mean not only a person inspired, a seer into the future, a genius of some kind, but also, (...) came to assume the meaning of national poet. That is a poet, whose prime responsibility was to write for the nation, a poet who lived as he wrote, for the spiritual life of the nation.⁹⁹

As a consequence of taking the Romantic trend to its extreme, Polish poets were now pictured as saviors and spiritual leaders of the nation, and poetry as intrinsically intertwined with the life of the nation. A full century later, Milosz could not escape the ethos attributed to the *intelligentsia* or the certain ambience surrounding a Polish poet. In the postwar period, Milosz's audience expected him to step up to this dual moral burden.

PEOPLE'S POLAND'S SUPREME POET

As the literary scene in Poland was slowly recovering, Milosz remained in dialogue with his Polish audience, which was mainly intellectuals, literary colleagues, and editors. Over time this dialogue revealed the dramas behind the moral implications of Marxism for the writers who lived through shattered careers, broken friendships, and Stalinist crimes and started to question the salutary aim of poetry in a world driven by politics. I intentionally focus on this dialogue, because it provides insight into the moral dilemmas of an eminent intellectual who struggled with Marxism at a time when his milieu had become ideologically polarized and aimed to situate him along ideological

⁹⁹ Tighe, *The Politics of Literature*, 5.

lines. While Milosz's case was a litmus test for the extent of intellectual freedom in Poland in the 1940s, his dialogue with Polish writers testified to the moral condition of Polish intellectuals, whose choices were certainly informed by the dramatic history of Eastern and Central Europe. Similarly to Tony Judt's discussion of the French intellectuals after WW II, I pose a question about the moral responsibility of Polish intellectuals in the postwar period, suggesting that Milosz epitomizes the generational experience of coming to terms with Marxism and socialism in a world where politics and literature were closely intertwined.¹⁰⁰ Marci Shore, in her work, focuses on Milosz's elder colleagues' fascination with and entrenchment in Marxism dating back to the 1920s. My work provides a portrayal of the members of Polish literary and intellectual circles in the 1940s, many of whom enthusiastically immersed themselves in the postwar reconstruction of the Polish cultural realm, and over the next decade had to operate under the gradually rising pressure of communism. Similarly to Shore, I illuminate an individual who embraced the ideology and in turn exercised influence on cultural and political events of his time via diplomacy and writing. I suggest that Milosz was quite aware of the morally questionable price he paid in the political sphere in order to save his poetic freedom.¹⁰¹ In the following paragraphs I discuss Milosz's case as representative

¹⁰⁰ Tony Judt deals with the moral responsibility of the post-WW II French intellectual circles in his book *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944-1956* (1994). Judt argues that French intellectuals have not fully come to terms with the sense of "moral irresponsibility" of the post-war years. As a result, a legacy of bad faith and confusion has damaged France's cultural standing, as well as undermined the traditional reverence for French intellectuals in the countries of Eastern Europe. This failure on the side of French intellectuals was, according to Judt, a reflection of the nation's larger inability to come to terms with its own past. See also: Raymond Aron, *L'opium Des Intellectuels* (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 2002); Sudhir Hazareesingh, *Intellectuals and the French Communist Party: Disillusion and Decline* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

¹⁰¹ Marci Shore, *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life and Death in Marxism, 1918-1968* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006). The problem of Polish intellectuals' involvement with communism is also discussed by the following authors: Andrzej Walicki, *Zniewolony Umysł Po Latach* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1993); Joanna Siedlecka, *Kryptonim liryka: Bezpieka wobec Literatów* (Warszawa: Wydawn. Prószyński i S-ka, 2008); Anna Bikont, Joanna Szczesna, *Lawina I kamienie*, as well as in two series of interviews: Magdalena Bajer, *Blizny Po Ukaszzeniu* (Warszawa: Biblioteka "Wiezi", 2005); Jacek Trznadel, *Hańba Domowa: Rozmowy Z Pisarzami* (Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1986). More on the role of literature and writers in Eastern Europe in: Clare Cavanagh, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics:*

of the mechanism of power relations between politics and literature in the context of postwar East-Central Europe.

After commencing his service in the USA, Milosz often called on his poetic sensitivity in order to soften for Americans his political image of a dignitary from behind the Iron Curtain. At the same time, the Polish authorities and editors kept an eye on the acclaimed poet, who could be potentially useful for hardening the socialist morale of the people through “the politics of poetry.” As it will be further shown, Milosz was the perfect figure for such a task, since he was an acclaimed and widely published author.

What did the situation of Polish literature look like after the war? In late 1945, the writer Tadeusz Breza reported to Milosz on the recovering literary scene, saying:

Slowly everything is picking up steam. There are plenty of books. Too many magazines...people write what they want not all of the prewar partners are present, we lack the crucial ones: Pilsudski’s followers, but everyone else are already present. Do you remember those beautiful sunny days in mid- August, during the [Warsaw] Uprising? A small garden, silence, sparrows. Afterwards - sounds of bombs. A moment to wait. And sparrows go back to their twitter. But there are fewer of them. Somehow it has become very narrow. The state of our literature is tiny. Not much is left of the literary top, the middle generation was decimated, there are very few young ones... some do not want to come back to the country, the others have stuck to it.¹⁰²

Milosz played an important role in this tiny literary scene.

In 1945 *Czytelnik* published Milosz’s wartime volume *Rescue* - a literary piece that proved to be groundbreaking not only for the author and his generation, but also for

Russia, Poland, and the West (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009); Cronies-Pope, Marcel, and John Neubauer, *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins Pub, 2004); Stanisław Baranczak, *Breathing Under Water and Other East European Essays* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990); Celia Hawkesworth, *Literature and Politics in Eastern Europe: Selected Papers from the Fourth World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies, Harrogate, 1990*; Harold B. Segel, *The Columbia Literary History of Eastern Europe Since 1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Hosking, Geoffrey, and G F. Cushing, *Perspectives on Literature and Society in Eastern and Western Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan with the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, 1989).

¹⁰² Tadeusz Breza’s letter to Milosz, Czesław Milosz Papers; Box 1, folder 9. Tadeusz Breza (1905-1970) writer, diplomat, editor of theatrical section of *Odrodzenie* in the years 1946-48.

contemporary Polish literature. Milosz wrote a majority of the poems placed in *Rescue* in Warsaw from 1940 to 1944. Some of his poems were published in the underground press during the Nazi occupation. With this volume, Milosz partially distanced himself from his prewar Avant-garde poetics, an important component of which was catastrophism. His new poetic path was best visible in the poetic cycle entitled *Świat: Poema naiwne* [World: Naïve Poems]. In this cycle, Milosz performed a creative act by escaping from the dread reality of wartime Warsaw to the Arcadia of his childhood, which was ruled by moral law and patriarchal order. The pastoral visions of the *Świat* were completely detached from the surrounding world of violence, human alienation and death. Similar to other pieces in this cycle, a poem entitled “By the Peonies,” captured a precious and serene moment:

[...]

Mother stands by the peony bed,

Reaches for one bloom, opens its petals,

And looks for a long time into peony lands,

Where one short instant equals a whole year.

Then lets the flower go. And what she thinks

She repeats aloud to the children and herself.

The wind sways the green leaves gently

*And speckles of light flick across their faces.*¹⁰³

Contrary to poetics of the *Świat*, in a poetic cycle entitled *Głosy biednych ludzi* [The Voices of Poor People], Milosz presented the everyday reality of wartime apocalypse. In

¹⁰³ Czesław Miłosz, “By the Peonies,” In: Miłosz, *New and Collected Poems*, 47.

this cycle Milosz provided the very first poetical account of the Holocaust in his poem, *Biedny chrześcijanin patrzy na getto* [A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto]. Milosz's wartime lyrical poetry splayed out between the two poles - *Świat* showed the world as it should have been, while *Głosy biednych ludzi* described the world as it was. Milosz's volume would constitute a turning point in Polish poetry. He finished it by posing a question, later echoed by Adorno's famous words on poetry, about the purpose of poetry in the post-apocalyptic world. This message was symbolically directed to the decimated generation of wartime debutant poets "Kolumbów" [Columbuses] who took the Romantic tradition seriously both in their poetry and in the sacrifice of their life in the Warsaw Uprising. Milosz's *Dedication* to them reads:

You whom I could not save

Listen to me.

[...]

What is poetry which does not save

Nations or people?

A connivance with official lies,

A song of drunkards whose throats will be cut in a moment,

Readings for sophomore girls.

That I wanted good poetry without knowing it

That I discovered, late, its salutary aim,

In this and only this I find salvation.

[...]

I put this book here for you, who once lived

*So that you should visit us no more.*¹⁰⁴

The poems from *Rescue*, widely reprinted in postwar Polish press, were crucial not only for establishing Milosz's artistic image, but also for initiating a postwar discussion about the role of poetry and poets against the experience of WW II.

Multiple literary authorities praised the uniqueness of Milosz's poetic output in *Rescue*, so Milosz was not bragging when he claimed: "On the home literary stock market I am placed high."¹⁰⁵ In 1945, one of the leading poets of the "Skamander" group, Julian Tuwim, wrote to Borejsza about Milosz's poetry, saying: "It has been a long time since I read such thrilling and beautiful poems as Milosz's. (...) My attitude towards his cycle 'Naïve poems,' can be described as: fascination, infatuation, fever of poetic emotion...how much knowledge and lyrical wisdom in it! I am under the impression that he is the leading poet of contemporary Poland."¹⁰⁶ A year later in a letter to Milosz, Putrament admitted his envy toward his gifted colleague, commenting on *Rescue*: "Your book is wonderful. (...) Your poetry deprives me of any willingness to produce rhymes, as it is out of all proportion. As Stalin has said - 'Przybosie come and go, but the Polish poetry (Milosz) remains.'" Here, Putrament referred to Polish poet, Julian Przybos, who succeeded in the postwar literary scene due to his willingness to write stanzas according to the *politruks*' directives.¹⁰⁷ In fact, Milosz regularly received letters from his fellow

¹⁰⁴ Milosz, "Dedication."

¹⁰⁵ Milosz's letter to Aniela Micinska and Jan Ulatowski, end of 1945. The Archives of Polish Emigration, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Torun, Poland. Collection uncataloged.

¹⁰⁶ Julian Tuwim's letter to Jerzy Borejsza, 12/12/1945. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 1, folder 7.

Julian Tuwim (1894-1953) was a leader of the Skamander group of Futurist poets, and a translator. He returned to Poland in 1946 and supported the Stalinist regime, although he wavered in his political stance.

¹⁰⁷ *Politruk* (Russian) is the supervisory political officer responsible for the political education and organization. In his letter, Putrament paraphrased Stalin's famous words: "Hitlers come and go, and nations remain." Putrament referred to the Polish poet Julian Przybos (1901-1970), a member of the prewar Krakow avant-garde, and initially a supporter of communism, the first postwar chair of the ZZLP (Professional Union of Polish Writers), diplomat in Switzerland 1947-

writers and friends praising the literary value of *Rescue*, and commenting on its popularity. In 1946, the writer Tadeusz Breza, wrote to Milosz: “Your book is a Bible for the youth, both for those who are interested in poetry and who are not. I have heard that first-hand when chatting with my twenty-year old sister and other youngsters. (...) This volume makes an extraordinary impression due to its emotional and intellectual significance and dimension.”¹⁰⁸ While Milosz enjoyed a prominent position as an acclaimed, widely published poet, his diplomatic post in a distant country only added glamour to his image.

Milosz’s poetry and reviews of his work were published not only in highbrow periodicals, but also in popular, highly circulated weeklies. As such, a broad audience observed how Milosz’s image was created as a product of three factors: Milosz’s poetic and journalistic output, genuine literary criticism, and commentaries coming from the biased editors who used poetry in order to make ideological statements. Despite the fact that he was living in America, Milosz exercised control over his Polish publications. As is the case for authors in general, however, he had little say as to the way his work was being presented to his only audience - the readers in Poland. Milosz’s poetry might have seemed sophisticated when compared to an increasing number of trivial poetic pieces on working-class people, which were produced according to socialist aesthetics. His broad audience relied on the opinions of the literary critics and editors who, as we will further see, co-created the image of Milosz as a top Polish poet, whom at that time no one could meet on the streets of Warsaw. We can learn little about the genuine reception of Milosz’s work in broader circles, since their voices were scattered, and, if present in the

51. Later, he withdrew his enthusiastic approval of socialist realism. Jerzy Putrament’s letter to Czeslaw Milosz, 05/15/46. Milosz Papers; Box 51, folder 730.

¹⁰⁸ Tadeusz Breza’s letter to Czeslaw Milosz, 1946. Milosz Papers; Box 1, folder 9.

“Letters from the Readers” columns, existed in a version that had been censored by the editors.¹⁰⁹ Consequently, it was a narrow group of writers and editors who were growing more dependent on political instructions coming from the government that co-authorized Milosz’s image in the realm of Polish literature. They assumed the role of intermediaries between the poet who lived abroad and his audience in the homeland. Naturally, Milosz hoped for his poetry to reach a broader audience, but first and foremost, he desired an intellectual “ping-pong,” as he would later call it, with members of the narrow literary and intellectual circles in which he thrived.¹¹⁰

Milosz was an important figure in the recovering literary scene, and he soon got involved in polemics on the role of poetry, which revealed disagreement between his take on literature and the approach of many of his literary colleagues who wanted poetry to serve political means. Although in the first postwar months, no one knew exactly what the authorities expected in the realm of literature, the literary critic Jan Kott rebuked Milosz for the individualistic tone of his volume *Rescue*, and implored him to introduce current social problems into his poetry. In the first postwar socio-cultural weekly *Odrodzenie* [Renaissance], Kott wrote: “To think socially means to think through history: to perceive the emergence of new social forms and the dying out of old ones, to notice the deep and real meaning of historic changes. To show them in poems – that’s the task.”¹¹¹ In response to Kott, Milosz refused to compromise poetic sovereignty for the purpose of discussing a present day socio-political agenda, saying: “Poetry lasts as long as it is a

¹⁰⁹ For example, see Leszek Bakula, “Słowo z ubocza,” *Kuznica*, 6 (1950).

¹¹⁰ A phrase used by Milosz in his multiple conversations with Professor Alexander Schenker. An interview with Professor Schenker, Yale University, New Haven, USA, March 2011.

¹¹¹ Jan Kott, “O katastrofizmie,” *Odrodzenie* 18 (1945): 8. *Odrodzenie* [Renaissance], (1944-50) - a weekly, the first postwar socio-cultural periodical. It was set up in Lublin in 1944, then published in Krakow (1945-47), and in Warsaw (1947-50). It supported cultural politics of the government. Its editors were Karol Kuryluk and Jerzy Borejsza. *Odrodzenie* was an influential periodical for postwar culture development, especially in the realm of literature. In 1950 it was merged with *Kuznica*, and since then published as *Nowa Kultura* (New Culture).

vanguard of knowledge of some epoch about itself.”¹¹² One revealing occurrence took place in 1946, when Milosz, after multiple rounds of voting, lost the 1945 Krakow Literary Prize to another Polish poet, Julian Przybos. The jury argued that Przybos’ poetry fulfilled an educational role for society, while Milosz’s verses lacked “a poetic and cultural significance.”¹¹³ Nevertheless, these first differences in the way Milosz and some of his literary colleagues defined the tasks of a poet in People’s Poland did not shake his position in the literary business, as both editors and cultural policy makers strived to publish his works.

Although a number of Polish writers did not worry about the political undertones in literature, a more insightful literary critic, Kazimierz Wyka, recognized potential damages from the politicization of literature, and pictured Milosz as a lonely poet, the only one capable of rescuing Polish poetry. In an in-depth review of *Rescue*, published in the highbrow monthly *Tworczosc* [Creativity], Wyka placed thirty-four year old Milosz high in the Polish literary firmament, saying: “He outgrew his peers and his poetic rivals. The labor that is ahead of him is not only on a generation’s scale, with which he coped so far as an artist, giving in and fighting as a man who is establishing his place in reality. This is the labor on a scale of poetry itself – poetry that does not pass when her time passes.”¹¹⁴

Similar to Wyka, Dominik Horodyski, an editor of the Catholic weekly *Dzis i Jutro* [Today and Tomorrow], emphasized Milosz’s moral commitment toward his

¹¹² Czeslaw Milosz, “Smierc Kassandra,” *Odrodzenie* 21 (1945): 7.

¹¹³ *Odrodzenie* 48 (1946): 12. Interestingly, Milosz won the prize in the first test voting. However, after a discussion and two more rounds of voting the prize went to Przybos, who would soon become one of the favorite poets of the regime. It was the vice-president of Krakow, engineer Tor, who had a say over the final verdict.

¹¹⁴ Kazimierz Wyka, “Ogrody lunatyczne i ogrody pasterskie,” *Tworczosc* 5 (1946): 135-47.

Kazimierz Wyka (1905-1970) was a Polish historian, literary critic and a professor of the Jagiellonian University. He was also a deputy to Polish parliament 1952-1956.

readers. Horodynski initiated his 1946 “Open Letter to Czeslaw Milosz” in a poetic mode, saying: “I wanted to visit you, Poet. (...) I have been looking for you in vain, until I was finally told that you are no longer here, that you have left the country and that you went far away and for long.”¹¹⁵ In his open letter, Horodynski claimed that Milosz’s critical stance toward the Polish messianic tradition had psychologically alienated the poet from the wartime dramas of many of his compatriots, and especially from the experience of the Warsaw Uprising. How should one understand the charges pressed by Horodynski against Milosz? The messianic tradition Horodynski referred to was a current in Polish philosophy, an important component of which was focus on the nation and its metaphysical role. According to this philosophy, the Polish nation suffered under the partitions in order to bring salvation to the sinful European nations, in a mode similar to Jesus the Savior. Polish Romantic literature popularized this messianic message, which subsequently nurtured the agenda of the nineteenth century Polish uprisings. The messianic rhetoric was also echoed in the glorious yet vain sacrifice of the Warsaw Uprising insurgents. Milosz was very critical of deifying nations and employing the messianic tradition for political and military ends. He refused to participate in or approve of the Uprising. In his open letter, Horodynski cited Milosz’s poem “In Warsaw,” in which the poet harshly broke with the messianic tradition that had beset Poles for two centuries. The poem, written in 1945, read:

What are you doing here, poet, on the ruins

Of St. John's Cathedral this sunny

¹¹⁵ Dominik Horodynski, “Gdzie ocalenie? Do Czeslaw Milosza list otwarty,” *Dzis i Jutro* 8 (1946): 1-2. *Dzis i Jutro* - a Catholic social weekly initiated by Boleslaw Piasecki, and published from November 1945 by a group of Catholics who supported the communist regime. It paved the way for future activists of the PAX Association, such as: Jan Dobraczynski, Dominik Horodynski, Konstanty Lubienski, Hanna Malewska, Wojciech Zukrowski.

Day in spring?

[...]

You swore never to be

A ritual mourner.

You swore never to touch

The deep wounds of your nation

So you would not make them holy

With the accursed holiness that pursues

*Descendants for many centuries.*¹¹⁶

Horodynski suggested that Milosz's *Rescue* voiced a critique of the messianic tradition that was in fact an escapist position, which in light of Milosz's decision to work abroad, appeared to serve only his individual salvation. Yet, Horodynski argued, Milosz had made a commitment to his readers by entitling his volume *Rescue*, and even though he was away from his homeland, the poet was morally obliged to point out "a rescue" for those who were left behind.

I propose to look at Milosz's 1946 discussion with Wyka and Horodynski as foreshadowing Milosz's life-long struggle with the Romantic tradition in East-Central Europe, understood broadly as the nationalist ideology of a region, and, more specifically, the nationalist notes present in Polish literature. One would think that Milosz's somewhat solitary literary position in the first postwar years might have derived

¹¹⁶ Milosz, "In Warsaw." Milosz on several occasions discussed the logic behind the Warsaw Uprising criticizing the messianic tradition as a philosophy that led to extermination of thousands of people. He came especially harsh on the members of literary group around the underground Warsaw monthly *Sztuka i Narod* [Art and Nation], which was published from 1942 to 1944. The magazine supported radical and national philosophies. Milosz blamed its authors for popularizing ideas that directly contributed to the outbreak of the Uprising which was doomed to fail.

from his reserved attitude toward cultural politics of the socialist regime, especially the early socialist-realist aesthetic. I suggest that Milosz's critical attitude toward the postwar wave of Polish poetry reflected not only his disgust at core traits of socialist realism, but also at its nationalistic overtone of Romantic provenance. In a 1946 letter to his friend in Warsaw, Tadeusz Kronski, Milosz said: "to accept socialist realism in fact meant to accept socialist Romanticism."¹¹⁷ Milosz's correspondence shows that the poet recognized early on that in Poland, nationalistic rhetoric was becoming a major component of early stage socialism realism. It was socialist realism *à la polonaise*. My analysis of the exchange taking place between the poet-diplomat and his friends residing in the country stresses how, in this unique historical moment, socialism, nationalism, and communism merged to create a complex ideological vortex. While the postwar socio-political situation in Poland fluctuated, poetry, and writing in general, became a vessel in which these ideologies permeated each other. From the ruins a new world was coming into being, and people often turned to their nations' past in search for ideological material that would help this world to grow. Carrying on postwar reconstruction the new socialist government often nourished and motivated the citizens by resorting to Romantic notions of the greatness of the Polish people. So did the poets.

In October 1946, Milosz responded to Horodynski's and Wyka's critiques by publishing the "Semi-Private Letter on Poetry," in which he discussed the nationalist component present in contemporary Polish poetry. Milosz said: "It is a time of temptation. Many patriotic and ideological poems will come out whose words ring, rustle

¹¹⁷ Milosz's letter to Kronski, Summer 1947. Milosz, Czeslaw, *Zaraz po wojnie. Korespondencja z pisarzami, 1945-50* (Znak, Krakow, 2007), 307.

and intoxicate.”¹¹⁸ Expressing his criticism of this trend in poetry, Milosz stood for much more than his own poetic sovereignty. In fact, the poet called on Polish writers to undertake the task of leaving the “chalky circle” of the Romantic tradition, which trapped poets in the realm of the sacrosanct national agenda. “Isn’t it horrible,” Milosz asked rhetorically, “that almost every generation of Polish poets has to perform the function of funeral weepers, and wouldn’t accepting this fact be legitimizing our national madness, which constantly produces the same results?”¹¹⁹ He alluded to Polish uprisings that had cost the lives of thousands.

Milosz’s article reveals his complex attitude toward the Romantic tradition in contemporary Polish poetry. Referring to his poetic *credo*, Milosz said: “When I wrote in the preface to *Rescue* that I have understood the rescuing aim of poetry that is exactly what I meant and I still believe that poetry can either save nations or bring them to ruin.”¹²⁰ With these words, Milosz approved of the Polish Romantic tradition that assigned a special status for poetry, and he admitted that poetry in a Polish context was more than a realm of artistic expression for the individual. At the same time, he chastised that part of the Romantic tradition that inculcated a messianic trend into Polish poetry. The moral obligation of a contemporary poet was to quit weeping and show a vision of a more propitious world, Milosz suggested. Only in this way could a poet provide a genuine rescue to a nation that was recovering from the wartime hecatomb. Milosz’s

¹¹⁸ Czesław Miłosz, “List pol-privatny o poezji,” *Twórczość* 10 (1946): 112-21.

¹¹⁹ Ibidem. Interestingly, the political role of literature in Poland was dual. On the one hand, as Miłosz notices, it was a kind of national literary pathology that Polish literature limited the writers assigning them Messianic and patriotic agenda. On the other hand, it provided a space of freedom in times of political subjugation. Davies writes: “Polish politics, driven from the public arena by an army of police and censors, took refuge in the metaphors of the poets and the allegories of the novelists. [...] Nineteenth-century Polish literature quickly became a great fortress, impregnable because its invisible walls could not be breached by guns and search warrants. [...] In Poland, Literature did not merely reflect Politics as it did elsewhere; it threatened to replace it.” Norman Davies, *The Heart of Europe* (Oxford 1980), 177.

¹²⁰ Ibidem.

correspondence from that time witnesses that he was also struggling with yet another Romantic tradition, when he dreaded that the Polish audience might see him as a national poet (*wieszcz*). In a 1947 letter to a close friend Milosz said: “God forbid that I become a so-called herald of the opposition and that they start to worship me as the new Mickiewicz who is with us, not with them. I am definitely too sly for that and I don’t give a damn about those wretched Poles who can only think in political categories.”¹²¹ Critique of the Romantic tradition in Polish literature would remain a *leitmotif* of Milosz’s work.

Since Milosz’s literary and political positions were strong, the editors of major Polish periodicals competed to define Milosz’s image. They tried to do so by imposing on him the title of either People’s Poland poet laureate, or the non-conformist savior of Polish poetry. Milosz defied these distinctions as he recognized the risk of being typecast.¹²² Not only did the editors of the three major Polish periodicals *Kuznica*, *Odrodzenie*, and *Przekroj* constantly strive to win Milosz’s favors and have his poems and articles published, but Borejsza even suggested that Milosz could become the chief editor of the weekly *Nowa Kultura* [New Culture].¹²³ The Polish writer and the editor-in-chief of *Nowiny Literackie* [Literary News], Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz, begged his

¹²¹ Milosz’s letter to Tadeusz Kronski, mid September 1947. In: Milosz, *Zaraz po wojnie*, 310.

¹²² In October 1947 Milosz wrote to Iwaszkiewicz: “I have many of my poems, but I suffer from a strange disease, i.e. unwillingness to publish, which stems not so much out of pride, as out of growing scruples and fear of the traps of popularity.” Milosz’s letter to Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz, 10/24/1947. In: Milosz, *Zaraz po wojnie*, 310.

¹²³ Milosz was invited to collaboration with periodicals in the following letters: Tadeusz Breza’s letter to Milosz, 01/07/1947. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 1, folder 9; Marian Elie’s letter to Milosz, 1946. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 1, folder 19; Pawel Hoffman’s letter to Milosz, 01/12/1950. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 1, folder 24; Kazimierz Wyka’s letter to Milosz, 07/26/1947. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 3, folder 83; Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz’s letters to Milosz, 05/10/1947, 04/03/1948. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 1, folder 29.

Nowa Kultura was a response from the Polish cultural authorities to *Kultura* - a literary-political monthly published by the Instytut Literacki in Paris under the editorship of Jerzy Giedroyc. *Kultura* was the center of Polish independent political thought that published political and literary pieces critical of the Polish regime. For decades it had functioned as a symbol of independent Polish culture, and had promoted great Polish writers: Witold Gombrowicz, Czeslaw Milosz, Gustaw Herling-Grudzinski, Leszek Kolakowski; and smuggled its publications to communist Poland. The Polish authorities took serious measures in order to diminish its oppositional influence. It was not coincidental that the periodical published in Poland was entitled “Nowa Kultura,” as the authorities in cultural sector expected that people would mix up both periodicals.

friend Milosz: “Send me a lot of material to the ‘News,’ I beg you, you write so well!” Then he complained about Milosz’s multiple professional engagements, saying that he “would very much like to publish Milosz, but Milosz prefers *Odrodzenie* and *Borejsza*.”¹²⁴ Kazimierz Wyka asked Milosz to contribute to the more independent monthly *Tworczosc*, saying: “The situation of poetry isn’t good nowadays, and the worst is that of the young poetry. Therefore, do not hide your stuff, ... send it, there won’t be any delay in publishing, I promise you.”¹²⁵ Yet another critic Ryszard Matuszewski later added: “For sure Borejsza would have a dose of useful snobbery as to set up a comfortable living for you in Warsaw.”¹²⁶ While the editors of the major periodicals were luring Milosz with visions of fame, some of his colleagues commented ironically on his decision to leave the country, such as Tadeusz Breza, who said: “The whole *Kuznica* knows least what to do with poetry and what one can expect from it. There is no pushing in any direction... Besides, people read your works and no one really knows what you could have been afraid of.”¹²⁷ Two years spent abroad did not harm Milosz’s position, and his was still a hot name in the publishing market. Major literary figures remained in correspondence with him, suggesting that he had been missed in the literary circles in Warsaw.¹²⁸ On New Year’s Eve 1948, Milosz received a warm letter from the critic

¹²⁴ Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz’s letters to Milosz, 11/06/47, 05/10/47. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 1, folder 29. In his letter Iwaszkiewicz talked about the editorship of *Odrodzenie*: “No one has a clue what is going on there... It means that it is Borejsza who does everything. (...) Following bad issues, there are good ones.” Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz’s letter to Milosz, 04/03/48. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 1, folder 29.

¹²⁵ Kazimierz Wyka’s letter to Milosz, 07/26/47. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 3, folder 83. At the same time though, Wyka praised Milosz’s articles published in *Odrodzenie*: “I have the pleasure to inform you that it is not only me who is a faithful reader of your works in *Odrodzenie* and that not only I think of it well. First of all people like that you always put the raw meat of facts first, that this meat is always fresh and that only a moron won’t finish reading.” Kazimierz Wyka’s letter to Milosz, 3/16/48. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 3, folder 83.

¹²⁶ Ryszard Matuszewski’s letter to Milosz, 04/17/48. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 1, folder 45. Similarly, Breza assured Milosz that getting an apartment would not be a problem, as he himself got one in Warsaw, from Borejsza.

¹²⁷ Tadeusz Breza’s letter to Czeslaw Milosz, 1/07/1947. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 1, folder 9.

¹²⁸ Still, Milosz, with a characteristic for him egotism, complained about the quality of contact with Polish friends, saying: “Longing... Everyone forget about me, do I deserve it? And I’m so interested in what happens in the country

Dominik Horodynski that read: “Lots of people miss you here, your absence will ruin the last days of the year for us. We will raise a glass to you on New Year’s Eve.”¹²⁹

Certainly, both sides needed each other, and remained in a lively dialogue that addressed not only Milosz’s career, but also the situation of Polish literature and postwar Poland in general.

A TREATISE ON IRONIC LOYALTY

Since Milosz’s 1945 departure to the USA, the situation in Poland had gradually changed, as the communists consolidated their power and persecuted their opponents. By 1946, all rightist parties had been outlawed, while 1946 electoral fraud won the communists a majority in the national referendum, which led to the nationalization of industry and land reform. The leading opposition party – Polish People's Peasant Party led by Mikolajczyk – was constantly suppressed, and their members persecuted by administrative means. At the same time, the regime turned against the perceived enemies of communism, and either sentenced to prison or murdered many WW II resistance fighters and Home Army veterans. In January 1947, after fraudulent elections, the communists and their allies acquired nearly all seats in Parliament, thus bringing down the curtain on the multi-party system in Poland. As a result, the oppositionist politicians, including Mikolajczyk, left the country. Soon after, the long-established Polish Socialist Party, which had been shaky due to the communists’ machinations, merged with the communists into the Polish United Workers’ Party. This party would remain in power for the next four decades. The above political developments opened the way for full

and to the people who are dear to me!” Milosz’s letter to Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz, end of 1947. In: Milosz, *Zaraz po wojnie*, 189.

¹²⁹ Dominik Horodynski’s letter to Milosz, 12/20/1947. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 1, folder 25.

monopolization of power by the communists, effectively turning Poland into a Soviet satellite. In general, Polish citizens opposed the communist regime, and felt bitter that the West did not protest Moscow-orchestrated suppression of their rights and of Poland's sovereignty. Yet, the rules of the Cold War made the West uninterested in any intervention into the Soviet sphere of influence.

In April 1948, while Poland was still in the process of a serious political transformation, Milosz published the poetic piece, "Treatise on Morals," that testified to the poet's psychological struggle under the pressure of that historic moment, but also portrayed the morally and politically dramatic choices of his peers. As such it constituted a literary landmark for the Polish *intelligentsia* for the decades to come.¹³⁰ In this piece, written in Washington, Milosz spoke in dual voice, as he both expressed his approval for the socio-political processes in Poland, and his concern about a human soul exposed to the nihilistic traits of socialism. As Andrzej Franaszek, a biographer of Milosz, rightly proposes, the dichotomy of the "Treatise on Morals" revealed the inner struggle Milosz was going through when coming to terms with the increasingly gloomy reality of People's Poland.¹³¹ The "Treatise on Morals" was a testimony to the schizophrenic scramble of an individual living within the ideological framework of Marxism. On the one hand, he dreaded the historical determinism of Marxism because it annulled individual responsibility; on the other hand, Marxism nourished him with a vague vision of a brighter future after a time of moral darkness. A fragment of the poem read:

¹³⁰ Czesław Miłosz, "Traktat moralny" (Treatise on Morals), *Tworczosc* 4 (1948): 5-16.

¹³¹ Andrzej Franaszek, *Miłosz: Biografia* (Kraków: Wydawn. Znak, 2011).

This inner struggle had taken place on the pages of Miłosz's correspondence, even before the publication of "Treatise on Morals." By the end of 1947, the poet had become seriously concerned with the situation in his country. In October 1947, he wrote to Iwaszkiewicz: "[...] the whole picture is dark. The moment that telling the truth about one's own country is considered opting for the opposition, the situation is very bad." 10/24/1947. Miłosz, *Zaraz po wojnie*, 184.

*Our epoch or demise,
enormous Die Likwidation,
how long it will last I cannot tell,
what kind of scum will we learn about.
Appreciate it, since it changes the world
raising slight reservations.*¹³²

[My translation]

Given Milosz's position at the time, the editor who published "Treatise" knew that the poet could only get away with such a controversial piece on the rare chance that the censor had agreed to its publication. In December 1947, he warned Milosz: "I will publish 'Treatise on Morals,' yet, since there are some locutions which could be used against you, I will ask Kuryluk's opinion and provide an introduction to it."¹³³ Milosz, in turn, was aware of his own intentionally aggressive publishing policy, of which he bragged in a letter to Tadeusz Kronski: "What I would like is to be regarded as someone dangerous, someone who writes good prose and poetry; I would also like them to conclude that they either have to treat me with care or, if eliminate me, then entirely."¹³⁴ Although within three years of leaving the country, the poet was quite satisfied with both his diplomatic service and literary career at home, his loyalty to the regime was a complex one, as he admitted in a June 1948 letter to Borejsza: "I think that you will understand my attitude of 'ironic loyalty.' I wish there was a place for it in our country and wherever people want to do something for real. To complain and love doing

¹³² Milosz, "Traktat moralny."

¹³³ Kazimierz Wyka's letter to Milosz, 12/14/47. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 3, folder 83. Quite recently the literary scholar, Zdzislaw Lapinski noticed that it is a mystery how "Treatise" made it at all through the sieve of the censor. Karol Kuryluk was at that time the chief editor of *Odrodzenie*.

¹³⁴ Milosz's letter to Juliusz Kronski, mid September 1947. In: Milosz, *Zaraz po wojnie*, 309.

something at the same time - it is a very Polish trait. (...) I mean loyalty towards the solutions which for sure are imperfect, but are the only viable ones.”¹³⁵ By “imperfect” solutions, Milosz meant the constrained freedom and political persecution involved in the new regime in Poland. Since “Treatise on Morals” spoke all too well about Milosz’s “ironic loyalty,” and many readers recognized in its extravagant form a mockery of socialist realism, it could not be met with a response in the official press. Milosz, *enfant terrible* of the literary scene, confronted the regime by questioning the cultural and moral costs of socialism, creating a seditious ammunition too potent for the literary critics to risk comment. However, their silence on “Treatise” spoke even louder about the fact that the favored poet was straying across an ideologically proper line.¹³⁶

Intentionally ignored on the surface, the “Treatise on Morals” gained prominence in underground intellectual life: first, it was discussed in private letters to Milosz; second, it became a literary code for the postwar non-conformist *intelligentsia*; third, it reemerged in the 1980s oppositional discourse. This speaks to the phenomenon of double-talk that characterized life under communist regimes, when (especially in the Stalinist period) what could be said in the private and public sphere differed dramatically. Milosz’s honest, ambivalent account of a personal struggle with the moral issues invoked by Marxism responded to the real needs of his colleagues, who only decided to express their views in private correspondence with the poet.¹³⁷ In a letter to Milosz, Wyka said:

¹³⁵ Wanda Telakowska’s and Czesław Milosz’s letter to Jerzy Borejsza, 6/06/1948. Jerzy Borejsza Archive.

¹³⁶ There were three other comments on “Treatise on Morals.” In the independent Catholic periodical *Tygodnik Powszechny* [Universal Weekly], Stefan Kisielewski mentioned that the poem is of a great intellectual value. *Tygodnik Powszechny* 24 (1948). Witold Wirpsza in his article naively stated that, contrary to a phrase used by Milosz “the heart of darkness,” he personally believed in “the heart of love.” Finally, on the pages of *Dzisiaj i Jutro*, Bohdan Ostromecki argued that Milosz’s skepticism presented in “Treatise on Morals” alienated its author from real suffering of people. “Na marginesie pewnego traktatu moralnego,” *Dzisiaj i Jutro* 50 (1948): 4.

¹³⁷ In a 1948 letter to Jerzy Andrzejewski Milosz underlined that it was not ideological and political pressures in themselves that decided about an individual’s fate, but rather the way in which she responded to it. Milosz wrote: “[...]”

I describe the situation for you so that you aren't disappointed if 'Treatise on Morals' does not echo the way you would expect. [...] We can only diminish the dimension of the catastrophe in poetry in a way you do it in 'Treatise': speaking in a human, direct, yet risky manner about our attitude towards the world, and not hiding in a quagmire of images and ornaments.¹³⁸

In July 1948, Iwaszkiewicz wrote in a letter to Milosz: "I am sorry for the rubbish that I have written about you in one of the forthcoming articles. I just wanted to turn the attention to your 'Treatise on Morals,' which has been passed over in silence, as if it has never been written or printed; and this is a thing that should revolt our zoils [nasty critics]."¹³⁹ Similarly, Anna Kowalska, who worked for the literary monthly *Zeszyty Wroclawskie*, said: "We read 'Treatise on Morals' with emotion. Rarely any work of literature invokes such elation in some, and such sorrow in others."¹⁴⁰

Besides this immediate reaction, "Treatise on Morals" functioned as a secret code, or even a moral compass for the Polish *intelligentsia* in the following decades of substantially curtailed political freedoms.¹⁴¹ Readers have often focused on the following lines:

*Yet you are not that volition less,
and even if you were like a field stone,
an avalanche changes its course,
depending on what stones it rolls.*

everyone of us changes with the epoch; [...] yet the question is whether we mature with the epoch in order to be tied by it or to gain some freedom thanks to this experience?" 08/18/1948. Franaszek, *Milosz*, 84.

¹³⁸ Kazimierz Wyka's letter to Milosz, 03/1948. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 4, folder 83.

¹³⁹ Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz's letter to Milosz, 07/27/48. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 1, folder 29.

¹⁴⁰ Anna Kowalska's letter to Milosz, 11/07/48. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 1, folder 37. Milosz's Archive includes more letters praising "Treatise on Morals," i.e. Eugenia and Wincenty Chmielnicki's letter to Milosz, 1948. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 1, folder 13.

¹⁴¹ My interviews with: Henryk Markiewicz, professor emeritus in the Department of Polish Literature at the Jagiellonian University, Krakow; Piotr Kloczowski, curator of the Institute for Documentation and Studies on Polish Literature, Warsaw; Alexander Schenker, professor emeritus in the Slavic Department at Yale, a colleague of Milosz, New Haven.

*And, as someone else used to say,
you can, so affect the avalanche course,
mitigate its wildness, cruelty,
it also requires bravery.*¹⁴²

[My translation]

The way Polish audiences in the 1940s and '80s interpreted Milosz's "Treatise on Morals" illustrated how meaning could be created within the relationship between the text and the reader. Contemporary readers usually interpreted the above fragment of the "Treatise" as a nuanced call for an individual effort to shape the face of socialism in Poland, rather than an expression of doubts coming from someone who worked in the very heart of the regime. The Polish opposition activists in the 1980s, conversely, understood the above words as an appeal to resist the socialist authorities.¹⁴³ In the early 1950s, Jerzy Stempowski, a political exile in France, commented on Milosz's poem with a rare insight, saying:

I have before me the most distinguished Polish piece of literary work written after the year 1939. (...) If anyone wishes to find out how Polish writers resisted the approaching darkness and loneliness, how they found within themselves the hidden power to resist – in the time when they were under the pressure of one half of the world and treated with indifference by the other half – he will find the key to it in the 'Treatise on Morals.'¹⁴⁴

Undoubtedly, when looking at the situation of Polish literature in 1948, one could conclude that for writers' artistic freedom and for genuine literature, twilight was surely falling.

¹⁴² Milosz, "Treatise on Morals."

¹⁴³ Milosz explained what he meant by an avalanche discussed in his poem. He said: "This is an expression of the philosophy of the collaborationists, who joined the party saying that they want to reform it from the inside. After all it was a piece written by PRL (Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, Polish People's Republic) official. [...] What one should get from it is rather an idea of cooperation with the People's Poland." Czeslaw Milosz, *Rozmowy polskie, 1979-1998* (Warsaw, 2006), 577.

¹⁴⁴ Franaszek, *Milosz*, 441.

NOWHERE TO PUBLISH, NOTHING TO WRITE

Milosz could not foretell that his “Treatise on Morals” would be published just months before the political and cultural catastrophe that touched Poland, and it was from a distance that he observed how Moscow orchestrated the late 1948 Stalinization of Central and Eastern Europe. As a result of Yugoslavia’s break with the Soviet Union, Stalin resorted to harsh measures in order to maintain the *status quo* in the satellite countries of the Soviet bloc. In Poland, the period of full-blown Stalinism started with the 1948 political purge of Polish communist officials accused of “nationalist deviation.” A group of Polish communists chosen by Stalin took full control of the new government, and the NKVD officer and hardline Stalinist Boleslaw Bierut became President of Poland. The Soviet-style secret police and the Ministry of Public Security employed 32,000 agents to carry out the persecution of political opponents of the regime, with torture and executions being regular practice. While all state sectors were supervised by the Soviet Secret Police officers to guarantee pro-Soviet politics, the Soviet troops “secured” inviolability of the Polish territory. Starting in 1949, the new government implemented a sweeping program of economic reforms, bringing Poland into line with the Soviet model of a “people’s democracy.” The spirits of Polish citizens differed dramatically - some enthusiastically approved of the reforms and joined the communist party, others fought with the unjust regime, and the majority simply carried on with their lives adopting an attitude of resignation.

The Stalinization of Poland not only transformed the socio-political reality of Milosz’s homeland, but it also affected Milosz personally with the official introduction of

socialist realism to literature and arts at the Szczecin Congress, in January 1949.¹⁴⁵ Socialist realism was a method of literary and artistic creativity that aimed to reflect the true social reality by employing approachable means of artistic expression. An artist practicing this method would adopt the socialist worldview, with a special focus on the working-class perspective as a point-of-departure for his endeavors.¹⁴⁶ In order to put the socialist-realist agenda to work, the cultural authorities stiffened the thus far relatively liberal publishing policy, and prepared a 'production plan' for literature. Certain communist officials prominent in culture who advocated a strategy of "gentle revolution," like Borejsza, were ousted.¹⁴⁷ By 1947, as the communists were growing stronger, they started to copy the Soviet cultural politics in Poland. As it has been aforementioned, the cultural policy makers directly referred to the immense potential of Eastern European literary traditions trying to turn literature into a forum for political propaganda. The fact that the President of Poland, Boleslaw Bierut, spoke of propaganda attested to its importance for the emerging communist regime. In his November 1947 speech, Bierut said: "The duty of an artist who shapes the spiritual realm of a nation's life is to sense the heart of people's mass toil, to sense their longing and needs. It is his duty to draw from their emotions and experience creative inspiration for his own effort, the main and basic goal of which should be to elevate and dignify the life of these

¹⁴⁵ Since in late 1948 the USSR changed its policy toward the satellite countries and introduced the "people's democracy" formula, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe became fully Stalinized. Consequently, communist parties monopolized the power, and names of the countries were changed into "People's Republics" (Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria). More on Stalinism in Poland in: Andrzej Paczkowski, and Jane Cave. *The Spring Will Be Ours: Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); Andrzej Paczkowski, *Pół Wieku Dziejów Polski: 1939-1989* (Warszawa: Wydawn. Naukowe PWN, 1995); Jerzy Eisler, *Zarys Dziejów Politycznych Polski: 1944-1989* (Warszawa: Polska Oficyna Wydawn. "BGW", 1992); Andrzej Garlicki, *Stalinizm* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1993).

¹⁴⁶ B. Owczarek, "Realizm socjalistyczny" in: *Słownik literatury XX wieku*, Aliny Brodzkiej ed, (Wrocław, 1995).

¹⁴⁷ Borejsza had a car accident on January 1st, 1949. His biographer, Eryk Krasucki claims that given the political situation at the time, the accident might have been an attempt on his life. Borejsza died in 1952.

masses.”¹⁴⁸ It was not until 1949, however, that the fate of Polish literature and culture became sealed with a stamp of the Soviet style socialist-realist aesthetic.

As Stalinism *à la polonaise* picked up steam, Miłosz’s writing almost completely stopped functioning in the realm of poetry, and was constantly subjected to strictly political evaluation.¹⁴⁹ The consequences were threefold: first, Miłosz’s dialogue with many literary colleagues came to a halt since many of them had decided to compromise fully their intellectual freedom; second, the frequency of Miłosz’s publications in the press sharply decreased; third, depressed and alienated from his artistic milieu Miłosz was experiencing a poetic crisis. Miłosz’s defense of writers’ sovereignty brought to light the split among his literary and intellectual colleagues, for whom 1949 was a turning point - they either had to subject themselves to the norms of socialist realism for the sake of their careers, or choose the hardship of internal exile as a way of protecting their artistic independence.

For the reasons explained earlier in this chapter, many writers embarked on socialist-realist projects, including the leading figures of Polish literary scene, such as Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński, Władysław Broniewski, Kazimierz Brandys and Tadeusz Borowski. Beginning in the spring of 1950, writers would receive fellowships from the government to go to factories and mingle with the workers, so that in their prose and poetry they could reach this audience more effectively. The generation of young writers who joined the socialist-realist literary project with a desire to make up for the lost wartime years was called “pryszczaci” [the pimply]. Among the “pryszczaci” one can

¹⁴⁸ Z. Jarosiński, *Nadwiślański socrealizm* (Warszawa, 1999), 14.

¹⁴⁹ In the years 1945-1950, Miłosz published ca. 70 articles and 45 times poetic works. He published in the major periodicals, such as *Kuznica*, *Odrodzenie*, *Przekroj*, and in literary magazines: *Nowiny literackie*, *Tworczosc*, *Zeszyty Wrocławskie*. Besides, his works were published in a dozen of other journals and periodicals.

find Jerzy Andrzejewski, Tadeusz Borowski, Andrzej Braun, Tadeusz Konwicki, Andrzej Mandalian, Witold Wirpsza, Witold Woroszyński, and the future Nobel prize winner Wisława Szymborska.

In their correspondence from that time, Miłosz's friends responded to his critiques on the situation in Poland and in Polish literature in particular, often ridiculing Miłosz's idealistic vision of a viable third option that would save Poland from Stalinist communism and Polish culture from socialist realism. Ryszard Matuszewski wrote: "What happens in Poland is not a local phenomenon. (...). These are issues pertaining to one third of the world, they are vivid and real, and you again want to look at them from the moon, dear Czesław! (...) Actually, I think it is better for you that you are at a lunar distance from Poland."¹⁵⁰ A few months later, he added in a tone of historical determinism: "Here and now in Poland we cannot any more be 'Europeans' or citizens of the world in detachment from our concrete situation."¹⁵¹ Similarly, the poet and *Kuznica* editor, Paweł Hertz, chastised Miłosz in a letter for sticking to unrealistic postulates for literature to remain independent from current socio-political developments. "I watch all that you are writing about, I am involved in that," Hertz admitted. Then, himself an author writing accordant to the socialist-realist aesthetic, Hertz cynically added: "I try to be sinless in regards to the good muses of true literature."¹⁵² Finally, a close female friend from the war period in Warsaw, Irena Kronska, wrote to Miłosz: "The Tiger wants Czesław to become a Marxist poet, and Czesław opposes it with the whole passion of his admirable authenticity which still beguiles him with slipping out, or with the possibility

¹⁵⁰ Ryszard Matuszewski's letter to Miłosz, 10/28/48. Czesław Miłosz Papers. Box 2, folder 45.

¹⁵¹ Ryszard Matuszewski's letter to Miłosz, 1949. Czesław Miłosz Papers. Box 2, folder 45.

¹⁵² Paweł Hertz's letter to Miłosz, nd. Czesław Miłosz Papers. Box 1, folder 22.

of discovering an absolutely genuine worldview.”¹⁵³ The Tiger was Tadeusz Kronski, Irena’s husband and the Miloszes’ friend, also a philosopher who played a key role in pushing Milosz on the path of Marxism. Since Kronski was an avid supporter of the regime, he wanted Milosz to concede to the rules of socialist realism.

The fact that multiple interested parties, such as officials of cultural departments, editors, and amateur poets in Poland advocated and pushed for the use of poetry as a tool of political propaganda, worried Milosz since he felt responsible as “one of those hundred people who care[d] about the condition of Polish literature.”¹⁵⁴ He revealed his concerns to a younger poet, Tadeusz Rozewicz, who at the time lived in Warsaw, noting: “For the issue of poetry is not only its own problem, not even a problem of the arts in general - but it is a question of whether man as a species can be at all happy or is he doomed to unhappiness due to the atrophy of some of his internal organs.”¹⁵⁵ Although the opinions of Milosz’s literary colleagues and friends were often contradictory in defining his responsibilities as a Polish poet, there was no doubt that the voice speaking through his poetry was one that many looked up to. Ryszard Ordynski, a film director from Warsaw, applauded Milosz’s poetic piece “Toast” and urged him to return to the country, saying: “Your ‘Toast’ was the greatest pleasure of this Easter. The power of word, wonderful sharp rhythm, unbelievable literary and political wit, and charm of a satire. (...) I do not have to tell you how you would be welcomed here and that you would be very, very useful to Poland.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Irena Kronski’s letter to Milosz, 4/01/1949. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 1, folder 40.

¹⁵⁴ Milosz’s letter to Ryszard Matuszewski 01/14/1949. Milosz, *Zaraz po wojnie*, 464.

¹⁵⁵ Milosz’s letter to Tadeusz Rozewicz, 08/10/1949. Milosz, *Zaraz po wojnie*, 583.

¹⁵⁶ Ryszard Ordynski’s letter to Milosz, 04/19/1949. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 2, folder 56.

In an effort to come to terms with the ideological tightening of the screw that came with the Stalinization of Poland, and in fear of being deprived of contact with his sole audience, Milosz commenced the process of renegotiating his role by turning his pen to journalistic work. He even compromised by publishing his own translation of a poem by the Chinese communist leader, Mao Tse-Tung.¹⁵⁷ Despite his efforts, the Stalinization of Polish culture soon made it obvious that Milosz and his editors could not work together, which was reflected in the decreasing frequency of his publications. In their correspondence, the editors constantly underlined for Milosz the importance of strictly political factors for their publishing policy and pointed to the omnipotent censor. Wladyslaw Rynca wrote to Milosz: “Certainly, I would undertake publishing of your translations (...), please send your manuscript, and once it is approved by the Ministry of Culture and by the censor, we can agree on the terms.”¹⁵⁸ By 1949, the editors had abandoned Milosz’s poems from *Rescue* in favor of those on “lives and deeds” of workers and miners. Milosz’s articles did not show in print because he did not want to write them according to the socialist-realist agenda, and therefore occasional reviews, translations, and a few new poems were all that he could offer to his readers. Milosz published fifty poems and articles in 1945, but only five in 1949 and six in 1950. These numbers testify not as much to Milosz’s literary output as to how intensely he was promoted in the press in the period 1945-1948. Each year the editors of ten to twenty periodicals placed Milosz’s works, often reprints of poems, in their columns. It was not a coincidence that in 1949, due to Milosz’s unwillingness to comply with the new literary

¹⁵⁷ Franaszek, *Milosz*, 419.

¹⁵⁸ Wladyslaw Rynca’s letter to Milosz, 03/20/49. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 2, folder 63.

guidelines, the readers could find his works in only two major weeklies.¹⁵⁹ And surely, the readers of *Robotnik Kujawski* [Kujawy Worker] or *Literacki dziennik ludowy* [People's Literary Daily] would no longer come across verses by Milosz.

Letters from friends informing him covertly about the escalating Stalinist terror, combined with his fight for artistic independence, presented Milosz with the question of the price he was willing to pay for securing his intellectual freedom. In 1948 close friends from Poland wrote in a letter to Milosz that “a sediment of sadness settles on the people,” which articulated the gradual curtailment of basic freedoms on the path to making Poland a communist country.¹⁶⁰ However, it was Milosz's encounter with the Stalinist reality during his 1949 visit to Poland that led directly to his poetic and personal crisis. After four years of absence, straight from his comfortable American nest, Milosz arrived in a country where people suffered from spiritual and material deprivation. He was shocked when a friend he ran into on the street shouted at him: “But we are slaves here!”¹⁶¹ Milosz's visit to Poland was traumatic, as not only did he become painfully aware of the scope of Stalinist political persecutions, but he also understood the fact that in order to remain on the Polish literary scene he would have to succumb to ideological orthodoxy. By 1949 for Milosz the period of delusions was over, and the poet found himself in the morally anguished position experienced by Western figures such as George Orwell, Albert Camus, and Ignazio Silone, moderate leftists who rejected the totalitarian methods of Stalinism.

¹⁵⁹ According to Volynska-Bogert and Zalewski, the number of Milosz's publications (poetry, articles, feuilletons and reviews) in the years 1945-1950 is as follows: (1945:50, 1946: 24, 1947: 10, 1948: 19, 1949: 5, 1950: 6). One can also observe a decrease in the number of periodicals that Milosz's works are published (1945: 12, 1946: 19, 1947: 10, 1948: 16, 1949: 4, 1950: 4). Interestingly, the bibliography shows a similar trend in the number of reviews or articles dedicated to Milosz's works (1945: 4, 1946: 18, 1947: 5, 1948: 5, 1949: 2, 1950:1). Volynska-Bogert, and Zalewski, *Czesław Milosz, an International Bibliography*.

¹⁶⁰ Aniela Micinska's letter to Milosz, 12/09/1948. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 2, folder 48.

¹⁶¹ Milosz, *A Year of the Hunter*, 121.

Just after his return from Poland, Milosz wrote to his close friend Iwaszkiewicz, confessing: “These two months have damaged me or scathed me seriously, and I have to build something anew and put in order. I don’t know if I could write in Warsaw.”¹⁶²

Milosz’s poem entitled “For myself in a diary, with the New Year 1950” read as a dramatic echo of the days spent in Poland:

When you are in hell, be a devil, who pushes

Into a cauldron a poor little soul that squeaks dolefully.

*[...] It is probably better to be the devil rather than the little soul? Absolutely.*¹⁶³

[My translation]

In these words Milosz suggested that by cooperating with the regime he and his friends played the role of “devils” that culturally legitimized political persecutions that the regime employed against “the little souls.” The power was on their side, but holding it came at a moral price. Interestingly, it seemed that Milosz’s grandmother, Jozefa Kunatowa, had a better understanding of his moral dilemmas than many of Milosz’s friends in literary circles. Kunatowa wrote to her relative: “You live, dear grandson, in the beautiful world of inspirations and creativity of the poetic spirit... Your high standing allows for many opportunities for various fine experiences; although for sure there is no lack of the sad ones, since the soul of a poet absorbs life more deeply and subtly.”¹⁶⁴

Due to shrinking publishing opportunities, Milosz was left with little space in which to maneuver, and both his dialogue with literary colleagues and his contact with the Polish audience in general were put at risk. He articulated this when he wrote to Iwaszkiewicz, saying: “[...] the possibility of printing is limited, every piece of writing

¹⁶² Milosz’s letter to Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz, 8/01/1949. Milosz, *Zaraz po wojnie*, 230.

¹⁶³ Czeslaw Milosz, “Sobie samemu do sztambucha na Nowy Rok 1950,” In: Czeslaw Milosz, *Wiersze* vol. 2, 156.

¹⁶⁴ Jozefa Kunatowa’s letter to Milosz, Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 1. Folder 41.

there [in Poland] has to be seasoned with ritual killing,” and later “I even think it is better to write nothing at all than multiply the pages of works sinking into stupor.”¹⁶⁵ Milosz referred to the fact that it was expected for literary pieces to carry on political propaganda and attack either of the regime’s opponents: independent writers, socialism critics, or capitalist countries. For Milosz, the agonizing repetitiveness of this repertoire made any poetry or intellectual exchange impossible. That was why he was soon to admit in a letter to close friends: “As you know, I was writing systematically, even during the war in Warsaw; now, in 1950 it is hard for me, because to tell the truth, I have nowhere to publish.”¹⁶⁶ Since Milosz did not want to conform to rules of socialist realism either in his poetry or in articles, he was now threatened with a severance of bonds with his sole audience and the end of his career as a Polish poet. As if that was not enough, since his devastating visit to Poland, Milosz had been experiencing a poetic breakdown. He could not even write poems for the drawer as he used to do. In his letter from early 1950 to Anna Kowalska, a confident editor of the *Zeszyty Wroclawskie*, Milosz said: “My own poems - it is bad with it.”¹⁶⁷ Finally, he revealed the depth of his inner drama, confessing to Kowalska: “This year is not good for me, and my heart is grave - to speak shamelessly. I am translating *Othello*, beside that a feeling of a man with hands and legs tied. (...) And what has a poet to do, if he cannot express commiseration and terror?”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Milosz’s letters to Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz 11/10/1949 and 10/22/1949. Milosz, *Zaraz po wojnie*.

¹⁶⁶ Milosz’s letter to Aniela Micinska and Jan Ulatowski, 1950. The Archives of Polish Emigration; Milosz’s letters to Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz 10/22/49. Milosz, *Zaraz po wojnie*, 238.

¹⁶⁷ Milosz’s letter to Anna Kowalska, 02/15/1950. Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature, Warsaw. Collection uncataloged.

¹⁶⁸ Milosz’s letter to Anna Kowalska, 01/13/1950. Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature.

THE LAST BATTLE OVER POETRY

In early 1950 Milosz galvanized the literary circles in Poland with his famous article “On the Condition of Polish Poetry,” in which he once again defended poetic sovereignty and expressed a deep concern about the consequences of compromising poetry to the political needs of the present moment.¹⁶⁹ Milosz ridiculed the socialist-realist manner of Polish poets, saying: “A young poet knows that he should be a realist. But how to manifest it? To put on a worker’s hat, spit through the teeth, and in general carry oneself in a strict and robust manner. (...) In this way we end up with this strange hybrid (...): brutality joined with avant-garde fancy.”¹⁷⁰ Moreover, in his article Milosz emphasized that the young poets’ shortcomings, such as their poor poetic craftsmanship and sparse knowledge of Polish literature, could not be overcome as long as a serious literary critique did not resonate with them.

What was Milosz defending Polish poetry from? Why was he so invested in the cause to risk his already feeble artistic and political position? In order to see his fight in a proper light, one has to understand the scope of artistic catastrophe that happened to poetry in Poland in postwar period. No doubt, the socialist-realist aesthetic had dramatically impoverished prose, yet it was probably even more fatal for poetry, placing it at the precipice of kitsch. As one critic stated, the year 1939 put an end not only to free Rzeczpospolita Polska [Republic of Poland], but also to the Rzeczpospolita Poetycka [Poetic Republic of Poland]. In the following paragraphs, I will provide a sample of socialist-realist poems to illustrate why Milosz worried about the condition of Polish poetry.

¹⁶⁹ Czesław Miłosz, “O stanie polskiej poezji,” *Kuznica* 3 (1950): 3.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibidem*.

Similar as it was for prose writers, the regime expected the poets to serve propaganda goals by engaging in their works such ideologically correct themes as the everyday lives of the working-class, the nationalization of industry and collectivization of the countryside, and the Polish-Soviet friendship. One of the politically proper genres was a poetic eulogy to a communist leader, preferably Stalin. Wladyslaw Broniewski, for example, won a 1949 literary competition for his poem commemorating Stalin's 70th birthday entitled "A Word about Stalin." One section of this widely published poem reads:

*The train of history rushes forward,
the century-signal flashes.*

*The Revolution does need no glory,
it does not need noisy metaphors,
it needs an engine driver,
which is He:*

*A comrade, leader, communist –
Stalin – word like a bell!*

[Translation after Marci Shore, the two last lines is my translation]¹⁷¹

Broniewski's poem fulfilled perfectly the task assigned to poetry by the cultural authorities. Although Broniewski was capable of writing "A Word about Stalin," he remained ambivalent to socialist realism, and, as Marci Shore states, recognized the threats it posed to his artistic integrity.¹⁷² Other authors of panegyric poetry were less sophisticated in their evaluation and execution of the socialist-realist aesthetic. Therefore,

¹⁷¹ Shore, *Caviar and Ashes*, 280.

¹⁷² *Ibidem*.

newspapers swamped their readers with such banal verses as the following lines: “To you, a comrade from Security Service, I dedicate this poem.”¹⁷³

Besides panegyrics, another theme in poetry that directly reflected the demands put forward by the regime was class struggle, the life of working-class people, and the praise of Stakhanovism [extreme work efficiency]. Among others, two leading Polish poets and the members of the prewar Krakow Avant-garde, Julian Przybos and Adam Wazyk, wrote poems in this trend. In his poem “Do robotnicy” [To a workwoman], Przybos used a somewhat self-referential phrase that nicely summarized the origins of those poems that were promoted as masterpieces of contemporary Polish poetry. The line from Przybos’ poem read: “My poetic work has been checked by the hands of workers and workwomen.”¹⁷⁴ The logic of this literary politics was simple - a poem derived from factory environment and ended up in a newspaper in the hands of a worker. Since the scope of propaganda requirements was broad, poets often combined multiple ideological messages into one piece. Andrzej Mandalian, a widely-published author of socialist-realist poetry, accomplished this goal in his poem entitled “I sing a song about the class struggle.” This poem, while promoting work ethics, warned against the damage that a “class enemy” could cause to the working-class’ daily toil.¹⁷⁵

Yet another poem that suited propaganda goals, and best epitomized the anti-Western and anti-capitalist rhetoric of the communist regime was Adam Wazyk’s “A Song about Coca-Cola,” in which the poet cleverly used the beverage as a symbol for American imperialism. In this 1951 poem, Wazyk pictured the USA as an enemy of

¹⁷³ Kowalski [pseud., Andrzej Mandalian], “Towarzyszowi z Bezpieczeństwa,” in: Bohdan Urbankowski, *Czerwona msza albo uśmiech Stalina* (Warszawa 1995), 398.

¹⁷⁴ Jarosiński, *Nadwiślański socrealizm*, 113.

¹⁷⁵ Andrzej Mandalian, “Śpiewam pieśń o walce klasowej,” in: Urbankowski, 398.

socialism, People's Poland, the Soviet Union and African-Americans, and as a world power interested in the outbreak of WW III. One of the strophes of Wazyk's poem read:

Having Coca-Cola is blissfull, pink

For a few American cents

You have dreamt about our atomic death,

*Five American continents.*¹⁷⁶

[My translation]

Besides the poem on Coca-Cola, which soon became a propaganda stunner, yet another of Wazyk's works, "A Postcard from a Socialist City" was preached in the official press. Here, Wazyk bowed to the unsophisticated taste of the working-class people by offering a highly eroticized picture of a female rail worker who tenderly lubed the railway engine's piston.¹⁷⁷ This vulgar eroticism was a common motif in socialist-realist poetry. Finally, on top of the above trends in poetry, it was highly recommended for the poets to chastise Christian and humanist philosophy, as well as to criticize the inequalities of the socio-economic structure of prewar Poland.

In this situation, the debate initiated by Milosz's article, "On the Condition of Polish Poetry," not only testified to artistic conformism on the side of poets, but also demonstrated to what an absurd extent literary criticism fell prey to the socialist-realist cultural and political agenda. In response to Milosz's article, Ryszard Matuszewski, a leading literary critic of *Kuznica*, argued that it was precisely Milosz's prewar "bourgeois aesthetics" that had a corrupting influence on the young poets. Matuszewski wrote: "The

¹⁷⁶ Adam Ważyk, "Piosenka o Coca-Cola," in: Urbankowski, 284.

¹⁷⁷ Adam Ważyk, "Widokówka z miasta socjalistycznego," in: Urbankowski, 405.

More on socialist-realist poetry in Poland in: Tadeusz Drewnowski, *Literatura polska 1944-1989. Próba scalenia* (Kraków 2004); Zbigniew Jarosiński, *Nadwiślański socrealizm* (Warszawa 1999); Edward Mozejko, *Realizm socjalistyczny. Teoria. Rozwój. Upadek* (Kraków 2001); Wojciech Tomasiak, *Słowo o socrealizmie* (Bydgoszcz 1991).

influence of Milosz's poetry – suggestive, yet often ideologically false - was (...) the source of completely new ideological and artistic wandering of the youngest generation of lyrical poets who grew up during the occupation.”¹⁷⁸ Additionally, Matuszewski challenged the literary activity of Milosz, stating that his translating of Pablo Neruda's poems was less than what people expected from the leading Polish poet in five years after the introduction of socialist government in Poland - “the victory of the revolution.” - as Matuszewski put it.¹⁷⁹ While merely three years prior, Matuszewski's major critique of *Rescue* was its slightly escapist tone, now, in a review of Milosz's work, Matuszewski found proper to apologize for ideological warps of the periodical he himself was editing. The critic said: “If only *Kuznica* had been in its time what it was supposed to be, then inducing to collaboration a poet such as Rozewicz [Tadeusz Rozewicz, a contemporary Polish poet] would have certainly accelerated his political evolution for his benefit and for the benefit of Polish poetry.”¹⁸⁰ Clearly, this comment left little doubt about how the mechanism of ideological *urovnilovka* (leveling) operated within the literary realm, where the editors obeyed the guidelines from the political echelons and published only those writers who addressed readers with proper socialist content.

Similarly, two other establishment literary critics, Janina Preger and Grzegorz Lasota, assured the readers of *Kuznica* that Milosz had gone astray with his irrational program for poetry. Apparently, argued Lasota, a bourgeois perspective prevented Milosz from noticing the ongoing struggle to create a contemporary poetry that would be national in form and socialist in content, and that would provide the working class with

¹⁷⁸ Ryszard Matuszewski, “Sprawa poezji współczesnej,” *Kuznica* 5 (1950).

¹⁷⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁸⁰ Ibidem.

Tadeusz Rozewicz (b. 1921), Polish poet and writer; during WW II a soldier of the Polish underground Home Army.

poems about their achievements. Lasota said: “Working class and peasant youth demand works which would speak in a clear and understandable way about the construction of our country and the efforts of our nation.”¹⁸¹ Preger in turn, forgetting her raving about the reserved tone of *Rescue*, claimed that only a poet’s deep political involvement in the life of the working class could produce a poetry that “would fulfill the new artistic needs of the socialist society.”¹⁸²

The critics discussed above who participated in the debate on the condition of poetry doubted Milosz’s commitment to the tasks of a poet as defined by socialist-realist norms, but not his poetic talent or the beauty of his verses. At the same time, though, less conformist intellectuals praised Milosz for his commitment to Polish literature.

Consequently, Milosz’s image was still in the making, since, firstly, his was a sensitive case of a diplomat serving in an ideologically hostile country, and, secondly, the officials still hoped that Milosz’s pen would eventually bend to a socialist call. The complexity of this dialectical process of shaping Milosz’s poetic and intellectual image for the needs of his Polish literary audience was best visible in the ambivalence of the *Kuznica* editors. At the same time as its three major literary critics scolded Milosz’s stand on the role of poetry, the chief editor of *Kuznica*, Pawel Hoffman, in a letter to Milosz emphasized how precious the poet was for the Polish literary scene. Hoffman wrote: “The discussion [of your article] has stirred everyone here up and caused a great commotion – we miss you here, but until you come back (on which we all count and to which we all encourage you), we will have to make do with long-distance cooperation.”¹⁸³ A month later, in February 1950, Andrzej Milosz wrote to his brother Czeslaw from Warsaw, and

¹⁸¹ Grzegorz Lasota, “Falszywy obraz,” *Kuznica* 6 (1950).

¹⁸² Janina Preger, “O doswiadczeniu poetyckim,” *Kuznica* 6 (1950).

¹⁸³ Pawel Hoffman’s letter to Milosz, 01/12/1950. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 1, folder 24.

underlined Milosz's importance for the intellectual elite in Poland, saying: "Your article has evoked many discussions. Aleksander Gromyko asked me to tell you that he had read it with pleasure, and that it was superb. A senior assistant of Professor Ossowski's, Janek Strzelecki, said: 'At last someone has written the truth about our contemporary poetry.'"¹⁸⁴

Ironically, the last word castigating Milosz's defense of pure poetry belonged to Wazyk, the same figure who in 1945 pointed with sorrow to the decay of the cultural epoch and appointed Milosz the savior of poetry by calling him "the last Polish poet."¹⁸⁵ In his March 1950 article, Wazyk linked the tasks facing contemporary poets to the cultural recommendation of the third plenum of the KC PZPR (Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party). In order to emphasize the political importance of writers in the construction of socialism, Wazyk invoked comrade Berman's words: "It is yet another appeal to the literary conscience of those writers who want to derive the material for their work from life and struggles, who do not want to become narcissists focused on their loneliness and past; who do not want the fast current of the new life to flow by them."¹⁸⁶ Contesting Milosz's belief that poets were responsible for offering a vision of an alternative world to their readers, Wazyk saw their role as complying with the current political agenda. He concluded that "A contemporary poet has a certain direction of self-control. He conducts it in face of ... a bare class struggle. (...) It is the same struggle between the old and the new thing that takes place around him, the same method of self-

¹⁸⁴ Andrzej Milosz's letter to Milosz, 02/03/50. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 2, folder 52.

¹⁸⁵ Milosz, "1945."

¹⁸⁶ Jakub Berman's words at the Writers' Association conference in 1950. Since the Szczecin Congress in January 1949 Jakub Berman was responsible for the introduction of social realism to literature. Adam Wazyk, "O wlasciwe stanowisko," *Kuznica* 10 (1950).

critique that the party expects from him.”¹⁸⁷ To put an end to the delusions of his nonpartisan colleague, Wazyk added in a private letter to Milosz: “Of course, you are right that socialist realism can be either good or bad; yet, in order for it to improve, it has to develop intensively.”¹⁸⁸

This lost battle over poetry and the trauma of his 1949 visit to Poland made it clear to Milosz that he would have to make decisions about his literary and political future. These were made all the more complicated since he dreaded Polish reality, but was not fond of the idea of staying in the United States, either. Milosz explained his stance in a 1950 letter to a close friend: “I think a lot and I struggle. I cannot stand this country anymore, it is a madhouse. Yet the years of my stay in America have been decisive for me. (...) In any case, I have a vast knowledge about this country, and this is a crushing knowledge.”¹⁸⁹ Since Milosz’s attitude toward America will be extensively discussed in the following chapter, now I only touch on the main lines of his critique of the United States.

First, Milosz was struck by what he regarded as the anti-intellectual character of America, and extreme narrow-mindedness of its citizens, whom he saw as devoid of inner life and spiritual needs. He shared his notions in a letter to Jerzy Andrzejewski, saying: “You can stare at it with your mouth agape for a long time, (...) life as it is, the sheer physiology of life of millions of human beings who do not understand a thing besides this, and who do not need to understand.”¹⁹⁰ Even though Milosz was critical of it, he was nevertheless immersed in the Romantic tradition, which defined the role of the

¹⁸⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸⁸ Adam Wazyk’s letter to Milosz. 05/30/50. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 3, folder 77.

¹⁸⁹ Milosz’s letter to Anna Kowalska, 1950. Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature.

¹⁹⁰ Milosz to Jerzy Andrzejewski. Milosz, *Zaraz po wojnie*, 65.

intelligentsia and aggrandized the position of the writer. Since these concepts were alien to Americans and their social life, Milosz had a hard time searching for a similar nucleus of intellectual and artistic life in the USA. In his correspondence with Iwaszkiewicz, with a dose of sympathy, Milosz commented on the fate of a writer in the USA. “Here, the role of a writer is different,” he wrote, “his *pussycat* [original] is different; in fact, it is a pretty nasty and poorly-paid job. This career is perceived as somewhat flattering only at universities, which are here sort of laic monasteries.”¹⁹¹ There is no doubt that Milosz missed the intellectual atmosphere of Warsaw, and in more general terms European literary circles. In 1949, upon his return his visit to Europe, he wrote in a wistful tone: “But America is more crude, anti-intellectual and immature. And it has none of this sweet taste of fall, which you find in France.”¹⁹² Besides its feeble intellectual life, yet another aspect of America that Milosz criticized was capitalism and consumerist culture. Echoing some of socialist landmarks, Milosz mentioned this subject in his letter to Jerzy Borejsza. Commenting on his tours in America, Milosz noticed: “We have traveled a lot in this paradise for the semi-intelligent, adoring its nature, scolding its ugliness. (...) It is not that we have not been touched by goodness, good will and intellectual greediness of totally helpless people who circulate in the vicious circle of making money and consuming.”¹⁹³ Finally, Milosz seemed to be unhappy about the trivial aspects of his everyday life in the United States, such as the monotony of a typical American suburb, to which he returned home after a day spent in the office.

Milosz’s attitude toward America was even more complicated, as over the period of five years the poet had served as a window into America for his Polish readers, who

¹⁹¹ Milosz’s letter to Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz, 1947. Milosz, *Zaraz po wojnie*, 154.

¹⁹² Milosz’s letter to Jerzy Andrzejewski, 09/1949. Milosz, *Zaraz po wojnie*. 85.

¹⁹³ Telakowska’s and Milosz’s letter to Jerzy Borejsza, 6/06/1948. Jerzy Borejsza Archive.

could only dream about a chance to visit the American continent and return to Poland. As we learn from letters to Milosz, his readers valued the critical, informed yet balanced tone of articles in the “Life in the USA” column of *Odrodzenie*, which Milosz published under the pseudonym “Nowak.”¹⁹⁴ Tadeusz Breza, a writer and editor, wrote to Milosz, saying: “People highly praise your articles from America, both literary men and ordinary people as well.”¹⁹⁵ In November 1948, Anna Iwaszkiewicz, the wife of Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz, commented in a letter on Milosz’s recent article, in which he emphasized his critical attitude toward American capitalism. “I was delighted,” Iwaszkiewicz wrote, “by your recent notes from America. Finally, someone has written, and how well and bravely, about the issue which is constantly discussed here.”¹⁹⁶ In most of his articles Milosz kept critical tone toward America. Why would that be a surprise? one may ask. Clearly, presenting the major enemy of the Soviet bloc in a negative light served as a tribute Milosz paid to his political supervisors in Poland. My analysis, however, of Milosz’s private correspondence with his friends from 1946 to 1950 proves that his critical attitude toward America, voiced in the articles published in official Polish press, was genuine.¹⁹⁷

Although, as Milosz stated: “Living in the USA is like living with a very perverse complete idiot woman,”¹⁹⁸ leaving the USA would mean breaking up with a safe, affluent, and predictable life and subjecting oneself to ideological clashes in his

¹⁹⁴ A good anecdote illustrating the above is Andrzej Milosz’s (Czeslaw’s brother) letter to Czeslaw from December 1947. Andrzej Milosz wrote: “I have once heard such a talk on a tram. There were two students. One of them says, ‘Read the last issue of *Odrodzenie*, with Milosz’s terrific correspondence from America.’ The other student asked, ‘You mean Nowak’s correspondence?’ ‘Well, yes, but it is Czeslaw Milosz who writes it’ The first one responded.” Andrzej Milosz’s letter to Czeslaw Milosz, 12/10/1947. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 2, folder 50.

¹⁹⁵ Breza referred to the column “Life in the USA” published in *Odrodzenie*, in which Milosz expressed his impressions of the United States. Tadeusz Breza’s letter to Milosz, 1947. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 1, folder 9. Other documents show that the readers were interested in Milosz’s relations from America: Karol Kuryluk’s letter to Milosz, 04/27/1947. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 2, folder 42; Kazimierz Wyka’s letter to Milosz, 11/06/1947. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 3, folder 83.

¹⁹⁶ Anna Iwaszkiewicz’s letter to Milosz, 11/03/1948. Beinecke, Box 1, folder 28.

¹⁹⁷ Telakowska’s and Milosz’s letter to Jerzy Borejsza, 6/06/1948. Jerzy Borejsza Archive.

¹⁹⁸ Milosz’s letter to Aniela Micinska and Jan Ulatowski, 1949. Archives of the Emigration.

homeland. “America is like smoking,” Milosz said, “it is well-known that it is much more healthy to live without it, yet it is hard to quit.”¹⁹⁹ Additionally, Milosz’s wife Janina enjoyed the material security of their American life, and wanted her children to grow up away from politically unstable Europe, and from the kind of hardships she had herself experienced in Poland. At that time, some of Milosz’s friends, such as Janina Wlodarkiewicz, advised him strongly against returning to Poland: “We believe that you can contribute enormously to the history and culture of the Polish nation.(...) However, we do not believe that you will be allowed to do it while in Poland.”²⁰⁰ While Milosz was slowly arriving at one of the most important questions in his life - “What is more important: to be Polish or to be a writer?” - news from his homeland arrived to shake up his world.²⁰¹

Given Milosz’s literary talent and his popularity among intellectuals, Polish authorities decided in early 1950 that Milosz as a political representative had become hard to control, and it was time to bring him closer to home. Since Milosz’s recent works and behavior had shown signs of ideological doubts, if not of opposition toward the regime, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs called him off his Washington assignment, relocating him to Paris on February 7th, 1950. They stated: “Czeslaw Milosz - a man completely ideologically alien to us. After his last stay in the country he revealed in his statements a strongly hostile and vilifying attitude toward all the aspects of life in the country.”²⁰² In July 1950, Milosz learned second-hand that his fate had been decided, and he instantly asked for an adjournment of his transfer to early 1951, because his wife

¹⁹⁹ Milosz’s letter to Aniela Micinska and Jan Ulatowski, 1949.

²⁰⁰ Janina Wlodarkiewicz’s letter to Milosz, 01/11/50. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 3, folder 82.

²⁰¹ Konstanty Jelenski posed this question to Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz in November 1951. Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz, *Dzienniki 1911-1955* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2007), 324.

²⁰² Archiwum Akt Nowych, Komitet Centralny PZPR, SYGN 237/XXII-42, 12.

Janina was pregnant with a second child and it would be safer for her to stay in the USA until after the delivery. Paradoxically, if Milosz wanted to guarantee for himself at least some scope of freedom from immediate political pressure, he had to bow, with all due loyalty, to the policymakers in People's Poland. Eventually, in October 1950, he decided to transfer to his newly assigned post in Paris, and leave his family behind. That meant compromising with the communist regime in the hope of saving his career as a Polish poet. Parting with his wife and three-year old son was a particularly excruciating experience. Janina Milosz described it in a letter to a friend: "Shortly before embarking in New York he [Czeslaw Milosz] telephoned me to say that if our son and I had been there with him then he would have refused to board the ship."²⁰³

After his move to Paris, Milosz felt totally imprisoned in the Parisian embassy whose rules were very strict in comparison to the Washington embassy. He responded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' call and went to Poland with the hope of paying the necessary tribute and improving his private and professional situation. In Poland, Milosz had his passport taken, which, as his former literary colleague and now a secretary general of the Polish Writers' Union, Putrament, explained afterwards, was an attempt to save Milosz's poetic talent for his homeland. "I considered him," said Putrament in 1956, "one of our best poets. (...) We cannot afford to waste such talents, or on making it a gift to anyone."²⁰⁴ While Putrament boasted to the authorities that he could seduce Milosz into socialist-realist writing, the poet stormed into his office in desperation. He yelled, cursed, and begged other prominent people for help in escaping the deadly embrace of his socialist homeland. Milosz risked a lot when he skipped the official New Year's Eve

²⁰³ Janina Milosz's letter to Harold C. Vedeler (Department of States) 06/29/1951. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 15, folder 467.

²⁰⁴ Jerzy Putrament, *Dwa Lyki Ameryki* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1956), 218.

party at the Writers' Union headquarters in Warsaw, but he did participate in a poetry reading at the National Theatre in January 1951. Milosz's reading of wittily chosen pieces turned out to be his last triumph among his literary colleagues, many of whom would soon turn their backs on him. Milosz's triumph confused Putrament, as he later noted: "After this reading even I started to have doubts: and what if he won't make his getaway? It is so important to a writer, this contact with the reader, with people of his native tongue..."²⁰⁵ By that time Milosz understood what his fate would have been had he decided to serve the regime with his pen. Years later, he said: "They wanted to make me someone who is feted with laurels and applause in public, and it is only backstage that they punch him in the face."²⁰⁶ It was only thanks to the help of Natalia and Zygmunt Modzelewski, the same man who had advocated Milosz's departure for service in 1945, that in January 1951 Milosz got his passport back and left immediately for Paris. There, in February 1951 he broke ties with the Polish government and became a political emigrant in France and a poet cut off from his sole audience.

For the preceding five years Milosz had enjoyed the benefits that came with his position in the literary market while remaining with his audience in a dialogue, whose aim was to classify the poet into proper rubrics of poetry and politics. His case embodies the dramatic tension between the Eastern European ethos of the *intelligentsia's* duties toward their country and the individual's struggle for artistic freedom. As Clare Cavanagh rightly notices in her recent book, we distort history when we tend to see poets of Eastern Europe as martyrs *par excellence* who constantly resist a regime.²⁰⁷ My discussion of the complexities of Milosz's interaction with his Polish audience in the

²⁰⁵ Jerzy Putrament, *Pół Wieku: Literaci* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1970), 57-58.

²⁰⁶ Milosz, *Rozmowy polskie*, 544.

²⁰⁷ Cavanagh, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics*.

1940s aims to prevent such historical distortion, and also to prevent a distortion of the meaning of writing, which, rather than being a finished project, is constantly maturing in one's moral choices. To see Milosz and his poetry without the glamour of power and the shades of moral dilemmas of his 1940s political and literary activity would mean to lose not only the essence of his poetry but of poetry in general, in defense of which Milosz put up a dramatic fight. There is no doubt that, in the period from 1945 to 1950, it was politics that fettered Milosz's hand, often preventing him from composing verses, but in 1951 his poetry was set free and sought shelter in the world.

CHAPTER 2

Neither East nor West: the Poet and Cold War Politics

“What is sad to me is that I am always being classified: one more ex-communist who renounces his beliefs and goes to the other side.”²⁰⁸

After his February 1951 defection, Czeslaw Milosz hid under the pseudonym of Mr. Kwiatkowski at the *Kultura* House in Maisons-Laffitte, in the suburbs of Paris. Barely clinging to his own life, Milosz spent hours in his room drawing flowers and circles on the envelopes of the letters from his wife, Janina, who had been apart from him for the preceding five months. Janina informed him about the measures she had taken to get him an entrance visa to the United States, and about their sons, Antek and the newborn Piotr, whom he had never seen.²⁰⁹ Awaiting a visa to get back to his family in America, Milosz lived in the Parisian suburbs. He was positive that Soviet secret police were following him, but it was in fact the French police—the *Sûreté*—who had put him under surveillance in order to protect him from being abducted on Moscow’s orders, as had been the case of several other diplomats from the Eastern bloc who had defected from their service.²¹⁰ Making a break with communist Poland left Milosz an exile devoid of an ideological home for his socialist hopes. Desperate, he would go daily to a dingy

²⁰⁸ Czeslaw Milosz, *Moja ucieczka* [My Escape] Unpublished essay. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 119.

²⁰⁹ The envelope of Janina Milosz’s letter from 06/22/1951. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 44.

²¹⁰ Czeslaw Milosz, *Rozmowy Polskie 1979-1998* (Kraków: Wydawn. Literackie, 2006), 55. At this time, the poet also had no contact with his brother and other members of family who were living in Poland, where letter censure was in effect. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 44, folders 633, 634-48; Czeslaw Milosz’s letter to Jozef Wittlin, 05/29/1951, In: Anna Ziolkowska, “Wankowicz i Milosz w swietle korespondencji,” *Tworczość* 10 (1981): 92; Jerzy Giedroyc, Juliusz Mieroszewski, and Krzysztof Pomian, *Listy 1949-1956* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1999), 75.

Bulgarian bar in the Latin Quarter, each time thinking that this day he would commit suicide.²¹¹

After several weeks of rage and despair, Milosz's host, the editor-in-chief of the Polish émigré monthly *Kultura*, Jerzy Giedroyc, suggested that he go public with the story of his break with the Polish communist government. Giedroyc was a savvy political player, and he carefully designed an event that would simultaneously make Milosz a star of Western intellectual circles involved in discussing communism, and promote *Kultura*. Thus, on May 1st, 1951, at a conference organized in the Paris headquarters of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, Milosz's trajectory intersected with that of the transatlantic intellectual community.

In this chapter, I argue that Milosz's 1950s audience created his public image as that of a political writer, while, on a deeper level, it shaped Milosz's own literary identity, providing an incentive for him to return to his natural element of poetry. Discussing the participants of the 1950s dialogue with Milosz, I will first consider the Western intellectuals' enthusiastic admission of Milosz to the transatlantic Congress for Cultural Freedom, with the ensuing ups and downs of their relations. Further on, the discussion will address the Polish exilic circles in London and their quarrels over Milosz's image with the milieu formed around the Polish émigré monthly *Kultura* in Paris. Next, by examining how Milosz's literary colleagues in Poland reacted to his exile, this chapter will provide a symbolic closure to the previous one. Finally, I will address the question of whether Milosz found in the West what the East could not offer him: the intellectual

²¹¹ Franaszek, *Milosz. Biografia*, 485. See: Czeslaw Milosz's letter to Jozef Wittlin, 06/29/1951, In: Ziolkowska, "Wankowicz i Milosz w swietle korespondencji," 92; Milosz, *Rozmowy Polskie*, 414. A 1951 letter from his friend, Margaret Storm-Jameson, also speaks about Milosz's poor psychological condition at that time. Jameson wrote: "It is like an illness. You have got to believe that Jane will be helped to endure it until you get back to her. You have got to live." Margaret Storm-Jameson's letter to Milosz, 02/07/1951. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 30.

freedom he needed to compose verses. While the details of Milosz's political exile in France in the 1950s have been recently examined by Andrzej Franaszek, my study provides a different perspective by considering Milosz's contemporary role as defined by the dialogue with the four groups of his 1950s audience. Thus far, scholars have usually discussed Milosz's stance against only one of his 1950s audiences.

THE TRANSATLANTIC INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY

Milosz's first impression of the political action of his future friends from the Congress for Cultural Freedom (henceforth CCF) had been Mary McCarthy banging her umbrella over a desk at the communist International Peace conference in New York in March 1949, flanked by Dwight MacDonal and Nicolas Nabokov. In 1949, Milosz participated in this conference, set up at the luxurious Waldorf hotel, as a diplomat of communist Poland, and witnessed how the advocates of Soviet communism clashed with American anti-communist activists in the heart of the world capital, New York City. The conference was one of the last Peace Conferences that were morally and financially supported by Albert Einstein, Charlie Chaplin and Leonard Bernstein, since the outbreak of the Korean War blunted to some extent the zeal of Western sympathizers of communism.²¹² Six years later, at the 1955 CCF meeting in Milan, Milosz went out of his way to tell Mary McCarthy how impressed he had been with her performance at the Waldorf starlight roof back in 1949.²¹³

²¹² This conference followed the formula of the filo-communist World Peace Congress, first introduced in People's Poland with the 1948 World Congress of Intellectuals for Freedom in Wroclaw, organized by Jerzy Borejsza. The latter enjoyed an impressive showing of filo-communist intellectuals and artists: Pablo Picasso, Paul Eluard, Fernand Leger, Irene Curie, Julien Benda. Beside a large French contingent, a group of Dutch politicians, academics and journalists attended.

²¹³ Frances Kiernan, *Seeing Mary Plain: A Life of Mary McCarthy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2000).

At the 1949 Peace Conference, McCarthy and MacDonald had represented a newly formed organization, “Americans for Intellectual Freedom,” protesting against both the crimes of the Soviet regime and the blindness of Western communist “fellow-travelers” who had bought into the USSR’s peace propaganda. A Vassar College alumna and a successful writer, McCarthy spent the 1930s in the New York circles of communist “fellow-travelers,” only to become a liberal critic of Soviet-style communism in the 1940s. As an important New York political activist, McCarthy contributed to the *Partisan Review*, *The New Republic*, and *The New York Review of Books*. At the Waldorf conference, McCarthy was accompanied by yet another political activist and writer, Dwight MacDonald. Like McCarthy, MacDonald belonged to a generation of American intellectuals who went through a period of fascination with communism, but later moved toward democratic socialism. MacDonald opposed both Stalinism and fascism, but did not shy away from criticizing the methods used by the West to oppose totalitarianism. As the editor of the *Partisan Review*, and later his own journal *Politics*, MacDonald played an important role in fostering the careers of George Orwell, Lionel Trilling, and C. Wright Mills, among others. Next to McCarthy and MacDonald sat the Russian-born composer and writer and a cousin of Vladimir Nabokov, Nicolas Nabokov. His family had fled the Bolshevik Revolution, and Nabokov took American citizenship in 1939. Before he got involved in the political activities of the American non-communist left, Nabokov had organized cultural life in postwar occupied Germany, and had taught at American universities. Nabokov’s organizational skills proved helpful in the careful planning of a strategy for the Waldorf hotel conference.

At the Waldorf conference, McCarthy and MacDonald put on a political show by pressing awkward questions about the abuse of intellectual freedom in the USSR. One of their provocative questions was directed at the Russian composer, Dmitri Shostakovich, who, trembling, responded that his music had actually benefited from party criticism.²¹⁴ At the same time, “Americans for Intellectual Freedom” organized a rally at Freedom House in New York, with a crowd of thousands who came to hear Sidney Hook, Max Eastman and Nicolas Nabokov speak of the political persecution of Soviet intellectuals.²¹⁵ Commenting on their action, MacDonald stated: “The anti-communist left has taken the offensive.”²¹⁶ Many participants of the rally, though, shared an impression that in the face of the grandiose communist peace propaganda, there was a need for a more systematic counter-action that would disarm the lure of communism. This paved the way for the formation of the Congress for Cultural Freedom.²¹⁷

Upon its formation in 1950, the Congress for Cultural Freedom employed American and Western European intellectual luminaries to neutralize the impact of communism throughout the world, and to counterbalance Soviet propaganda led by the Cominform.²¹⁸ Since it was easier to reach filo-communists by speaking the language of

²¹⁴ Michael Wreszin, *A Rebel in Defense of Tradition: The Life and Politics of Dwight Macdonald* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 50.

²¹⁵ Peter Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Postwar Europe* (New York: Free Press, 1989), 6.

²¹⁶ Giles Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA and Post-War American Hegemony* (London: Routledge, 2002), 96.

²¹⁷ This phenomenon had its predecessor in the prewar period. The first congress “in defense of culture” took place in 1935 in Paris, and was primarily designed to oppose Nazi movements in Europe. Milosz, who at that time was on a scholarship in Paris, had a chance to listen to the speeches. In his 1952 article, Milosz commented on the 1935 Congress in the following way: “Among the luminaries of that Congress were Guehenno, Aldous Huxley, Malraux (then a communist), Mann (...), as well as a significant number of filo-communist Western writers, and a big delegation of Soviet writers. That Congress was of course aimed against Nazism.[...] On the stage, intellectuals rabbited beautifully, but in their words there was this particular false, which characterizes the 19th century liberal repertoire – when it is juxtaposed to absolute cruelty.” Czeslaw Milosz, “Zoologiczne uwagi o festiwalu,” *Kultura* 7 (1952): 24-28.

²¹⁸ Cominform—the common name for the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties. The Cominform was a Soviet-dominated organization of Communist parties founded in September 1947 at a conference of Communist party leaders in Poland. The intended purpose of Cominform was to coordinate actions between Communist parties under Soviet direction. The Cominform was dissolved in 1956 in the process of De-Stalinization.

the left, the CCF had a strong leftist bias. Its ideological platform ranged from orthodox anti-communist to anti-Stalinist and anti-communist left and to liberal social-democrats. The CCF based its structure on organic intellectual movements which had thus far led the combat against communist ideology, among them the *Politics* circle and the Americans for Intellectual Freedom.²¹⁹ CCF co-founder Melvin J. Lasky commented on the essence of the Congress:

It was not an official body, but a free association of men and women. It was not a 'front' for the totalitarians of the left or the right...It was the initial attempt of the intelligentsia of the civilized world - poets and scientists, philosophers and journalists, socialists and conservatives, churchmen and trade-unionists, painters and publishers - to join together freely, to discuss, to criticize, to formulate an independent program for the defense of their common democratic ideal.²²⁰

Yet the Congress for Cultural Freedom was not only a transatlantic initiative that consolidated the efforts of Western anti-Soviet and antifascist intellectuals, but also a child of major American Cold War strategists, who noticed an advantageous overlap between the moral motivations of the organization and the political interests of the USA. Sidney Hook explored this issue in his discussion with an American governmental official, saying: "Give me a hundred million dollars and a thousand dedicated people, and I will guarantee to generate such a wave of democratic unrest among the masses [...] of Stalin's own empire, that all his problems for a long period of time to come will be internal. I can find the people."²²¹ As a result of cooperation with American policy planners, the Congress could count on lavish CIA funding, which remained a secret until 1967, when it was made public in an atmosphere of scandal. The anti-communist

²¹⁹ Thus far, the New York Intellectuals had expressed their liberal anti-communism by publishing in *Commentary*, *Partisan Review*, *New Leader*, *New York Times Magazine*, and *Twentieth Century*. Gregory D. Sumner, *Dwight Macdonald and the Politics Circle: The Challenge of Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

²²⁰ Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 114.

²²¹ Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 120.

intellectuals expressed their approval of the general lines of American policy in exchange for moral and material support for their fight against filo-communist sentiment. The American government, in turn, used the CCF to spread ideas of freedom and human dignity, which would compete with the Soviet attempt at monopolization of peace propaganda.

The activities of the Congress for Cultural Freedom and the communist Peace Congresses were, to a large extent, indicative of the binary postwar power system. The engaged intellectuals participated in a clash between liberalism and Marxism, as these had become incarnated in the Cold War antagonism between American and Soviet sides.²²² Although the Western discourse about the role of intellectuals differed from its Eastern counterpart, the CCF, in a way, mirrored the political tactics of its ideological enemy—the Soviet Union—which exploited the moral authority of Russian intellectuals by forcing or luring them into official support of the communist system. Both sides took advantage of what Pierre Bourdieu called the “cultural capital” of intellectuals in order to legitimize their own geopolitical and ideological agenda. As Christopher Lasch would later scathingly state: “[...] the campaign for ‘cultural freedom’ revealed the degree to which the values held by intellectuals had become indistinguishable from the interests of the modern state – interests which intellectuals now served while they maintained the illusion of detachment.”²²³

The Congress for Cultural Freedom met for the first time in West Berlin in June 1950, and from the very first moments it had a symbolic political significance, since the North Korean invasion of South Korea occurred during its first session. At the

²²² Jeffrey C. Isaac, *Arendt, Camus, and Modern Rebellion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 14.

²²³ Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 98.

conference, problems of liberal anticommunism and neutrality toward communism were addressed by intellectuals from Europe such as Julian Huxley, Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone and Denis de Rougemont, and from America: Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Tennessee Williams, James Burnham, and Sidney Hook. World-renowned philosophers such as John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Benedetto Croce, Karl Jaspers, and Jacques Maritain agreed to lend gravitas to the event as its honorary chairmen. The meeting of this newly-emerged nucleus of the transatlantic community of intellectuals was a symbolic rather than an organizational success. The following two CCF conferences in Brussels and New Delhi helped organize structures and design an agenda, but they also brought to light the conflict between the cold war hardliners, such as Arthur Koestler and James Burnham, and those whose attitude toward the USSR was more moderate. Certainly, the CCF had to establish internal limits to ideological flexibility in order to retain an inner coherence and to build a sound public image. At the same time, in respect to the need for a fresh, imaginative, yet politically effective critique of communism, the CCF could not resort to forcing the hands of intellectuals, and could only allow a genuine expression of their anti-communism. The organizational dilemmas and ideological clashes between the delegates, combined with a constant fluctuation of men and women in the executive, placed the whole CCF enterprise in a precarious position. In this sense, it sounded especially grave when Koestler warned his colleagues: “If we fail we shall become guilty of another *trahison des clercs*.”²²⁴

Milosz came into the orbit of the Congress when he announced his political exile at the May 1st, 1951 press conference organized at the CCF headquarters in Paris. Almost

²²⁴ Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 120. Koestler referred to Julien Benda’s 1928 classic book, *The Treason of the Intellectuals* (*La Trahison des clercs*) (New York: Norton, 1969).

overnight Milosz became a star of the Congress, and gave reason to the organization of a seminar about intellectuals' attitudes toward communism. In September 1951, in the French town of Andlau, the CCF intellectuals heard Milosz dissecting the nuances of Polish intellectuals' seduction by communism. For the Congress Milosz was a particularly appealing intellectual addition. Here was a man who had made a desperate decision to choose freedom, and was happy to talk about the abuses of freedom behind the Iron Curtain. His voice was of great value, since he had worked for the communist regime, had experienced the seductive power of Marxism, and could speak about the practice of intellectual life under communism. Moreover, he did not chastise communist ideology, but tried to find a key to the mind of those seduced by Marxism and communism. What more could the Congress ask for? As Scott-Smith points out, the Andlau seminar, with the Eastern European writer participating, constituted a turning point for the CCF, since it commenced its transformation "from an instrument of struggle against totalitarianism to an international forum for debate."²²⁵

Three years earlier, as a Polish diplomat, Milosz had persuaded Einstein to write a welcome memo to the participants of the communist Wroclaw Peace Congress; now he himself was thriving at the Congress for Cultural Freedom meetings and was publishing in its periodicals.²²⁶ The Congress supported Milosz's efforts to get an entrance visa to the USA, guaranteed him privileges, generous royalties, and financial support from the Fund for Intellectual Freedom led by Arthur Koestler, and from the International Rescue

²²⁵ Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 139.

²²⁶ Einstein wrote a memo requested by Milosz, but since only its fragment had been read at the Peace Congress, Einstein's message had been distorted. Polish authorities were afraid that the delegates from Moscow would not like the tone of Einstein's letter, since it spoke critically about the communist enterprise and about the threat of nuclear war. Milosz was very unhappy about the fact that Polish authorities offended the famous physicist ignoring his genuine message. He apologized to Einstein, and they remained in good relationship. The CCF periodicals mentioned above, in which Milosz published upon his exile included: *Preuves, Encounter, Tempo Presente, Der Monat, Cuadernos*, and *The Twentieth Century*.

Committee.²²⁷ Above anything else, in the Congress Milosz found an audience that was deeply interested in what he had to say. Joining the Congress, Milosz found a temporary ideological home, intellectual interlocutors, and salvation from, by his own account, going insane.²²⁸

While exercising his intellectual freedom, Milosz did not allow himself to merge completely with the ideological stand of either the CCF or the American intellectuals whom he had seen at the Peace conference two years before. Mary McCarthy recollected the 1949 New York conference saying: “It was Milosz’s first exposure to the democratic left and he just fell in love with us.”²²⁹ It might have been love at first sight, but it was not blind. From the very first days in the Congress, Milosz emphasized his disgust with the idea that he would play the role of a disillusioned former communist or become an expert in communism. Years later, Milosz reminisced: “Everything had been already set up so that I become a publicist writing about communism, the Left, politics, in the most liberal and anti [communist] way, and whatever else you want.”²³⁰ Milosz worried that he could fall prey to yet another ideological dogma, and be labeled as a servant of the anti-communist crusade in the West.

With these dilemmas on his mind, in 1952 Milosz wrote a lot, traveled around France making new friendships, and became more stable psychologically. By 1952, contact with his family declined, since correspondence was not a sufficient means for

²²⁷ The archives of the Congress for Cultural Freedom prove that Milosz had priority over other exiled Polish writers for obtaining funds for his book. In 1961, the CCF director Michael Josselson wrote about it to his successor John Hunt: “I think that we should expand our help, in order to cover possibly the largest number of the Polish writers, with the exception for Milosz, who always has priority.” 11/29/1961. Archive of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, Special Collections, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. International Association for Cultural Freedom, series II, box 187, f.3.

²²⁸ In 1953, Milosz became a member of the CCF Committee for East-Central Europe, along with Jozef Czapski, Jozef Wittlin, and Mircea Eliade.

²²⁹ Wreszin, *A Rebel in Defense of Tradition*.

²³⁰ Czesław Milosz, and Aleksander Fiut, *Czesława Milosza autoportret przekorny* (Kraków: Wydawn. Literackie, 1988), 36.

sustaining close relations, phone calls were extremely expensive, and, most importantly, Milosz was unhappy that his wife insisted on staying in the USA and waiting for him to join her. He was now tired of fighting for the visa, and preferred to live in France, where his professional position was improving and where he was gaining intellectual acceptance.²³¹ However, Janina Milosz was resistant to this idea, as she did not want their sons, who were born in the United States, to be emigrants in France. She was also afraid of the politically unstable situation in Europe, and doubted her husband's ability to earn a living from writing in France.²³² Milosz's visa application languished, which created even more tension between the separated couple. Janina filled her letters with complaints and worry, saying: "You do not care about us at all" or "Where are you? You have not even left your new address! Have you gone crazy? How can we reach you? Stay at one place, do not run all over the place."²³³ Later, she turned to an even more dramatic tone, indicative of a desperate woman who had to take care of two children in the absence of her husband. She wrote: "Czeslaw, I beg you, do not distance yourself from us – both you and we will be lost."²³⁴ In July 1952, Janina tried in vain to get in touch with her husband in Paris at avenue Denfert-Rochereau and at *Kultura* House in Maisons-Laffitte. Czeslaw told Janina neither about the new book he was working on, nor that in order to write it he had moved from Paris to the Dordogne, with a lady friend.

While playing the sexy rebel in the Congress, Milosz happened to be especially alluring to one of its female members—Jeanne Hersch—who became Milosz's lover, and contributed greatly to creating his image in the West. Hersch was a brilliant Swiss

²³¹ Czeslaw Milosz's letter to Ignacy Swiecicki, 02/04/1953. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 59, folder 828.

²³² Janina Milosz's letter to Czeslaw Milosz 10/10/1952. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 44.

²³³ Janina Milosz's letter to Czeslaw Milosz 06/04/1952. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 44. Janina Milosz's letter to Czeslaw Milosz 06/16/1952. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 44.

²³⁴ Janina Milosz's letter to Czeslaw Milosz 11/07/1952. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 44.

philosopher, one year Milosz's senior, and knew Polish. She encouraged Milosz to write a novel, which she would translate so that he could enter it into French literary competitions. The book that he wrote with Jeanne in the Dordogne—*La prise du pouvoir* [English title *The Seizure of Power*—received the prestigious Prix Littéraire Européen in 1953. Hersch played an instrumental role in persuading Milosz to open up to Western audiences, and to become an intellectual intermediary between the two sides of the Iron Curtain.²³⁵ She believed deeply in Milosz's writing potential, and attached herself strongly to her lover, arguing that he should focus on his work rather than constantly worry about the fate of his family. In autumn 1952, Milosz and Hersch moved in together in Paris.²³⁶ Milosz's love affair with Hersch seems to have been important to him; however, in an unpublished essay from 1953 he also expressed regret about it. He wrote: "I should not have been sleeping with Teresa."²³⁷ The details leave no doubt that Milosz was referring to his relationship with Hersch. Milosz's papers show that for at least a year he was simultaneously in a relationship with his wife, who stayed in America, and with Jeanne, his intellectual partner and lover in France. While Jeanne knew about Milosz's family in America, Janina had no idea about her husband's relationship with Jeanne. By the spring of 1953 it had been almost three years since the poet had last seen his family, and he still waited for their arrival, but he confessed to a friend that he doubted the possibility of his marriage lasting.²³⁸

By this point Milosz had become a well-known author in Western intellectual circles, and had developed strong work and social relations with intellectuals within the

²³⁵ Jeanne Hersch's letters to Czeslaw Milosz. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 25., folders 403 - 406.

²³⁶ Their friends addressed letters to both of them at the address: Hotel Trianon, 3, rue Vangirard, Paris. Janina Milosz's letters were forwarded to this address. Alfred Loepfe's letter 03/05/1953. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 39, folder 585. Janina Milosz's letters to Czeslaw Milosz 11/03/1952, 11/07/1952. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 44.

²³⁷ Czeslaw Milosz, *Unpublished essay*, ca. 1953. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 119.

²³⁸ Czeslaw Milosz's letter to Ignacy Świecicki, 02/04/1953. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 59, folder 828.

CCF and beyond. Not only were Albert Einstein, Arthur Koestler and Jacques Maritain involved in Milosz's visa campaign, but many American and European intellectuals, such as Dwight MacDonald, Nicola Chiaromonte, Francois Bondy and Mary McCarthy cooperated with Milosz within the structures of the Congress. His relationship with Jeanne Hersch helped establish relations with the philosophers Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers. The intellectual relations between all these people functioned as a network in which circulation of ideas reflected their moral, intellectual and political engagement with the problems of the mid-twentieth century world. Clearly, by 1953, Milosz had joined the proverbial club. Meanwhile, also thanks to intellectual stimulation from the Congress, Milosz embarked on writing *The Captive Mind*—a work that would shed light on his ideological path from leftist sympathies and fascination with Marxism to the rejection of communism in Poland.

IN A JAR WITH SPIDERS

One would think that upon his exile a natural move for Milosz would have been to join “Polish London,” the major community of Second World War emigrants from Poland, which had been formed around the Polish Government in Exile in London.²³⁹ If Milosz had decided to mingle with Polish London it would at least have given him a sense of belonging. However, in this case the ideological differences between Milosz and

²³⁹ The Government of the Republic of Poland in Exile was formed in the aftermath of the invasion of Poland of September 1939, and the subsequent occupation of Poland by Nazi Germany and the USSR. It was based in France first, and from 1940, in London. The Government, though largely unrecognized and without effective power, remained in existence until the end of communist rule in Poland in 1990, in opposition to the People's Republic of Poland. The term “Polish London” was introduced by Rafał Habielski in his book, *Polski Londyn* (Wrocław: Wydawn. Dolnośląskie, 2000). The term refers to the political, cultural and social life of the Polish WW II exiles who settled down in London, following the Polish Government in Exile. “Polish London” had a wide net of political and cultural institutions, which accompanied the life of the Polish community in exile. While the Polish Government in Exile aspired to participating in world politics, the Polish London community navigated between assimilation to British culture and living in a national ghetto. More on the subject in a three volume series: Andrzej Friszke, Paweł Machcewicz, and Rafał Habielski, *Druga Wielka Emigracja 1945-1990* (Warszawa: Biblioteka Więzi, 1999).

London exilic community proved to be stronger than national sentiment and the community of language.

Polish emigrants learned about Milosz's defection in May 1951, when Milosz published "Nie" [No] in *Kultura*, in which he explained his motives for emigration, and distanced himself specifically from the agenda of Polish London.²⁴⁰ In his article, Milosz espoused the intellectual's privilege and duty to oppose the injustice of communism by a symbolic exclamation "No!". Although he primarily meant to explain to his Polish readers how he opposed the communist dictum, he indirectly attacked Polish exiles in London by ridiculing their utopian dreams of Poland's independence, which ignored the current world power structure. Milosz spoke with irony about the politically ineffective Polish emigrants: "The quarrels of the tiny parties seemed to me to be useless play; and the politicians were *vaudeville* figures."²⁴¹ He also jeered at the ultra anti-communist stance of the emigrant leaders, who had left Poland at the beginning of the war, and did not have any valid knowledge about the subsequent socialist and communist regimes in their homeland.

"No" caused an avalanche of responses from Polish London. In a May 21st, 1951 issue of a popular London émigré daily *Dziennik Polski* [Polish Daily], readers would find an article on Milosz under the eye-catching title "Madness and career."²⁴² Its author, J.S., sneered that in his article, Milosz, rather than expressing relief upon breaking with the communist regime, focused on his regrets of his crushed career as a Polish poet. Milosz's dramatic decision to choose freedom and his revelations about the regime were

²⁴⁰ Czesław Miłosz's letter to Melchior Wankowicz, 1952. Renata Górczyński Papers Relating to Czesław Miłosz. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Yale University; Box 1, folder 43.

²⁴¹ Czesław Miłosz, "Nie" *Kultura* 5 (1951): 4.

²⁴² J.S., "Szalenstwo i kariera", *Dziennik Polski I Dziennik Żołnierza* 05/21/1951, 5.

of no value, since the emigrant milieu, J.S. boasted, had long known the truth about life in the Soviet bloc. The leading figure in the press campaign against Milosz was Mieczyslaw Grydzewski, the editor-in-chief of the major Polish weekly issued in London, *Wiadomosci* [The News]. In his August 1951 article entitled “La grande tentation,” Grydzewski accused Milosz of being a naïve and conformist megalomaniac, who in the past five years had approved of socio-political developments in Poland, and only now decided to escape. The journalist compared Milosz to a “Guinea pig that ran away from the New Faith’s laboratory and keeps vomiting, because it is poisoned [with Marxism].”²⁴³ Grydzewski also chastised Milosz for attacking the political emigration in London, while simultaneously publishing in the Polish émigré monthly *Kultura* in Paris.

While Grydzewski was right about the morally ambiguous situation of Milosz as a former communist official, the other disputants took an extreme anti-communist approach and dismissed Milosz as a poet because of his former political affiliation. Three months after Grydzewski’s publication, in November 1951, another attack on Milosz came from a *Wiadomosci* correspondent, Sergiusz Piasecki. In his pamphlet, entitled “Former попутчик Milosz,” Piasecki provocatively used the Russian word *попутчик* [fellow-traveler] in order to allude to Milosz’s subjection not only to the communist Polish government, but also to the Soviet Union. Milosz, Piasecki wrote, was “one of the traitors who sold themselves in a way less honorable than that of an ordinary bitch.” Piasecki also ridiculed Milosz’s literary pride, pointing to the fact that when Milosz

²⁴³ Mieczyslaw Grydzewski, “La grande tentation,” *Wiadomosci* 34 (1951): 4.

boasted about his work in *Kultura*, he forgot to mention that he had also translated the poems by the Chinese communist leader, Mao-Tse-Tung.²⁴⁴

As the material in the Archives of Polish Emigration proves, Piasecki went on a personal crusade against Milosz which lasted until 1958 and which revealed much more than just Piasecki's strong anti-communist sentiment. Milosz reacted to Piasecki's attacks in the press by questioning Piasecki's credibility, and reminding readers that Piasecki was a former intelligence agent and a convicted criminal in interwar Poland.²⁴⁵ In his innumerable letters to *Wiadomosci*, Piasecki hurled new accusations against Milosz, and suggested that the poet deserved a death sentence, since "(...) he deeply aggrieved the Polish nation...not as a poet, but as a Pole."²⁴⁶

A publicist for the *Dziennik Polski*, Aleksander Bregman, best described the reaction of Polish London to Milosz's flight. Bregman wrote: "We still do not know what Milosz has purchased and for what price; we are also not convinced, whether what he has bought was worth the price he has paid."²⁴⁷ In other words, Bregman wanted Milosz to

²⁴⁴ Sergiusz Piasecki, "Były poputychnik Milosz," *Wiadomosci* 44 (1951): 3. These poems are also omitted in Milosz's bibliography. Rimma Volynska-Bogert, and Wojciech Zalewski, *Czeslaw Milosz, an International Bibliography, 1930-1980* (Ann Arbor: Dept. of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Michigan, 1983).

²⁴⁵ Czeslaw Milosz, "Do Antoniego Slonimskiego," *Kultura* 12 (1951): 80-88.

²⁴⁶ Sergiusz Piasecki's letter to *Wiadomosci*, 08/17/1951. Piasecki's letters abounded in charges pressed against Milosz. He wrote: "I feel the need, or even a duty, to speak in this case, because many of my colleagues who were noble men and genuine patriots died at the hands of those whom Milosz had supported with his talent, his knowledge and his work. [...] Milosz used everything that he had been sumptuously endowed with by Poland in order to annihilate it." 08/17/1951. In another letter Piasecki such commented on Milosz: "a henchman of Stalin and a death camps tracker: poet Milosz." 12/08/1951. In 1958, when Milosz won the prize of the Polish Writers' Association in exile, Piasecki left the Association in an act of protest. Sergiusz Piasecki's letters to *Wiadomosci*, 1946-1958. Collection CCXLV, The Archives of *Wiadomosci*. The Archives of Polish Emigration, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Torun, Poland. Piasecki's zeal must have been fueled by a dramatic intersection of politics and passion. He was married to Milosz's former girlfriend, Jadwiga Waszkiewicz, whom Milosz had dated in the early 1930s in Vilnius, before abandoning her pregnant and dishonored, to leave for a yearlong fellowship in Paris. Given the social standards of the day, Jadwiga Waszkiewicz, a single pregnant woman, became morally and socially stigmatized. During the war she married Piasecki and lived under the last name Tomaszewicz. It was only fifty years past their affair, that Milosz and Jadwiga reconnected via a correspondence, in which they discussed the events of the 1930s. In her letters, Jadwiga responded to Milosz's confession about pangs of conscience he suffered, and she forgave him. In the early 1980s, Milosz and Waszkiewicz planned to meet. Jadwiga died shortly before their scheduled meeting. Jadwiga is the protagonist of Milosz's poem "To NN." Jadwiga Tomaszewicz's (Waszkiewicz) letters to Czeslaw Milosz. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 61, folders 847- 848.

²⁴⁷ Aleksander Bregman, "Sprawa Milosza," *Dziennik Polski I Dziennik Zolnierza* 191 (1951): 2-3.

inform Polish exiles what benefits he had gained, and what concessions he had made while serving as a diplomat for the Polish communist government. Bregman's article well reflected two major characteristics of Polish London. First, because of the sealed Polish borders and poor information flow, Poles in London had sparse knowledge of the daily dilemmas and moral concessions of their compatriots in People's Poland. They passed moral judgment on people in Poland, as if 25 million Poles could either leave or openly contest the communist government while subject to political persecutions and surrounded by numerous Soviet troops. Consequently, the London émigrés found it hard to connect with new exiles and labeled anyone coming from behind the Iron Curtain as communism-stained. When the worlds of a new exile and of "old" emigrants collided, as in Milosz's case, the former hoped for a minimum of understanding, while the latter demanded expiation and auto-criticism. In the Soviet bloc, the authorities expected auto-criticism from party members who had been ideologically mistaken, and had to reaffirm their allegiance to the party line. Ironically, Polish London reproduced the method employed by their detested enemy, expecting Milosz to apologize for his ideological errors and to join the anti-communist front.²⁴⁸

Although Milosz thought that any attempt at dialogue with Polish London was pointless, he eventually picked up the gauntlet thrown in the press campaign. In July 1951, in the pages of *Kultura*, Milosz published a "Response" to the accusations that had been put forward against him. He criticized the *a priori* anti-communism of émigrés, who had spent the past 12 years in "the scrap heap of Polish dictionaries" without the slightest idea about the ways in which communism had been implemented in People's Poland. Since the journalists of Polish London focused the debate exclusively on politics, Milosz

²⁴⁸ Ryszard Wraga, "Nie ma zadnej sprawy Milosz," *Dziennik Polski I Dziennik Zolnierza* 8 (1952): 2.

pointed out that he was not only a former communist diplomat but also a poet. He wrote, “Even if my life path is a zigzag, [...] my poetic path seems pretty consistent to me.”²⁴⁹ To avoid any doubts as to his current political stance, Milosz admitted that he was an anti-Stalinist leftist.

Next to Milosz’s “Response,” two authors from *Kultura*, Zygmunt Zaremba and Juliusz Mieroszewski, published their defense of the poet, adding yet another party to the discussion of Milosz’s image in the West. Rather than dwelling on Milosz’s past from a narrow Polish perspective, as the London publicists did, Mieroszewski focused on Milosz’s current contribution to intellectual debates in the West. “Milosz’s articles,” Mieroszewski argued, “in French, American, and West-German periodicals, as well as in the publications of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, had been appraised as an important contribution to a struggle of the ‘free world against Bolshevism.’”²⁵⁰ Zaremba added that new exiles deserved a second chance, otherwise all the Poles living in the country should be irrevocably condemned, which would be an obvious nonsense.²⁵¹ Four months later, in December 1951, thirty two Polish émigré intellectuals stood up for Milosz, publishing a statement in which they appealed to Polish London for fair treatment of new exiles from Poland, and protested aggressive press campaigns reminiscent of Stalinist trials.²⁵² These events showed that *Kultura* was much more than just an émigré monthly, but rather a milieu formed around it, with their agenda being to sustain Polish culture in exile, and reach their compatriots in Poland.

²⁴⁹ Czesław Miłosz, “Odpowiedz,” *Kultura* 7 (1951): 103-105.

²⁵⁰ Juliusz Mieroszewski (Londynczyk), “List z wyspy,” *Kultura* 7 (1951): 95-102.

²⁵¹ Zygmunt Zaremba, “Wobec nowego uchodźcy,” *Kultura* 7 (1951): 89-95.

²⁵² “Oświadczenie pisarzy emigracyjnych w związku z pozostaniem Czesława Miłosza za granicą,” *Kultura* 12 (1951), 3.

Milosz's dialogue with the Polish émigrés was not a simple trajectory, since he was torn between a self-imposed separation and a desire to belong to the Polish community. He hoped for an empathetic reaction to his works, but also thought that his ideas would be as exotic for the majority of emigrant Poles as the tongue of the Papuan tribe would be.²⁵³ Since politics stood in the way of a meaningful dialogue with Polish London, Milosz relied on *Kultura* as a forum of dialogue with other Polish émigrés. Nevertheless, he had to pay a high price for remaining independent from the London emigrant parties.²⁵⁴ Milosz's close friend, the English writer Margaret Storm-Jameson, wrote in July 1951 to him saying: "You care too much for émigré attacks on you. They are ghosts who enjoy life when fresh blood is given to drink (like yours)."²⁵⁵ The poet, both irritated and offended, was considering a libel suit against a certain Polish emigrant publicist from the London circle.²⁵⁶ As if the hostile attitude on the part of Polish London was not enough, Milosz was also attacked by extreme right-wing American Poles. Similarly to London émigrés, Poles living in the United States had little clue as to the situation in Poland, and held to a conviction that anything communist-related should be left in oblivion if not exterminated. They considered it a patriotic duty to remind the American authorities that Milosz had been a communist official, and therefore should not be granted entrance to the United States. In January 1952, Milosz lamented to a friend

²⁵³ Czeslaw Milosz's letter to Melchior Wankowicz, 1952. Renata Gorczynski Papers Relating to Czeslaw Milosz; Box 1, f. 43.

²⁵⁴ Czeslaw Milosz's letter to Pearl Kluger, 03/19/1953. Visa dossier. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 181.

²⁵⁵ Margaret Storm-Jameson's letter to Czeslaw Milosz, 07/26/1951. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 30. Similarly, in November 1952, Janina Milosz asked her husband not to devote his life to the fight with the Polish emigrants. Janina Milosz's letter to Czeslaw Milosz 11/10/1952. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 44.

²⁵⁶ Margaret Storm-Jameson's letter to Czeslaw Milosz, 11/01/1951. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 30.

that the Polish denunciations caused problems with obtaining an American visa, and that, as a consequence, he had not yet seen his one-year-old son.²⁵⁷

The debate about Milosz revealed the many ideological differences between distinct exilic communities. Polish London defined Milosz first and foremost as a servant of communist totalitarianism, and therefore a national outcast, whose pretensions to compose verses in Polish were of no significance. For *Kultura*, it was sound to analyze critically Milosz's political past, but to condemn him as a poet on the basis of his former political affiliation would mean to act against the cause of Polish culture. Therefore, the chief of *Kultura*, Jerzy Giedroyc, provided Milosz with an opportunity to talk about his experience with the communist regime, and, if he desired, to publish literary works.

In his 1996 essay "The Secrets of Czeslaw Milosz," the editor of Milosz's work, Mirosław Supruniuk, suggests that Milosz's 1951 case became prominent because Giedroyc had deliberately created much ado around it in order to strengthen *Kultura's* position against *Wiadomosci* and Polish London. I would be more inclined to side with Franaszek's reading of the sources, and argue that the case was more complex than Giedroyc's political calculations. Franaszek criticizes Supruniuk's thesis, showing that even before Milosz's exile, in 1950 Giedroyc had worked with an American sociologist and CIA consultant, James Burnham, to ensure that Milosz would get back to America quickly and discreetly. Giedroyc had Milosz's best interest in mind. Expanding Franaszek's analysis, I claim that while Milosz's was just an individual story, his case became significant because it spoke to individual dramas concerning thousands of his compatriots, and Eastern Europeans in general. Like Milosz, they had to reconcile their

²⁵⁷ Czeslaw Milosz's letter to Melchior Wankowicz, 1952. Renata Gorczynski Papers Relating to Czeslaw Milosz; Box 1, f. 43.

patriotic duties and ideological affiliation, either at home or in exile. The 1951 Milosz campaign revealed the range of attitudes that Poles had developed in the aftermath of the war; there were disappointed leftist idealists, patriots turned communists, outward and concealed right-wing nationalists, and doctrinaire anti-communists who understood their affiliation as patriotic duty.²⁵⁸ For them, Milosz's case served as an ideological battlefield.

Milosz turned out to be a litmus test for Polish London's and *Kultura's* distinctive attitudes toward new exiles, while also bringing to light the ideological platforms of the two independent centers of Polish thought in exile. In the debate, Polish London took a doctrinaire anti-communist stance, dismissing Poland in its current situation. *Kultura*, on the contrary, discussed the future of communist Poland, acknowledging the permanent character of the Cold War order. In a way, the discussion on Milosz was reminiscent of the Dreyfus affair - it acted as a catalyst for the final split between the two major postwar Polish émigré centers.²⁵⁹ Milosz's case not only mobilized the two exilic institutions, but also stirred emotions among individual émigrés, who often commented on the path of the Polish poet in exile. Waclaw Korabiewicz, an émigré and a colleague of Milosz from the Vilnius period, asked Milosz in a letter: "To whom do you owe so much happiness, and why does fate endow you so? To end up in Paris, living like a blue bird, in the lap of luxury, and be the object of social discord. You, my dear, live of writing, once here, then there – and everywhere you are fine."²⁶⁰ In his picturing of Milosz's privileged position Korabiewicz was far from the truth. In fact, in the initial period after his defection,

²⁵⁸ Mirosław Supruniuk, "Zagadki Czesława Miłosza. Rok 1951-wstęp do opisu," *Kresy* 2 (2003); Franaszek, *Milosz*, 467.

²⁵⁹ Friszke, Habielski, Machcewicz, *Druga Wielka Emigracja 1945-1990*.

²⁶⁰ Waclaw Korabiewicz's letter to Czesław Miłosz, 1953. Czesław Miłosz Papers; Box 36, folder 538.

Milosz lived in a “Polish hell,” described by one émigré as a jar with spiders that fight and eventually devour each other.²⁶¹

On November 4th, 1951, at the same time Piasecki attacked Milosz in *Wiadomosci*, another blow came from Warsaw, where the renowned Polish writer, Antoni Slonimski berated his younger colleague in the pages of the major Polish newspaper *Trybuna Ludu* [People’s Tribune]. In his article, Slonimski pictured Milosz’s exile as an act against the Polish people that made the poet into an enemy of the Polish state.²⁶² Paradoxically, while the West perceived Milosz first and foremost as a political figure, the Polish authorities channeled Milosz’s escape as a literary affair of no political significance, as if he had never served as an official representative of communist Poland. Nevertheless, the authorities pressed Polish writers to condemn Milosz’s act and to make sure that his literary image was completely ruined.²⁶³

Soon after the chief of People’s Poland’s culture department, Jakub Berman chastised Milosz at the October 1951 Assembly of Polish Artists, the great figures of the Polish literary scene castigated the poet who used to be the apple of the regime’s eye. For the writers, publicly attacking Milosz was above all “a ritual gesture attesting to their loyalty.”²⁶⁴ In January 1952, the leading poet Konstanty Ildefons Galczynski published “A Poem for the Traitor,” in which he suggested that Milosz had chosen financial

²⁶¹ Jerzy Jaruzelski, *Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz 1896-1966, Wilno-Londyn-Warszawa* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1987), 289. Another emigrant, Malinowski, decided to return to communist Poland, because “he would rather be with the devil than with them [the émigrés].” In: Czesław Milosz’s letter to Melchior Wankowicz, 1952. Renata Gorczyński Papers Relating to Czesław Milosz; Box 1, folder 43.

²⁶² Antoni Slonimski, “Odprawa,” *Trybuna Ludu* 11/04/1951. *Trybuna Ludu* [People’s Tribune] was one of the largest newspapers in communist Poland. It was the official media and propaganda outlet of the Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR). On December 16, 1948, People’s Poland’s two main parties, the Polish Socialist Party and the Polish Workers’ Party, were consolidated to form Polish United Workers’ Party. The parties’ respective newspapers, *Robotnik* and *Głos Ludu*, were merged into *Trybuna Ludu*.

²⁶³ Berman thundered: “Reach with your sharp weapon the kulak and the speculator, the spy and the saboteur, the American instigator and the Neonazi.” Joanna Pyszny, *Boje na lamach. Pisarze i literatura w prasie polskiej lat pięćdziesiątych XX wieku*. (Wrocław, 2002): 61-95.

²⁶⁴ Anna Bikont, and Szczesna Joanna, *Lawina i kamienie: Pisarze wobec komunizmu* (Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 2006), 55.

security over patriotic duty, and forecast that the poet would suffer from artistic malaise with a “dead typewriter” keeping him company in exile.²⁶⁵ In his 1951 article entitled “I am here and I build with you,” Iwaszkiewicz accused Milosz of pursuing egoistic artistic goals at a time when his homeland needed writers’ involvement in its business.²⁶⁶ As the head the Polish Writers Association, Iwaszkiewicz exemplified the compromises a writer had to make in order to thrive on the literary scene.²⁶⁷

While it comes as no surprise that the writers would pay tribute to the government, the campaign also reflected a more complex problem. I agree with Franaszek, who argues that besides conformism and fear, a sense of group solidarity motivated the attacks of Polish writers on Milosz. They saw their younger colleague as the black sheep who had abandoned their herd. “It was as if, during a poker game someone said: I see you. It ruins the game,” Franaszek says.²⁶⁸ Paradoxically, Milosz still had a sense of belonging to this group, and that was why he sent an open letter from Paris explaining to his friends and readers the reasons for his defection.²⁶⁹

In Poland, the message was made clear for the general public—Milosz had betrayed his country and ceased to exist in the realm of Polish literature. The Polish

²⁶⁵ Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński, “Poemat dla zdrajcy” [A Poem for the Traitor], *Nowa Kultura* 3 (1952): 4-5.

²⁶⁶ Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, “Jestem i buduję razem z wami,” [I am here and I build with you], *Nowa Kultura* 45 (1951). In a private letter to his wife, Iwaszkiewicz expressed his disappointment with Milosz, saying: “My dear Hania, I don’t know whether you already know that our misgivings have come true, Czesio ran off, meaning he yielded to the temptation of those dollars.” In: Donata Subbotko, “Czesław Miłosz, czyli wiązka odruchów. Wywiad z Andrzejem Franaszkiem” [An interview with Andrzej Franaszek] http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,9551126,Czeslaw_Milosz_czyli_wiazka_odruchow_cz_3.html (02/28/2012).

²⁶⁷ Iwaszkiewicz was the president of the Polish Writers Association in the years 1945–1946, 1947–1949 and 1959–1980. From 1947 to 1948 he was the editor in chief of the periodical *Nowiny Literackie* [Literary News]. He also served as a delegate in Polish Parliament multiple times.

²⁶⁸ Subbotko, “Czesław Miłosz, czyli wiązka odruchów.”

²⁶⁹ Milosz’s 1951 letter to his Polish friends, entitled “Dear Compatriots!” was published in *Zeszyty Historyczne* (204) in 2004, upon Milosz’s death. It was initially sent by Milosz in 1951 and circulated in literary circles in Poland. Milosz responded to the attacks on him from Polish literary circles two more times. In 1955, he discussed the essay “Before he will be forgotten” by Polish writer Kazimierz Brandys. In his essay, which was a clear reference to Milosz’s case, Brandys described the fate of a Polish artist who decided to escape the communist regime and live in the West. See: Czesław Miłosz, “Refleksje o środowisku zamkniętym,” *Kultura* 11 (1955): 21-33. Again, in February 1956, shortly before the events of “Polish October,” Milosz published a response to the slanders which had been circulated on him in the press of People’s Poland. Czesław Miłosz, “Odpowiedz,” *Kultura* 2 (1956), 155.

authorities' effort, which today would be called an image campaign, was an example of People's Poland's cultural politics toward exilic writers and artists, whose works were banned on political grounds with no consideration given to their artistic value. The negative image of the émigrés promoted by the communist government served to ridicule the political agenda of Polish London. Polish authorities banned the works of the émigré writers, consigning them to oblivion in their native land. As a result, the literary worlds of People's Poland and "Poland in exile" were gradually growing apart, limiting the dialogue between the domestic and exilic branches of Polish culture. Paradoxically, the pearls of twentieth-century Polish literature came into existence in exile, but they were created by those authors who reached beyond the ghetto mentality of Polish émigré circles. That is exactly the path that Milosz's work would take.

A STORY OF ONE SICKNESS

While, over time, Milosz's intellectual involvement in the Congress for Cultural Freedom relieved his homesickness, things did get ugly for a while in the initial period of his exile. Milosz had a hard time revisiting his ideological affiliation and professional service, as well as coming to terms with the failed socialist project in Poland. Therefore, he chose mental solitary confinement in order to cure himself from his fascination with Marxism. In the first months spent at the *Kultura* House, he would alternatively experience fury and despair over the separation from his family, his shattered Polish poetry career and exile from his native land. As one *Kultura* house dweller later recollected, Milosz would work himself up into frenzies attacking other people with the most absurd arguments, such as denying the existence of Soviet gulags. Half a century

later, Milosz explained that he had made these statements in order to irritate his friends, and that he did not expect to be taken seriously.²⁷⁰ In any case, in early 1951 Milosz's psychological condition was extremely poor. In his notes from that time, he wrote that he was still longing to have an ideological point of reference other than historical determinism.²⁷¹

Following his flight from communist Poland, Milosz had a chance to observe and participate in the Western intellectuals' debate over communism, and noticed that the West tended to oversimplify the situation of the political emigrant from the East. In September 1951, in his speech presented at the CCF conference in Andlau, Milosz argued that: "For the West, if one had been involved in the communist regime, one must have been a Stalinist; if one had chosen freedom (fled the country), one must have gotten disillusioned."²⁷² The Polish poet hated the idea that his views would be once again distorted and started working on a book in which he would explain adequately the complexity of the Eastern Europeans' experience with communism to the Western reader. Marxism was a powerful intellectual tool, Milosz reasoned, therefore, it could not be simply rejected, but called for further reflection.²⁷³ Additionally, Milosz hoped that by attacking his own vulnerability toward Marxism head-on he would free himself from the fascination with historical determinism and overcome his ideological crisis.

²⁷⁰ Iza Chruślińska, and Zofia Hertz, *Była Raz Kultura: Rozmowy Z Zofią Hertz* (Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2003), 56. Milosz, *Rozmowy polskie*, 87.

²⁷¹ Czesław Milosz, *W ciągu ostatnich kilku lat* [Over the Past Couple of Years]. Unpublished essay, ca. 1953. Czesław Milosz Papers; box 119, folder 1803.

²⁷² Czesław Milosz, *Wielkie pokuszenie: Bielinski i jednorożec*, (Torun: Archiwum Emigracji, 2002), 13.

²⁷³ Czesław Milosz's letter to Melchior Wankowicz, 1952. Renata Gorczyński Papers Relating to Czesław Milosz; Box 1, f. 43.

In late 1951, with encouragement from *Kultura* and his CCF patrons, Milosz started writing *Zniewolony umysł* [The Captive Mind].²⁷⁴ While still at work on his book, Milosz commented on his own “captive mind” in a letter to the Polish writer Melchior Wankowicz. Milosz admitted that he had held to illusions that Poland would become a socialist country. He said, referring to the potential of leftist idealism: “Did I believe? I did not believe in Stalinism, but obviously I did believe. I believed that something might have been done.”²⁷⁵ When writing *The Captive Mind*, Milosz managed to distance himself from the intellectual allure of Marxism. He never, however, changed his opinion about Marxism’s seductive power.²⁷⁶ Upon finishing his book, Milosz commented on its personal scope: “This book is a battlefield, in which I have given shape to my combat with the doctrine I have rejected.”²⁷⁷ His book constituted a dramatic appeal for a solution for people like him—exiles from ideology. *The Captive Mind* was to become an essential voice in the discussion over ideology in the Cold War era, and a major factor in creating Milosz’s image for and by the Western audience.²⁷⁸

In *The Captive Mind*, Milosz took the Western reader by the hand to walk him along the path of a gradual commitment from a nascent fascination with the Marxist ideology to the whole-hearted involvement in the communist system. *The Captive Mind* examined the lives of four Polish writers: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and Delta, and their journey toward communism. This approach was meant to give a better insight into the psychological and mental changes of society in the Soviet bloc. In his book, Milosz dealt

²⁷⁴ Czesław Miłosz, “Preface,” In: Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind* (New York: Vintage International, 1990).

²⁷⁵ Czesław Miłosz’s letter to Melchior Wankowicz, 1952. Renata Gorczyński Papers Relating to Czesław Miłosz; Box 1, f. 43.

²⁷⁶ Miłosz, *Rozmowy polskie*; Fiut, *Czesława Miłosza autoportret przekorny*; Czesław Miłosz, and Cynthia L. Haven, *Czesław Miłosz: Conversations* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006); Czesław Miłosz, Renata Gorczyński, Aleksander Fiut, Richard Lourie, Renata Gorczyński, and Aleksander Fiut, *Conversations with Czesław Miłosz* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987).

²⁷⁷ Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, XIII.

²⁷⁸ Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, XV.

with sensitive material, since he referred to his own experience and that of his literary colleagues, whose names he encrypted under Greek letters.

In order to explain the idiosyncrasies of the “captive mind,” Milosz discussed four incentives for a Polish intellectual’s involvement in communism. First was the fascination with Marxism, an intellectually appealing philosophy that filled the ideological vacuum of postwar Poland. Marxism offered an all-encompassing ideological key to reality, and served as a quasi-faith that helped the writers’ psyche recover after the war. Milosz wrote: “Men will clutch at illusions when they have nothing else to hold to.”²⁷⁹ Second, historical determinism, a crucial component of Marxist ideology, attracted intellectuals by offering a task for them to fulfill in important political developments. Simply put, it was better to be on the side of history. “[A man],” Milosz said, “weighs his chances and concludes it is unwise to align himself with the side that has been damned by the Being which has taken the place of God in this century, i.e. History.”²⁸⁰ While the overtly communist regime was busy orchestrating a full-fledged transformation of Poland, the role of the writer was to lead the march toward what was pictured as a glorious socialist future. As I have previously indicated, the regime appreciated those intellectuals who took this business seriously. The third motive at the root of Polish intellectuals’ engagement with communist power was their desire to be integrated into society, paradoxically, without compromising their privileged position. Certainly, the events of WW II did not help to break the traditional alienation of intellectuals from other social groups. Now, Milosz suggested, a writer wanted to make sure that not only did he hop on “the train of history,” but also that he was on good terms with his fellow

²⁷⁹ Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, X.

²⁸⁰ Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 31.

passengers. Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz best expressed this tendency in a title of his article: “I am here and I build with you.”²⁸¹ Finally, Milosz argued in *The Captive Mind*, the urge for a prestigious social position, fame and a high standard of living lured intellectuals to work for the communist regime.²⁸²

In *The Captive Mind*, Milosz used his own situation to show that this mechanism could operate quite well as long as the intellectual did not know or did not want to know about the crimes committed by the regimes in People’s Poland and Stalinist Russia. For those who decided to disregard moral doubts, historical determinism again proved helpful in justifying the evil of totalitarianism. In the light of a historical process with a clearly designated goal, an individual was yet another cog in the machine of history. As a result, if a writer wanted to remain faithful to the logic of History, the price he had to pay was terrible, but paradoxically, acceptable.

Certainly, the motivating pressure from the CCF and Jerzy Giedroyc, combined with Milosz’s ambition, helped bring about the English translation of *The Captive Mind*, which was a logical next step by all parties. For Milosz, the motivation behind this publishing tactic was probably the necessity to find his own place as a writer in the West. Milosz signed a contract with a first-rate American publishing house, Alfred A. Knopf. A Knopf editor wrote to Milosz, “We think that your book is a fascinating and revealing document on the intellectual and spiritual condition of Eastern Europe, and it seems to me that it throws more genuine light on the subject than any other book I can think of. (...) We consider this book of very real importance.”²⁸³ In 1953, after months of fights over the book contract between Milosz, his wife, his translator Jane Zielonko and his

²⁸¹ Iwaszkiewicz, “Jestem i buduję razem z wami.”

²⁸² Milosz, *Wielkie Pokuszenie: Bieliński i jednorożec*, 13.

²⁸³ Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., letter to Czeslaw Milosz, 03/14/1952. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 5, folder 106.

publisher, the book was finally published. Shortly after the 1953 publication of *The Captive Mind*, more than twenty reviews were published in the most influential periodicals of the Anglo-Saxon world, among them *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, *Spectator*, *Foreign Affairs*, *New Republic*, *The New York Times*, and *Partisan Review*.

When discussing the Western audience's reaction to Milosz's book, one has to remember that he entered a debate that had been started in 1949 by Milosz's Western colleagues, who described their disillusionment with communism in a collection of essays entitled *The God that Failed*.²⁸⁴ The authors were: Louis Fischer, André Gide, Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, Stephen Spender, and Richard Wright. A popular counterpart to this highbrow literature was the *genre* of "confessional" literature, in which runaways from communist countries went through a catharsis process, turning into doctrinaire anti-communists. Milosz's book exceeded both *genres*, as he had never been communist but had believed in the viability of the socialist project for his country, and on the other hand had never joined the anti-communist crusade.

The reception of *The Captive Mind* involved a process of creating a new image for Milosz that took place in a three-fold dialogue. Most importantly, Western intellectuals with established reputations commented favorably on *The Captive Mind*, which guaranteed attention for the new East European member of the CCF. This also provided Milosz with new opportunities and stimulating company in the Congress, which in the 1950s was certainly a major center of intellectual exchanges attracting the brightest minds of the epoch. Second, many Western intellectuals corresponded privately with Milosz to express their attitude toward his explanation of the mechanism of Marxism's seduction. This dialogue gave Milosz a sense of belonging to an intellectual community

²⁸⁴ R.H.S. Crossman, and Arthur Koestler, *The God That Failed* (New York: Harper, 1950).

concerned with the same problems, and provided gratification for addressing the audience outside the realm of Polish poetry. Finally, less prominent figures responded to Milosz's analysis, and even though their voice counted little for Milosz's public image, it was precious to him since it came from people who shared a similar experience with the communist ideology.²⁸⁵ It was soothing for him to hear that he was not the only one left without an ideological home.

The initial debate on *The Captive Mind* showed that Milosz had made an important contribution to Western reflection on ideologies by steering clear of the schema of communist totalitarianism as a mysterious "evil system" and trying to analyze the everyday psychological and mental mechanisms animating those who lived under the communist rule. The approach did attract criticism as a way to disguise the political conformism of the supporters of communism under over-theorized terms such as "New Faith" or "Ketman". In 1959, the Polish exile writer Gustaw Herling-Grudzinski stated plainly that Milosz had "made up his book at the desk," and had been wrong to claim that people had taken the communist "New Faith" seriously. However, he only made this comment after the events of 1956, when the political situation in the Soviet bloc was very different than it had been in the Stalin era. Contrary to Herling-Grudzinski, Andrzej Walicki, a Polish exiled philosopher, argued that Milosz's analysis was accurate. In his 1993 book, *Captive Mind after Years*, Walicki discussed his own diaries from the 1950s to reveal that communism was an extremely important issue for him and his colleagues. Regardless of whether they had submitted to the "New Faith" or not, their decision had been an outcome of precisely the sorts of complex intellectual and psychological

²⁸⁵ Andrzej Nowicki's letter to Czeslaw Milosz, 11/11/1953. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 46; Jerzy Stempowski's letter to Czeslaw Milosz, 08/05/1951. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 59, folder 812.

processes described by Milosz, rather than of banal political conformism. Franaszek is right to notice that later in his life Milosz himself revised his analysis. But one cannot forget that in 1951 the man writing *The Captive Mind* believed that communism would rule over Eastern Europe for the next two or three centuries. Therefore, reproaching Milosz for exaggerating the seductive power of communist ideology would be ahistorical, since *The Captive Mind* reflected the stage of communist dictatorship in Poland when the future was determined by Soviet domination.²⁸⁶

Milosz's second contribution was that the debate on his book brought to the surface the diverse approaches toward communism in the Congress for Cultural Freedom. This was critical to prevent doctrinaire anti-communism from taking over the CCF. For the purpose of this chapter, I will look at three critical issues discussed by Western intellectuals in the debate on *The Captive Mind*: the mechanism of enslavement of the mind by communism in the Soviet bloc, the Western alternative to communist ideology, and the search for a political "third way" —leftism devoid of its totalitarian stigma.

At the time Western intellectuals suffered from scarcity of information on East-Central Europe, which hampered their understanding of the social and intellectual processes behind the Iron Curtain. Some Western intellectuals admitted that WW II had created extraordinary outcomes for East-Central Europe that might remain incomprehensible for a Westerner. One of them was Nicola Chiaromonte, a former member of the Italian Communist Party, who had been imprisoned by Mussolini, then fought against Franco in Spain, only to end up as an anti-Stalinist intellectual in New

²⁸⁶ Interestingly, the socio-political changes taking place in People's Poland in the two decades after Milosz's defection had influenced his attitude toward *The Captive Mind*. In his December 1967 letter to Jerzy Giedroyc, Milosz commented on his 1951 book, saying: "Well, I magnified [communism], and those in Warsaw should give me a medal for making communism into a serious affair; but it is a writer's privilege to magnify." Jerzy Giedroyc, Czesław Milosz, Marek Kornat ed., *Jerzy Giedroyc, Czesław Milosz: Listy*; Gustaw Herling-Grudzinski, "Komentarz tłumacza," *Kultura* 3 (1959): 17-20; Andrzej Walicki, *Zniewolony Umysł po latach* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1993).

York and then in Europe. Chiaromonte commenced his article on *The Captive Mind* with a quotation from Milosz's book that read: "A man is lying under machine-gun fire on a street in an embattled city. He looks at the pavement and sees a very amusing sight: the cobble-stones are standing upright like the quills of a porcupine. The bullets hitting against their edges displace and tilt them. Such moments in the consciousness of a man *judge* all poets and philosophers."²⁸⁷ Chiaromonte backed up Milosz's argument that for Polish intellectuals, Marxism, with dialectical materialism as its constituent, was an adequately "earthy" response to the violence of the war.²⁸⁸

Chiaromonte was not the sole intellectual who used *The Captive Mind* to emphasize the incompatibility of the Eastern and Western experience as the source of simple-minded Western indignation at the existence of the "devilish" communist system. Dwight MacDonald, a driving force of the CCF and a fervent promoter of Milosz, also emphasized it. In his article for *The New Yorker*, MacDonald argued that while the violence involved in WW II was not necessarily familiar to all Western Europeans, it certainly was alien to "naïve in experience Americans."²⁸⁹ He would refer to his own experience as an American, saying: "Modern history had simply passed us by as though we were some aboriginal tribe placidly living its traditional, idyllic days." MacDonald alluded to the juxtaposition of an American mentality entrenched in Nature and the European spirit immersed in History; a subject which would later become a leitmotif of Milosz's work. Further in his review, MacDonald praised Milosz's book, saying: "Except

²⁸⁷ Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 33.

²⁸⁸ Chiaromonte was not quite right to say that Milosz was a member of the underground movement. Milosz indeed published his volume of poetry in underground press, but he did neither support the ideas nor participate in political or military activities of the underground movement. Milosz condemned the Warsaw Uprising, which was organized by the underground movement. Nicola Chiaromonte, "Intellectuals under the 'System': The Captive Mind," *Partisan Review* 20 (1953): 697–702.

²⁸⁹ Dwight MacDonald, "In the Land of Diamat," *New Yorker* 11/07/1953, 157.

for Hannah Arendt's *Origins of the Totalitarianism*, I know of no study of the totalitarian mentality as subtle and imaginative as this one."²⁹⁰ In a November 1953 letter to Milosz, MacDonald expressed his disappointment with the American audience, which did not lend an ear to Milosz's story. He stated: "I am ashamed as an American that it [*The Captive Mind*] sold so badly over here."²⁹¹

ON THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

"Are Americans *really* stupid?" Milosz was asked when visiting Poland during his diplomatic service in the late 1940s. This question, Milosz later wrote in *The Captive Mind*, revealed the attitude of an average person in the people's democracies toward the West. People in East-Central Europe, Milosz argued, felt betrayed by the postwar peace settlements, and had hard time understanding the geopolitical interests of Western countries. Still, they looked toward the West with "despair mixed with a residue of hope."²⁹² And in the case of the intellectuals, it was even more pronounced, for, as Milosz said: "The Eastern intellectual's attitude toward the West (...) is somewhat like disappointed love."²⁹³ Addressing the Western audience, Milosz expressed his generation's attitude toward the West, saying:

Let us admit (...) that *at this moment* the superiority of the West in potential production, technology, and replacement of human hands by machines (...) is unquestionable. But, the Eastern intellectual asks, what goes on in the heads of the Western masses? Aren't their souls asleep, and when the awakening comes, won't it take the form of Stalinism? Isn't Christianity dying out in the West, and aren't its people bereft of all faith? Isn't there a void in their heads? [...] Well then, what can the West offer

²⁹⁰ MacDonald, "In the Land of Diamat," *New Yorker*, 157.

²⁹¹ In his letter MacDonald gave the number of 1500 copies of *The Captive Mind* sold in the USA. Dwight MacDonald's letter to Milosz 11/25/1953. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 47, folder 672.

²⁹² Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 25.

²⁹³ Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 52.

us? Freedom *from something* is a great deal, yet not enough. It is much less than freedom *for something*.²⁹⁴

One CCF member, Stephen Spender, pushed the discussion over *The Captive Mind* onto a provocative path by taking on the question of problematic Western “freedom.” Spender was an English poet and an editor of *Encounter*, which was one of the CCF magazines. In his 1953 review of Milosz’s book, Spender simply asked: “What the West has to show against all this?” Spender admitted that the scope of the enslavement of the mind must have been dramatically wide in Eastern Europe, since there “Communism is the air one breathes, the food one eats, the subject one writes about and the audience who reads.” Did the West have an ideological shield to defend itself from the communist phenomenon and a different set of values to offer to people in the East? Spender was skeptical of that. He pointed to McCarthyism, to primitive Christianity, and to individualism as tenuous values that the West, the United States in particular, had in the face of this challenge.²⁹⁵

Milosz’s skepticism as to the values of the West was shared by the German philosopher Karl Jaspers, who expressed his opinion in a foreword to Milosz’s book. Jaspers was both a psychiatrist and a philosopher, known for his contribution to German existentialism and critique of totalitarian systems. From the total isolation into which Hitler’s regime had forced him, Jaspers returned in 1945 to a position of intellectual leadership for the younger liberal elements of Germany. His decision to speak publicly about his reception of Milosz came at the prompting by his two friends Hannah Arendt and Jeanne Hersch. Arendt also translated Jaspers’ remarks into English.²⁹⁶ In a May

²⁹⁴ Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 35.

²⁹⁵ Stephen Spender, “The Predatory Jailer,” *New Republic* 25 (1953): 18-19.

²⁹⁶ Karl Jaspers’ letter to Hannah Arendt, 05/22/1953. Hannah Arendt, Karl Jaspers, Lotte Köhler, and Hans Saner, *Hannah Arendt/Karl Jaspers Correspondence, 1926-1969* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992).

1953 letter to Arendt, Jaspers wrote: "I am glad you were satisfied with my foreword for Milosz. [...] I was reluctant at first, but then got caught up in the work and enjoyed it. [...] Milosz writes so concretely and with a psychology that only someone who was there and both had to and was able to work his way out of that experience could develop."²⁹⁷ Although Jaspers' foreword arrived too late to be included in the first edition of *The Captive Mind*, it was immediately published in *The Saturday Review* and translated into Polish in *Kultura*.²⁹⁸ Milosz mentioned in a letter to his friend, Konstanty Jeleński, that Jaspers' wonderful review had raised the prestige of his book.²⁹⁹

Jaspers saw *The Captive Mind* as an outstanding analysis of contemporary human spiritual emptiness, which in the East led to the enslavement of the mind within a totalitarian ideology, but could be equally dangerous to a Western mind. For Jaspers, Milosz's book was a point of departure for a critique of Western complacency with the idea of freedom as a miraculous response to man's spiritual debacle. Jaspers praised Milosz for resisting the temptation to resort to aggressive fanaticism of freedom. Any kind of totalistic ideological message, Jaspers warned, could be harmful. The propaganda of freedom taken to its extreme would work like totalitarianism *a rebours*. Having devoted his 1947 book - *The Question of German Guilt* (1947) – to analyzing his nation's responsibility for its Nazi past, Jaspers was receptive to the personal scope of communist totalitarianism.³⁰⁰ It was his opinion that the West should be more cautious in its often condescending attitude toward the people who had to struggle with moral dilemmas

²⁹⁷ Karl Jaspers' letter to Hannah Arendt, 05/22/1953. Arendt, Jaspers, Köhler, Saner, *Hannah Arendt/Karl Jaspers Correspondence*.

²⁹⁸ Karl Jaspers, "Endurance and Miracle," *Saturday Review* 36 (1953); Karl Jaspers, "O książce Milosza," *Kultura* 6 (1953): 118-129. Jaspers' foreword was also published in the 1953 German and French editions of *The Captive Mind*.

²⁹⁹ Czesław Miłosz's letter to Konstanty A. Jeleński, April 1953. Czesław Miłosz, Barbara Toruńczyk ed., and Konstanty A. Jeleński. *Korespondencja* (Warszawa: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich, 2011), 7.

³⁰⁰ Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961).

under communism. To a Western reader skeptical of Milosz's analysis, Jaspers addressed a provocative question: Are you completely certain that you would stay faithful to your humanity regardless of the circumstances? Certainly, ideological violence in the East should be condemned, Jaspers argued, but the West should stay alert and avoid taking the slippery path of fanaticism of freedom. In *The Captive Mind* Jaspers saw a mirror in which the West could examine itself.

In the early 1950s, a writer could hardly dream of a better commendation than Hannah Arendt's praise on the cover of his book. And such was the case of *The Captive Mind*. Arendt was a German-American political theorist and philosopher who fled in 1941 from Nazi Germany to New York, where she became an active member of its intellectual circles. She gained recognition for her 1951 work *The Origins of Totalitarianism* in which she analyzed the roots of Stalinism and Nazism. Arendt took a serious interest in *The Captive Mind* and in Milosz, whom she first met upon moving from New York to Paris in April 1952. She wrote about this encounter to Jaspers: "She [Jeanne Hersch] got me together with a friend of hers, Milosz, a Polish refugee whom I was eager to meet."³⁰¹ Thanks to the discussions in the Parisian circle of Milosz's friends, Arendt became less worried about her engagement in the Congress. In another letter to Jaspers she wrote: "I saw Francois Bondy and got the impression from Jeanne Hersch, Milosz and him that the Congress for Cultural Freedom is something quite different and very much better here than it is in the States. That was a comfort for me."³⁰² Arendt was concerned that in the USA the CCF had been perceived as a political forum of the fight against communism, rather than a community of intellectuals engaged in a discussion of

³⁰¹ Hannah Arendt's letter to Karl Jaspers, 04/17/1952. Arendt, Jaspers, Köhler, Saner, *Hannah Arendt/Karl Jaspers Correspondence*, 181.

³⁰² *Ibidem*.

the problem of freedom. A year later, Arendt helped promoting the work of her Eastern European friend. “Czeslaw Milosz is in a class by himself” —with these words Arendt commenced a review that ended up as a jacket note for *The Captive Mind*. In her insightful note, Arendt honored Milosz’s inner struggle with communist ideology, underlining that what the poet described was not an individual experience, but rather the drama of a whole generation in the Soviet bloc. She praised the book, saying: “Brilliantly, movingly and with a wealth of psychological detail, it lays before us the whole arsenal of reasons and motives with which men can argue themselves into submission and conformity.”³⁰³ Further on, Arendt discussed Milosz’s sovereign intellectual position, emphasizing that his work did not belong to the genre of literary confession made by former communists. Knowing the pain of establishing intellectual sovereignty for herself, Arendt showed respect to her colleague’s search for intellectual integrity. With a deep understanding of Milosz’s difficult position, Arendt stated that his battle for “freedom with security” was not yet finished. “Because he is a poet,” Arendt said, “he still has to explain it all to himself, reliving his experience, and thus explaining to us what is happening in the darkest part of a dark world - the human mind.”³⁰⁴ Arendt was suggesting that Milosz had to come to terms with his previous ideological affiliation, which made his search for the “third way” even more dramatic.

Milosz’s search for the “third way” fits into a broader intellectual trend, whose aim was to find a path between liberalism and Marxism, especially as these had become incarnated in the Cold War antagonism between American and Soviet imperialisms. In practical scope, that would mean reconciling right-wing and left-wing politics by

³⁰³ Hannah Arendt, Note on *The Captive Mind*, *New Republic*, 06/22/1953.

³⁰⁴ Arendt, Note on *The Captive Mind*, *New Republic*.

advocating a varying synthesis of right-wing economic and left-wing social policies. After WW II, many intellectuals who had gone through a period of fascination with communism ended up disappointed with the Stalinist system. At the same time, they yearned to implement in the West some of the socialist policies which they had admired in the East. Various options of the “third way” were constantly discussed, yet it seemed that the idea of social democracy came closest as a practical solution to the essence of the search. Among the early advocates of democratic socialism defining themselves in opposition to Stalinism were George Orwell and the group of the New York intellectuals around the journals *Partisan Review* and *Dissent*. Hannah Arendt, Albert Camus, George Orwell, Ignazio Silone, and later E.P. Thompson, among others, engaged in the effort to present an alternative to American-style liberalism and Soviet-style communism. One of the political consequences of looking for a way out from the binary power structure was the emergence of the New Left.

The reviewer for *Commonweal* who wrote that *The Captive Mind* would “inspire animosity in a representative of either extreme Stalinism or anti-Stalinism” aptly recognized that Milosz’s account of the communism-seduced minds was also an exploration of an ideological “third way.”³⁰⁵ In his first book published in the West, Milosz not only provided insight into the mental compromises of Polish intellectuals under the communist regime, but also attacked postwar intellectual life in the West for its vulnerability toward the Cold War binary schema. Milosz wrote: “Many people still refuse to believe that there are only two sides, and that the only choice is between absolute conformity to one system or the other.”³⁰⁶ He refused to fully approve of the

³⁰⁵ William P. Clancy, “The Fatal Payment,” *Commonweal* 13 (1953): 328-29.

³⁰⁶ Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, IX.

Western version of freedom, since he was critical of capitalism as a factor in Western democratic systems. Based on his experience of America, Milosz wrote: “In certain Western countries, above all in the United States (...) a new civilization has arisen which is popular, vulgar, perhaps in some respects distasteful to more ‘refined’ people, but which assures its masses a share in the output of its machine production.”³⁰⁷ While Americans could enjoy a relatively high material status, they suffered from spiritual deprivation, Milosz claimed. He felt disgust at the idea that one could be completely satisfied with material advantages. On top of that, Americans did not use their freedom to advance intellectual life, to engage with abstract ideas and moral questions. For them, Milosz suggested, freedom was a pure existence, with no space for reflecting on life’s essence. Milosz’s critical opinion of America had not changed much since the time he wrote about the USA for the official Polish press. His reflections placed him next to other twentieth-century thinkers who worried about the objectification and deracination of humans as the effects of technological progress and mechanization of production.

Many Western intellectuals reacted enthusiastically to Milosz and *The Captive Mind*, because it was a blow to the ideological formula in which they were stuck, and his search for “the third way” reverberated well with contemporary arguments put forward by Hannah Arendt and Albert Camus. In her 1953 essay, “The Ex-Communists,” Arendt ridiculed doctrinaire anti-communism as “communism turned upside down,” and appealed to intellectuals to dissent from any enforced ideological position.³⁰⁸ While Arendt investigated on paper the damage caused by shaping intellectual debate along the ideological binary division, Camus approached the problem of the “third way” both

³⁰⁷ Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 33.

³⁰⁸ Arendt, “The Ex-communists,” *Commonweal*, 03/20/1953.

theoretically and practically. With his 1951 anti-Marxist book, *L'Homme Révolté*, Camus opened the door for the Western critique of Marxism as an ideological foundation for further development of communism and Stalinism. Already in the late 1940s, Camus was searching for an intellectual and political space for “independent leftism.” This made it difficult for him to fit into the Parisian intellectual scene, which after war was gradually leaning toward filo-Stalinist positions.³⁰⁹ Camus and Milosz shared a similar experience with the intellectual French left, which scolded them for taking an anti-Stalinist stance. Milosz published his book just after the famous 1952 debate between Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, which constituted a turning point in French intellectual history, as the latter renounced partly his existentialist philosophy, taking a strong pro-Stalinist position. Sartre even told Camus: “If you do not like either communism, or capitalism, then there is only one place for you - the Galapagos Islands.”³¹⁰ Similarly, *The Captive Mind* met with a hostile reception among the Parisian Stalinist *Mandarins*, who looked at Milosz from the perspective of the communist Polish government—Milosz had betrayed the cause.³¹¹ The French press honored the French edition of *The Captive Mind* with just one review.³¹² Now, besides the extreme right-wing Polish émigrés in London and Polish-Americans, Milosz acquired yet new enemies in the West. It was hard to think that just four years earlier Milosz had been sipping cocktails at the patio of the Polish embassy in Paris with the French apostles of communism Paul Éluard and Louis Aragon.

The discussed reviews have shown that many Western intellectuals pictured Milosz as a “third way” seeker, who, unlike many runaways from the Soviet bloc, did not

³⁰⁹ Tony Judt, *Past imperfect: French intellectuals, 1944-1956* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

³¹⁰ Milosz, Czesław. *Rozmowy polskie*, p. 729.

³¹¹ Milosz wrote about the debate Camus-Sartre in his article “Sartre-Camus,” *Kultura* 1 (1953): 115-17. [signed M.K.]. After Camus’ death, Milosz dedicated him lines in the article “Diariusz paryski,” *Kultura* 3 (1960): 3-27.

³¹² According to Volynska-Bogert, *The Captive Mind* had 18 reviews in Germany, one in Italy and one in Spain. Volynska-Bogert, Zalewski, Czesław Milosz. *An International Bibliography*.

look for redemption by joining doctrinaire anti-communists, but took the bumpy road of rejecting elements of both communist dictatorship and capitalist democracy. Since Milosz experienced the disadvantages of both systems in practice, his critique was certainly valuable. Nevertheless, projecting the “third way” was a risky affair, and Milosz was soon asked to explain what *The Captive Mind* failed to do. Stephen Spender laid the charge out nicely in private correspondence with Milosz, saying:

What you are really saying is that one has to choose between A and B (communism and anti-communism), but one wants to arrive at X. Unfortunately, neither A nor B lead to X, though both may pretend to do so. A and B are not as bad as one another (A let us say, is far worse than B), but nevertheless, any alliance with A against B undermines your moral position. There are certain people who dislike both A and B, just as you do, but their positions become untenable, because they refuse to see that the world is in fact dominated by the conflict between A and B, and whatever solution is arrived at, it will have to be through A and/or B.³¹³

In his letter Spender hit at the heart of what was not only Milosz’s problem, but also that of the Congress for Cultural Freedom—both the liberals and the “third campers” chastised the distorted version of socialism that Stalin had to offer, and disagreed when it came to proposing a counter-idea to communism. The former did not find a “third way” a politically realistic proposition given the Cold War order, and the latter condemned this sort of freedom, whose basic components were consumerism and mechanization, which led to alienation of a man. For Spender, Milosz’s position as a critic of both East and West was not really viable.

Certainly, Milosz could not offer an easy alternative to the two systems; nonetheless, Western intellectuals pictured Milosz as an important writer, who revived for them the question of the political “third way” from the East European standpoint. Milosz’s essential contribution to the debate on ideology was informing the West that the

³¹³ Stephen Spender’s letter to Milosz, 12/18/1953. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 59, folder 810.

East European captive minds would have not necessarily been enamored with what the West had to offer. For people of leftist sensitivity, like Milosz, it was not a sufficiently good option. While for many intellectuals in the East and the West it took the events of 1956, or even the 1968 Prague Spring, to revisit their thinking about communism, Milosz already in the early 1950s was in the vanguard of the system's critics. Although it seemed unrealistic at the time, Milosz's book suggested that the potential collapse of communist dictatorship in East-Central Europe and the arrival of freedom would not miraculously solve all ideological problems, but would instead bring new ones. In a way, Milosz lived through the dilemmas of the 1980s East-Central European dissidents, and struggled with the same questions that Adam Michnik and Vaclav Havel would struggle with four decades later.

Although *The Captive Mind* failed commercially, it had a terrific press and critical success, establishing Milosz firmly in the Western intellectual world. His ideas won the recognition of contemporary leading thinkers.³¹⁴ His book was broadcast by Radio Free Europe.³¹⁵ However, it all came at a cost. Milosz knew that with the book he was risking falling into the rubric of a "political writer." On the one hand, most of the reviewers mentioned the fact that Milosz was a poet, some even recognized that in East-Central Europe it was an occupation that bore a certain social responsibility; therefore, had Milosz accepted communism, he would have been false to his vocation as a poet.³¹⁶ On the other hand, though, the nature of the subject discussed in *The Captive Mind* was

³¹⁴ See Marek Kornat's introduction to Giedroyc, Jerzy, Czeslaw Milosz, Marek Kornat ed.. *Jerzy Giedroyc, Czeslaw Milosz: Listy* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2011).

³¹⁵ In December 1953, Milosz agreed for his work to be read in Free Europe Radio, under a stipulation that it would not be broadcasted to Poland. Certainly, Milosz's family had been in a difficult situation after his flight, and the poet probably wanted to spare them further complications. There might have been other reasons for this decision, which the poet did not reveal in his letter. Milosz's letter to Radio Free Europe, 12/14/1953 Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 52., folder 741.

³¹⁶ Henry Parkes, "The Intelligent Devil," *New Republic* 25 (1953), 18.

inevitably of political rather than literary character, and consequently shed a certain light on its author. Milosz must have understood that his analysis of Polish intellectuals' involvement with communism would be a departure from his natural element of poetry. Yet, what else could the poet have done, speaking an exotic language in France and suffering moral and ideological crisis? Milosz badly wanted to remain in the world of literature, and that required compromising his artistic image.

It could only soothe Milosz to receive praise of his works from a man whom he highly admired and whose advice he had sought in 1949 before deciding to break ties with Poland. This man was Albert Einstein. In mid-1953, Einstein wrote to Milosz about his book:

I have not seen any publication which gives a deeper insight from the psychological standpoint than your book. You have also effectively resisted the temptation to curry favor with the Western reader by idealizing the conditions in the Western countries. Your book will be a contribution to that kind of understanding which is the first condition for the attainment of world-wide peace.³¹⁷

Merely four years earlier, Einstein had been among the good-faith supporters of the philo-communist Peace Conference in New York, which Milosz had attended as a People's Poland diplomat. Although in 1951 Milosz acted against Einstein's advice, choosing exile, the physicist wrote a letter to the American government in support of Milosz's visa application, so that the poet could return to his family. All of Milosz's friends' efforts proved futile. By 1953, both Einstein and Milosz had grown disillusioned and worried as to the plausibility of either the communist or capitalist system.

³¹⁷ Albert Einstein's letter to Milosz, 07/12/1953. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 16., folder 283.

“VOICES OF DISILLUSION”³¹⁸

The Congress’ intellectuals created the image of Milosz in the West via the public debate on *The Captive Mind* and private correspondence, but also through participating in the poet’s fight for an American entrance visa. Immediately after his defection in February 1951, Milosz wrote in a desperate tone to Albert Einstein, T. S. Eliot, and Congressman John Besterman appealing for their help in attaining a visa.³¹⁹ There were many concerns on the part of the American government that put Milosz in a bad light: Why had he not broken with the Polish government during his stay in the United States? How did he manage to leave Poland, when no one else was allowed to do so? Simply put, the U.S. officials suspected Milosz of masquerading as an anti-communist.³²⁰ Additionally, right-wing Polish émigrés in the USA denounced Milosz as a servant of Stalin or a communist agent in the West. A member of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom wrote about this to Milosz in March 1952, saying: "It seems there is a group of Polish émigrés who stood in the way of your obtaining a visa last year, and that this was for political reasons and not because of homosexuality (which I have not heard at all). [...] This is an election year so no one wants to risk sponsoring your entry."³²¹ Last but not least, as Einstein underlined in his letter, Milosz “was not willing to sign any kind of declaration inimical to his country, a declaration which would be used for propaganda purposes.”³²² Consequently, his application for a visa languished, and his case got more complicated, as the McCarran-Walter Act was enacted in 1952 by the

³¹⁸ The title of Milosz’s article in *Problems of Communism* 1 (1956).

³¹⁹ John Besterman’s letter to Czeslaw Milosz, 06/25/1951. Visa dossier. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 181; Czeslaw Milosz’s correspondence with Albert Einstein, Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 16, folder 283; Czeslaw Milosz’s correspondence with T.S.Eliot, Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 16., folder 286.

³²⁰ Walter Waggoner, “Denying Visas to Non-communist Specialists,” *New York Times* 12/09/1951.

³²¹ A letter from American Committee for Cultural Freedom, 03/20/1952. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 5., folder 114.

³²² Albert Einstein’s letter to Czeslaw Milosz, 02/02/1951. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 16, folder 283.

American Congress. The Act was used to bar members, former members, and “fellow-travelers” of communist parties from entry into the United States. This act prevented many prominent individuals from entering the United States, including Julio Cortazar, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Pablo Neruda, Michael Foucault, Dario Fo, and Graham Greene.

While *The Captive Mind* fostered theoretical critiques of the limits of Western freedom, Milosz’s campaign for a visa, with esteemed Western intellectuals involved, brought a practical dimension to the matter of freedom. In a difficult period for Milosz, several Western writers and scholars extended a helping hand to their desperate Polish colleague, striking up friendships and welcoming Milosz to the Western intellectual world. An English writer and a sponsor of the International Pen Club Center for Writers in Exile, Margaret Storm-Jameson, played a key role in lobbying for Milosz’s visa, and more importantly, keeping him sane. Storm-Jameson led the Center that was brought to life within the structures of the Congress by Arthur Koestler in order to provide material and psychological support to intellectual exiles from the Soviet bloc. There is no doubt that Storm-Jameson’s gracious and rich correspondence with Milosz was crucial for relieving his dramatic psychological condition, and for inducing him to intellectual debate by writing for the Western audience.³²³ Just three weeks after Milosz’s flight, Storm-Jameson asked him to share his experience of life under the totalitarian system with a Western reader. She wrote: “When will you begin writing your *Divine Comedy*? Who will write it for us, and for the future, if you don’t? [...] It is what you were born for, it is what you have been tortured for, it is what you have made mistakes for.”³²⁴ At

³²³ Margaret Storm-Jameson’s correspondence. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 30, folder 465-471.

³²⁴ Margaret Storm-Jameson’s letter to Czeslaw Milosz, 02/25/51. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 30, folder 466.

this time, Milosz was still hiding in the Maisons-Laffitte house of *Kultura*, probably in hopes of obtaining an American visa without unnecessary publicity. Storm-Jameson tried to entice Milosz to combat the pressure of waiting by turning his pen to work.

In a March 1951 letter, Storm-Jameson touched on the question that must have come back to haunt not only Milosz, but also his colleagues and political supervisors in Poland. How did the advantages of freedom compare to the high price Milosz decided to pay for it, leaving his country, risking his career and the welfare of his family? Further, Storm-Jameson posed a series of questions: “You know, when you can put into words why you did not want to accept the role of *vedette* [a star] in Warsaw, you will have answered some enormous and persistent questions.[...] Explain, you, when you can, when you have waited long enough, why the instinct to be free is so deep and powerful? And what it demands? And what one desires to be free for?”³²⁵ Upon his defection, the question of freedom constantly bothered Milosz. On one occasion, it was a subject of Milosz’s discussion with Mary McCarthy. McCarthy recollected:

Milosz was absolutely miserable in the early years of his defection in France, and I remember having coffee with him and him trying to make me explain to him - he said, ‘You people, what do you live for? What do you live for?’ and if you say, ‘Well, I live to do my work and see my friends and so on,’ this seemed to him a completely unsatisfactory goal in life. And this is true of many people who have left those countries.³²⁶

In his meeting with McCarthy, Milosz showed an attitude that echoed his critique of the Western version of freedom expressed in *The Captive Mind*. Milosz was disappointed that Western intellectuals took freedom for granted and made so little of it, while their Eastern counterparts yearned for the luxury of freedom. No doubt, the Eastern European

³²⁵ Margaret Storm-Jameson letter to Milosz, 03/21/1951. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 30, folder 466.

³²⁶ William Buckley, “A Conversation with Mary McCarthy,” 1971. In: Mary McCarthy, and Carol W. Gelderman. *Conversations with Mary McCarthy* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 141.

ethos of the *intelligentsia* once again made it hard for Milosz to understand the role of his intellectual colleagues in the West, or rather, to understand their lack of interest in playing such a role. He did not, however, explain what he thought Western intellectuals should live for. While Milosz pondered the question of freedom, Storm-Jameson made a considerable effort to employ reputable intellectuals, such as Albert Einstein and Arthur Koestler, to support Milosz's fight for a visa. In his papers from 1951, Koestler wrote that he had helped a certain "Milosevic," and had exchanged a relevant correspondence with Einstein and Storm-Jameson, but he had little hope as to the outcome of their joined effort.³²⁷ In March 1951, Koestler suggested to Storm-Jameson that he considered Milosz's visa a lost case: "Now we all have an alibi: you, I, Einstein. And it all won't help your friend."³²⁸ The French philosopher Jacques Maritain, who was teaching at Princeton at that time, sent Milosz words of support including the text of a request that he had submitted to the American government asking it to grant Milosz entrance into the United States. Maritain's request read: "I think that when a man makes a stand for freedom, at the cost of great sacrifices, and breaks with a totalitarian government and with his own communist-dominated country for the sake of his convictions, the duty of those who struggle for freedom is to extend a helping hand to him."³²⁹ For two years Milosz lived in France "under the nearly intolerable strain of waiting," receiving letters from several intellectuals, all of a similar content.³³⁰ Albert Einstein wrote to him: "I cannot do much about your case. I am a black sheep myself."³³¹ T.S. Eliot replied, "I do

³²⁷ David Cesarani, *Arthur Koestler: The Homeless Mind* (New York: Free Press, 1999), 99.

³²⁸ Margaret Storm-Jameson's letter to Milosz, 03/09/1951. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 30., folder 466.

³²⁹ Jacques Maritain's letter to Milosz, 02/25/1952. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 42., folder 612.

³³⁰ Margaret Storm-Jameson's letter to Czeslaw Milosz, 06/22/1951. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 30., folder 466.

³³¹ Albert Einstein's letter to Czeslaw Milosz, 02/02/1951. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 16., folder 283.

not know any influential persons in either Washington or London. I cannot intervene.”³³² Milosz felt humiliated and wondered why had he left his country, if people in the West did not understand his position. He wrote in a 1953 unpublished essay: “I am on one boat with the reactionary, and I am aware that he has no ability to pilot the boat. I understand his gestures very well, but he does not grasp mine. He perceives me as a suspicious agent, writer, socialist, Trotskyist, communist, intellectual – and these terms mean more or less the same for him.”³³³ There was no way Milosz could avoid the binary division of the world and he soon bore the consequences of the McCarran-Walter act’s implementation in the USA. Ironically enough, a close Polish homonym to the name of the American politician McCarran is *kara*, which means “punishment.” Having been penalized by the communist Polish government, the right-wing Polish émigrés, and the French “fellow-travelers,” Milosz now faced punishment from the American government.

Eventually, waiting became unbearable. “I decided not to make any further steps in order to obtain that visa,” Milosz wrote to a friend in March 1953.³³⁴ Soon after, in spring 1953, Milosz revealed to his wife the relationship with Jeanne Hersch. Janina Milosz immediately decided to join her husband in France. Since Milosz had received a financial prize for the book he wrote together with his lover Jeanne, he could now, ironically, afford to bring his family to France.³³⁵ On the 1st of July 1953, just after his family’s arrival in France, Milosz withdrew his application for a visa to the United States.³³⁶

³³² T.S. Eliot’s letter to Czeslaw Milosz, 02/15/1951. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 16., folder 286.

³³³ Milosz, *W ciagu ostatnich kilku lat*.

³³⁴ Czeslaw Milosz’s letter to Pearl Kluger 03/19/1953. Visa dossier. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 181.

³³⁵ Jeanne Hersch appeared to step aside for the sake of Milosz’s family reunification. Stanislaw Vincenz’s letters to Czeslaw Milosz from the period 1953-1954. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 65.

³³⁶ Czeslaw Milosz’s letter to the American Embassy in Paris, 07/01/1953. Visa dossier. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 181.

At the same time as the Congress for Cultural Freedom shaped Milosz's image in the West, a new tiny audience in *Kultura* helped reorient Milosz's career path. Certainly, Milosz's dialogue with his fellow Polish émigrés Konstanty Jelenski and Witold Gombrowicz proved essential for the construction of Milosz's literary image for *Kultura* readers. Yet, first and foremost, it genuinely influenced the formation of Milosz's literary self. Milosz met Jelenski in Paris, where Jelenski worked as a head of the East European division of the CCF, and was an active writer in Polish émigré circles, especially in *Kultura*. Gombrowicz, in turn, was a Polish dramatist and novelist, who, upon his 1939 emigration to Argentina, sustained contact with Polish culture by publishing in *Kultura*. Gombrowicz's works were banned and consequently unknown in People's Poland. Only posthumously did he gain the reputation of a genius Polish writer. Jelenski and Gombrowicz remained in dialogue with Milosz in a time when the poet, torn between moral duties, financial problems, and ideological doubts, seemed to be drifting away from poetry.

While the success of *The Captive Mind* in the West and the lack of his poetry in translation made it difficult for Milosz to resist the label of a political writer, the debates with Jelenski and Gombrowicz pushed Milosz to distance himself from politics and get back to his natural element: the realm of poetry. In 1953, a polemic took place between Gombrowicz and Milosz in the pages of *Kultura*, in which Gombrowicz scolded Milosz for writing with a particular vulnerability toward historicism, and suggested that he take a more independent literary path. Acknowledging the value of *The Captive Mind*, Gombrowicz argued that the poet allowed "History" to dictate not only the themes for his

work, but also his position, that of “a man who fell down.”³³⁷ Milosz’s response in the next issue of *Kultura* left no doubt that he had deeply pondered Gombrowicz’s questions. Milosz asked rhetorically: “For what do I have in common with *The Captive Mind* or with the novel [*La prise du pouvoir*], which is in fact to a great extent political? They are truly ready to label me as an expert in communism. Help! I am a poet.”³³⁸ At the same time, though, Milosz insisted that it was important to reflect on the ideological allure of historical determinism as an explanation of twentieth century history. Gombrowicz replied to that in his next article, saying: “(...) I tell Milosz that one has to be careful and not allow life to turn into politics under his pen.”³³⁹ Since Milosz had earlier expressed his fear of alienation from current intellectual debate in case he decided to abandon “History” as a compass for his writing, Gombrowicz scolded his colleague for that attitude:

It is an indecent fear, since it means not only giving up eminence, but also one’s truth. [...] The popularity that one acquires at the service of a reader and the trends of an epoch means no more than just a broad circulation – and nothing, nothing more. Only the one who has separated oneself from other people and come into being as a separate human, and then acquires two, three, ten followers, brothers, only he has maneuvered himself out of loneliness within the limits for art allowable. No, Milosz: no history will replace your own conscience, maturity, depth; nothing will absolve you of yourself. If you personally are important, then even if you inhabited the most conservative place on the earth, your testimony about life will be important; but no historical mangle can wring meaningful words out of immature people.³⁴⁰

Soon after Gombrowicz’s polemic with Milosz, Konstanty Jelenski published the article “A Poet and History,” in which he discussed the conflict between Milosz’s intellectual engagement in current problems of the epoch and his true vocation—

³³⁷ Witold Gombrowicz, “Fragmenty z dziennika,” *Kultura* 9 (1953): 45-57.

³³⁸ Czesław Miłosz, “Gombrowiczowi,” *Kultura* 10 (1953): 11-14.

³³⁹ Witold Gombrowicz, “Fragmenty z dziennika,” *Kultura* 1 (1954): 35-37.

³⁴⁰ Witold Gombrowicz, “Fragmenty z dziennika,” *Kultura* 1 (1954): 35-37.

composing poetry.³⁴¹ Similarly to Gombrowicz, Jelenski suggested that Milosz should not have allowed his current intellectual duties to make him lose sight of his poetry. In his unpublished essays from this period, Milosz often reflected on his obligations, noting: “I try to find out, what are the duties of a writer, who composes in Polish in the year 1953.”³⁴² Having read Milosz’s articles, Jelenski knew that Milosz had a sense of duty toward Polish literature, poetry in particular.³⁴³ Responding to this concern, Jelenski wrote in his article: “Milosz is not a free poet. He is burdened with a sense of responsibility not only for his own nature, but also for social order, for people, for ‘history.’”³⁴⁴ Jelenski sensed that Milosz was trapped in “the house of history”; nevertheless, he presented Milosz to the readers as a poet, “an authentic poet.” In 1953, opening his dialogue with Milosz in correspondence, Jelenski clearly expressed his opinion about the hierarchy of Milosz’s literary engagements. He wrote to Milosz: “You are a quite unusual literary phenomenon: one of the leading contemporary lyric poets writes a philosophical essay, *The Captive Mind*, and a novel [*La prise du pouvoir*] of which he does not need to be ashamed!”³⁴⁵ Their dialogue would continue over the span of the next three decades, and Jelenski would become, as Milosz put it, “his best reader.”

In the light of the above dialogue, I argue that while some of *Kultura*’s collaborators had genuinely contributed to the shaping of Milosz’s literary identity, in general *Kultura* strived to create Milosz’s public image along its own Cold War interests. In the initial period after his defection, Milosz himself admitted that *Kultura* helped

³⁴¹ Konstanty Jelenski, “Poeta I historia,” *Kultura* 1 (1954): 179-185.

³⁴² Czesław Milosz, *Na rynku mojego malego francuskiego miasteczka*. (Unpublished essay), 1950s. Czesław Milosz Papers; Box 119., folder 1816.

³⁴³ An example of that was Milosz’s polemic with Gombrowicz on the role of poetry and poets, which took place on the pages of *Kultura*. Witold Gombrowicz, “Przeciw poetom,” *Kultura* 10 (1952): 3-11; Czesław Milosz, “List do Gombrowicza,” *Kultura* 11 (1952): 119-124.

³⁴⁴ Jelenski, “Poeta I historia.”

³⁴⁵ Konstanty Jelenski’s letter to Milosz, 09/22/53. Czesław Milosz Papers; Box 31, folder 476.

rescue his life and sanity. The editor-in-chief, Jerzy Giedroyc, and two of his associates, Jozef Czapski and Konstanty Jelenski, facilitated Milosz's entrance on the CCF stage. Czapski, a Polish émigré writer and painter, suggested to Milosz the idea of "ketman," which was essential for conceptualizing *The Captive Mind*. This ancient Persian term introduced to Milosz by Czapski was first used by Arthur Gobineau in his book *Religions and Philosophies of Central Asia*. It stood for the act of paying lip service to authority while concealing personal opposition. *Kultura* defended Milosz's good name in the face of attacks from Polish London, and granted Milosz its columns so that he could express his views and publish his poems, old and new. Although only selected echelons in People's Poland had access to *Kultura*, writing in Polish for Polish readers with a hope of reaching those in his homeland made the transition period a bit smoother for Milosz. Nonetheless, Milosz's first and only shelter in exile started to unnerve him as he felt uneasy being affiliated with an émigré monthly, and judged for his adherence to the political stance of *Kultura*. It has been mentioned that Giedroyc was a real *homo politicus*, and pressed Milosz for political pieces, hoping to take advantage of his prestige to propel the political line of *Kultura*. As a historian and editor of letters between Giedroyc and Milosz, Marek Kornat, rightly proposes, Milosz was interested in *Kultura* as the émigré literary monthly, not as a political platform. In 1955, four years after his dramatic flight, Milosz found it proper to distance himself from the politics of *Kultura*. In his open letter to Giedroyc, Milosz in fact addressed his readers, informing them that he had published in the monthly, but that he had never created its political line, and he had not fully approved of the views promoted by *Kultura*. Distancing himself from *Kultura* was a part of the process in which Milosz had gradually abandoned his previous

intellectual affiliations, fighting against the label of a political writer in hopes of constructing his own image as a poet. In the letter to Giedroyc, Milosz explained his position, saying:

Perhaps, the most important experience of every writer is to have masks put on him by public opinion, one after another, until he looks in the mirror in astonishment not recognizing his face. [...] To live, I think, means to strive that our face peep out under the plaster cheeks and noses. I am afraid that by concealing the truth about my humble role in *Kultura*, I would work for a plaster nose – who knows, maybe a very nice one, but not mine.³⁴⁶

Shortly after Milosz politely rejected a political affiliation with Giedroyc's monthly, he realized that *Kultura* was not the only group that attempted to endow him with a plaster nose. The Congress for Cultural Freedom had not forgotten about its 1951 poster child, and decided it was time to drill more out of Milosz's potential.

Since Milosz's arrival in the West, the CCF had certainly evolved, and when the initial enthusiasm upon its formation calmed down, some intellectuals, Milosz included, started to worry about their affiliation with the Congress, the sources of its financing, and the balance between an intellectual debate and sheer politics. Arendt's words from her 1955 letter to Karl Jaspers about the "odor of luxury" at the CCF meeting in Milan seemed representative of the problem. Arendt also commented on the intellectual atmosphere in the CCF: "I met Milosz yesterday; he is a bright spot. And some of the Americans you don't know, like Dwight McDonald, who in his total *naivete* is smarter than all the literati put together. Lasky [is] also better than some others. The French are the most degenerate."³⁴⁷ The 1955 CCF's meeting in Milan opened the discussion of "the end of ideology" —a thesis first put forward by the influential sociologist Edward Shils

³⁴⁶ Czeslaw Milosz, "A letter to the editor," *Kultura* 6 (1955), 157.

³⁴⁷ Hannah Arendt's letter to Karl Jaspers, 09/13/1955. Arendt, Jaspers, Köhler, Saner, *Hannah Arendt/Karl Jaspers Correspondence*.

and later developed by Daniel Bell. At the root of the matter lay Shils' notion that in the aftermath of World War II and the Cold War, both the right and the left had been equally discredited, and an exhaustion of political ideas had taken place in the West.³⁴⁸ Indeed, at this time, changes taking place in the world, especially in the USSR after the death of Stalin, challenged the CCF to look for fresh intellectual and political means for its operation. On the other hand, the CCF had little space for maneuvering, since it was stuck in the stagnant binary system.

The fact that Milosz was gradually growing tired of his political writer image was not necessarily clear to his CCF patrons, for whom Milosz was an important asset, especially since he proved with *The Captive Mind* to be capable of more than just serving as a symbol of intellectual defiance to communist totalitarianism. Because the CCF's financial support had been crucial for Milosz's writing and the welfare of his family, he could not simply extricate himself from the CCF by refusing to write for their periodicals or attend meetings. To be a Polish poet in the West was a lifestyle that would not allow one to feed his family. Mary McCarthy recollected that coming to the 1955 Congress in Milan, Milosz had cashed in his first-class ticket and took a coach down from Paris, sitting up all night. Compromising his independence, Milosz nonetheless yearned for freedom in his new literary projects, and explored intellectual paths devoid of political underpinning. That, however, worked only to a point, and, as the correspondence between Milosz and the Congress shows, the CCF soon started asking Milosz to cover his tab, pushing more and more aggressive requests over time.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁸ Edward Shils, "The End of Ideology," *Encounter* 26 (1955): 52-58.

³⁴⁹ Archive of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, Special Collections, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago.

The problems with the Congress abusing Milosz's intellectual freedom started with the 1952 translation of *The Captive Mind* into French, in which the translator, Andre Prudhommeaux, added multiple "clarifications," which Milosz found to be of a doctrinaire anti-communist character. One of the CCF's leaders and editor in chief of *Preuves*, Francois Bondy, mediated this conflict, reminding Milosz that it was thanks to Prudhommeaux's work that Milosz became well-known in France. Milosz replied, criticizing Bondy's flippant attitude toward the distortions committed by the translator. Another instance in which Milosz had to defend himself from the political voraciousness of the Congress came in 1957, when Melvin Lasky, one of the CCF's founders, asked Milosz to write a revisionist essay to *The Captive Mind*. What kind of reconsiderations did Lasky have in mind? Lasky supplied Milosz with a "tempting plan" of how he was supposed to update the message of his book so that it would better suit the current political needs of the Congress. Upon meeting with Milosz to discuss this project, Lasky wrote a letter, in which he assured Milosz that the Congress did not desire to "fit your [Milosz's] thinking into some [...] preconceived thesis."³⁵⁰ Milosz never wrote the requested essay.

Two years later, in the fall of 1959, one of the CCF periodicals, the Austrian *Forum*, published a distorted translation of Milosz's 1957 lecture delivered at the Free Europe University; and no one even bothered to ask Milosz's permission. Because of poor translation and omissions, the text conveyed a message opposite to Milosz's original lecture. As if that was not enough, the Congress distributed this text in German at the 1959 Communist Youth Festival in Vienna, which created the impression that Milosz had

³⁵⁰ Melvin Lasky's letter to Milosz, 11/15/1957. Archive of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, Special Collections, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. International Association for Cultural Freedom; series I, box 11, f. 5.

specifically desired to address the communist youth. In this situation, Milosz directed his rage to the very head of the CCF, John Hunt, in the following words: “The Congress is responsible for damage done by one of its publications. I doubt whether such things should be tolerated as they are in obvious contradiction with freedom of expression.”³⁵¹ In correspondence pertaining to this event, Milosz compared the CCF edits of his text to the work of a commissar behind the Iron Curtain, and put forward a bitter conclusion: “You did great damage to my name through changing my text written with precision, and without any blaring adjectives able to wound human feelings, into a routine cold war article.”³⁵² Ironically, Milosz was again fighting against a suppression of his intellectual and artistic freedom. It seemed as if he had now been living through communism *à rebours*.

In her book, Scott-Smith discusses the complex relations between power and intellectuals within the CCF, and argues that although the Congress meant to defend the traditional autonomy of critical intellectuals who were endangered with the political conformism of the Cold War, it in fact used intellectuals for the purpose of Cold War politics, and attempted to constrict intellectual freedom by monopolizing the idea of freedom.³⁵³ My analysis of Milosz’s career supports Scott-Smith’s thesis, revealing how at the end of the 1950s Milosz faced problems similar to those from which he had run away in 1951. Certainly, there could be no direct comparison between the two instances, since this time Milosz was not at risk of physical coercion; nonetheless, he had to defend

³⁵¹ Czeslaw Milosz’s letter to John Hunt, 09/25/1959. Archive of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, Special Collections, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago; series II, box 223, f. 2.

³⁵² Czeslaw Milosz’s letter to John Hunt, 09/25/1959. Archive of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, Special Collections, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago; series II, box 223, f. 2.

³⁵³ Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, 13.

his intellectual freedom from a political violation within the structures of, ironically, the Congress for Cultural Freedom.³⁵⁴

TOWARD THE GARDEN OF POETRY

“Possibly, this garden fosters poetry,” Milosz wrote to his friends, Aniela and Jan Ulatowscy, in August 1957, upon moving with his family to a house in Montgeron, fourteen miles from Paris.³⁵⁵ Since his family’s arrival in France in the summer of 1953, Milosz had lived in Brie-Comte-Robert, a commune distant from the Parisian CCF headquarters. That enabled him to get closer to the nucleus of his writing—poetry. In the initial and painful period of his exile, and when working within the structures of the CCF, Milosz did not compose many poems. Therefore, a friend cheered Milosz’s new poems in a May 1956 letter, saying: “I am glad you are deep in poetry, you should not be an exile from poetry as well as from Poland.”³⁵⁶ Milosz had learned a lesson from both the stormy discussion over *The Captive Mind*, and from a more intimate debate over his writing in the *Kultura* circle, and moved to new literary projects, which constituted a clear departure from previously discussed themes. The 1955 novel *Dolina Issy* [*The Issa Valley*] was reminiscent of Milosz’s childhood in rural Lithuania at the turn of the twentieth century. *The Issa Valley* was the tale of a boy’s initiation into the world of Eros and Thanatos at a time when the adults were involved in a clash of Lithuanian and Polish national sentiments. Since in this poetic novel written in Polish Milosz operated with highly

³⁵⁴ My discussion of Milosz’s relations with the CCF benefited from Olga Glondys’ unpublished essay, “Kongres Wolności Kultury i wolność Czesława Miłosza: refleksja o zaangażowaniu i drodze do Prawdy w dobie Zimnej Wojny.” Courtesy of Professor Marek Zaleski, Polish Academy of Science, Warsaw.

³⁵⁵ From 1953 to 1957 the Miloszes lived in Brie-Comte-Robert, approximately 20 miles from Paris. Czesław Miłosz’s letter to Aniela and Jan Ulatowscy, 08/29//1957. The Archives of Polish Emigration, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Torun, Poland. Collection uncataloged.

³⁵⁶ Margaret Storm-Jameson’s letter to Milosz, 05/29/56. Czesław Miłosz Papers; Box 30, f. 468.

sensual imagery, finding a welcoming space among his memories, *The Issa Valley* catalyzed Milosz's return to composing verses. In a poem written a year later, *Traktat poetycki* [*The Treatise on Poetry*], Milosz posed a question about the duties of a Polish writer. In this forty-page work, Milosz joined an insightful analysis of the socio-political situation of Poland at the beginning of the twentieth century with an examination of intellectual and poetic trends of that time. *The Treatise on Poetry* revealed Milosz's poetics through a philosophical reflection on freedom, the sense of history, and the relation between culture and nature. Consequently, while *The Treatise* was characterized by the poet's ironic distance, it posed serious questions about human fate and one's moral choices against the backdrop of recent Polish history.

Milosz's 1959 book, *Rodzinna Europa* [*Native Land. A Search for Self-Definition*] in turn, was a collection of essays in Polish, a sort of journey into his childhood and youth. In this quasi-autobiography, Milosz discussed how turbulent historical events and ideological currents had shaped his moral and intellectual self. He reminisced with nostalgia about his heterogeneous Lithuanian homeland, his travels to Western Europe, his first intellectual and erotic fascinations. At the time when the events of WW II put an end to Milosz's youth, he grappled with ideologies that had been shaping the history of his region: nationalism, communism, and national socialism. In this book, Milosz showed that although he had been pushed out of the orbit of his native land, he was to remain irrevocably Eastern European in his heart. Both *The Issa Valley* and *Native Land* were published in Polish, by *Kultura*. Despite political tensions in their relations, the editor-in-chief of *Kultura*, Giedroyc, was fully aware of Milosz's literary

eminence, and readily promoted his works.³⁵⁷ The reception in Polish émigré circles of the three works: *The Issa Valley*, *The Treatise on Poetry*, and *Native Land*, was far less spectacular than that of *The Captive Mind*.³⁵⁸ Even though Milosz was still earning money by publishing articles addressed to a Western audience in the CCF periodicals, the new books proved that he hoped to find Polish readers in the West, presumably among the *Kultura* writers and subscribers. In secrecy, he dreamed about reaching readers in Poland.

What kind of response from Poland could he have been hoping for? The binary Cold War order might have held Milosz an intellectual captive, but the world had not stood still since the poet had left Poland in 1951. Three years after Stalin's death, in March 1956, his successor Nikita Krushchev denounced Stalinist crimes in a famous "Secret Speech," which shook not only the Soviet bloc, but also public opinion throughout the world. The ensuing Soviet politics of "the Thaw" liberalized the political regime within the USSR and in the satellite countries, leaving hardly any sector of life unaffected. The loosening of the totalitarian framework gave way to hopes that far exceeded the regime's willingness for concessions, with the 1956 Hungarian Uprising being the turning point. Besides affecting the socio-political situation, "the Thaw" had also influenced cultural life behind the Iron Curtain, allowing, among other things, a more lenient publishing policy. It took the death of the leader of the Soviet empire to make many émigré writers, Milosz among them, dream about having their works published in their native lands.

³⁵⁷ A very few new poems that Milosz had composed after his defection made its way to the 1953 collection *Swiatlo dzienne* [Daylight], and were placed next to Milosz's poems from the previous 15 years.

³⁵⁸ According to Volynska-Bogert and Zaleski, these books had not too many reviews upon publication: 4 for *Swiatlo dzienne*, 9 for *Dolina Issy*, 4 for *Rodzinna Europa*, 5 for *Traktat poetycki*. In 1958, Milosz published *Kontynenty* [The Continents], which was a collection of essays that had been previously published in *Kultura*. Volynska-Bogert, Zaleski, *Czeslaw Milosz: An International Bibliography*.

“The time has come to start [...] mending the reprehensible politics of chopping off from the live body of our literature its organic limbs” —the chief of a major Polish publishing house, Henryk Vogler, wrote to Milosz, unfurling for the poet a tempting vision of attentive Polish readers.³⁵⁹ In his December 1956 letter, Vogler offered to publish Milosz’s works in the Wydawnictwo Literackie [Literary Publishing House]. Although Milosz was hesitant about the moral aspect of this cooperation at first, he eventually signed a contract with the Wydawnictwo, and for a few months lived the excitement of reaching Polish readers beyond the tiny group who thus far had had access to smuggled issues of *Kultura*.³⁶⁰ In 1957, most of the serious Polish periodicals published at least one review of Milosz’s work, free of any political scolding.³⁶¹ Yet the political atmosphere changed again, and barely had Poles taken a deep breath of Western air, when the window onto Europe was forcibly shut down. In April 1958, Vogler informed Milosz that publishing his two volumes was not an option any more.³⁶²

It is very difficult to assess the scope of Milosz’s presence for his Polish audience in the decades following his 1951 exile. My research shows that a very small group of his readers had access to the 1945 poetry volume *Rescue*. Certainly, high governmental echelons, especially in the department of culture, would have come across Milosz’s publications when browsing the issues of *Kultura* in search of information about intellectual life in the West. Over time, with slow liberalization of the censorship and

³⁵⁹ Henryk Vogler’s letter to Czeslaw Milosz, 12/14/1956. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 69, folder 957. Similarly, Jerzy Andrzejewski invited Milosz to publish his works in a new Polish periodical *Europe*. This new publishing enterprise was clearly a product of the 1956 events in Poland. Jerzy Andrzejewski used to be Milosz’s friend in the war-time Warsaw. Andrzejewski served Milosz as a prototype for Alpha protagonist in *The Captive Mind*. Jerzy Andrzejewski’s letter to Milosz, 10/18/1957. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 5, folder 119.

³⁶¹ Volynska-Bogert, Zalewski, *Czeslaw Milosz: An International Bibliography*.

³⁶² Henryk Vogler’s letter to Czeslaw Milosz, 04/29/1958. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 69, folder 957. Milosz wrote about the censorship in Poland and about publishing strategy of Polish publishing houses in “List do polskich komunistow” [A letter to Polish communists], *Kultura* 11 (1960): 97-100.

border control, a slightly larger number of people could have access to *Kultura* or, in the 1970s, even to illegal copies of Milosz's books. Sabina Sebyla, a relative of the Polish writer Wladyslaw Sebyla, wrote about Milosz in a 1956 letter to a friend who lived in the West:

They talk a lot and variously about [Milosz] in the country. As far as his ideological-political position causes divergent opinions, the opinion on him as a poet is uniform. He is considered to be a great writer. How many people know his poems by heart! [...] A great poetry remains, but political stances and its valuation undergo constant affiliations. They know about his books of prose, but they are almost unattainable.³⁶³

Two years later, Miron Bialoszewski, a young Polish poet whom Milosz had promoted in the West, wrote to Milosz: "People here, the critics, the editing houses are very susceptible to your evaluations."³⁶⁴ Similarly, Milosz's friends, Halina and Tadeusz Byrscy, said in 1958: "All the smart people here appreciate you, and there is an agreement that you spearhead Polish literature."³⁶⁵ The sources reflect that among very narrow intelligentsia circles, the memory of Milosz and his work was alive despite the cultural persecutions of the communist government.

While the highly charged situation of the year 1956 was special for Milosz's Polish readers, since it allowed them to read some of his recent writing, it also constituted a breakthrough for the poet. In 1956, before he was able fully to embrace his newly apolitical stance, Milosz yielded to the allure of politics on two occasions. First, upon Giedroyc's request, Milosz addressed his compatriots in an appeal concerning the 1957 elections in Poland.³⁶⁶ Second, also in 1956, Milosz wrote "An Open letter to Pablo Picasso," in which he brought up the question of intellectuals' moral responsibility for

³⁶³ Sabina Sebyla's letter to Milosz, 11/07/1956. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 58, folder 795.

³⁶⁴ Miron Bialoszewski's letter to Milosz, 04/30/1958. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 8, folder 166.

³⁶⁵ Tadeusz Byrski's letter to Milosz, 05/20/1958. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 10, folder 202.

³⁶⁶ In 1957, this letter was broadcasted by the BBC, and published in several Polish newspapers.

supporting communism. He addressed Picasso in a critical tone, saying: "If your support helped the terror, your indignation would also have mattered."³⁶⁷ With the exception of these cases, it was clear that from the mid-1950s Milosz looked for a way out from his quasi-political affiliations. Since he wanted to free himself from the inconvenient patronage of the CCF, in 1959 Milosz applied to the American New Land Foundation for a one-year stipend of three thousand dollars, which would allow him to sustain a literary dialogue with his Polish readers, including those living in People's Poland. "In spite of the success of my other books," Milosz wrote, "there is no doubt that I am first of all a poet."³⁶⁸ He mentioned innumerable quotations of his work in Polish domestic periodicals after 1957, and having his pre-war poems placed in school textbooks, as well as reaching Poles via the "widely-read" articles published in *Kultura*. Was this just a marketing strategy or a direct reflection of Milosz's unwavering hope in the possibility of sustaining a meaningful dialogue with Polish readers from his French exile? That question would remain unanswered, since in 1960 Milosz accepted a year-long visiting professorship at the University of California at Berkeley, where he moved with his family and stayed not for a year, but for the next forty years.

Milosz symbolically bade farewell to his intellectual career in France in a 1960 letter to Ignazio Silone, which echoed his letter to *Kultura* from five years before. Expressing his gratitude toward the Congress, Milosz emphasized that he had never formally become its member and had never been responsible for its political trajectory.

³⁶⁷ Judt, *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals*, 275.

³⁶⁸ Czeslaw Milosz's letter to the New Land Foundation, 1959. The New Land Foundation granted Milosz a three year fellowship of \$ 3.000 per year. Since he had meanwhile accepted the offer to teach at the UC Berkeley, Milosz asked the New Land Foundation to support the Polish writer Aleksander Wat instead. A letter to Milosz from the New Land Foundation, 04/10/1959, Milosz's letter to the New Land Foundation, 1960. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 47, folder 668.

As if turning his head back to glance one last time at the decade spent in Europe before leaving for America, Milosz admitted to his Italian friend:

I do not consider myself a 'Western' writer – though after I published *The Captive Mind* I could have become one, profiting from 'success and esteem.' I have rejected several proposals from various sources to write in the quality of a Soviet expert, as that is not my business. I have been repaid for clinging to my native tongue with the reception in Poland.³⁶⁹

While bidding farewell to the European continent, Milosz kept in mind the voices of his Polish readers, which had reached him in 1956, and hoped that at some point he would have the chance to engage with them in a renewed dialogue.

Milosz's dialogue with his audiences in the 1950s brought to the surface the two instincts that were in tension within Milosz. On the one hand, Milosz was an intellectual who had always been sensitive to social discontents, and found it difficult to remain silent in the face of pressing socio-political problems. On the other hand, he knew well that this kind of engagement took away from his poetry, both literally, in terms of time and mental space devoted to writing, and symbolically, distancing him from his natural element. Within the intellectual framework of the Cold War, Milosz's audience took advantage of his temporary poetic crisis, and hauled him into ideological wars, a fate that also happened to other contemporary writers. Milosz found it wrong to have been placed under the category of a "political writer," but he realized that it was the only category available for him in order to exist for the Western reader.

During the 1950s, when Milosz remained in a dialogue with his audiences, he was in fact a subject of four image campaigns, each of which served the Cold War political goals of these audiences. Picturing Milosz as a traitor, his literary colleagues in People's Poland won favors with the regime by stigmatizing Milosz as a communist renegade. The

³⁶⁹ Czeslaw Milosz's letter to Ignazio Silone, 1960. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 58, folder 799.

Kultura circle saw Milosz as an asset in its politics toward the Congress, People's Poland and Polish London; and while allowing Milosz artistic freedom in its pages, it nevertheless pushed him into becoming a political figure. The Congress for Cultural Freedom took a lost Polish poet and made him into a political tribune, exploiting his texts while disregarding Milosz's protests. Employing the rhetoric *pars pro toto*, Polish London turned its hatred of the Polish communist regime toward Milosz, and pictured him simply as a servant of communism, disinheriting him completely from the realm of Polish literature. Certainly, within these groups there were people who were genuinely interested in Milosz's fate as a poet, rather than in his political usefulness. A Polish poet, Rozewicz, praised Milosz's verses in his letters from Warsaw; Arendt understood all too well Milosz's desire for intellectual independence within the CCF; a *Kultura*'s collaborator, Jelenski, did not overlook Milosz as a poet; and a journalist from Polish London, Michal Chmielowiec, wrote apologies for the 1951 slanderous campaign.³⁷⁰

No doubt, the patronage of *Kultura* and the Congress for Cultural Freedom saved Milosz's career, and even his life, but it soon turned out to be a poisoned fruit. For Milosz, the formula of interacting with his audience in the character of a "political writer" may have been helpful to survive the initial crisis of exile, but was not a viable permanent option. Paradoxically, making Milosz into a star, the Congress' audience violated him, since it valued most the work which he thought to reflect his authentic artistic self the least. His "rescue" came from a tiny group of readers, such as Gombrowicz and Jelenski, who sensed the accidental character of Milosz's current literary works, and understood his urge to shed the "political writer" moniker. Eventually,

³⁷⁰ Michal Chmielowiec's letter to Czeslaw Milosz, 07/30/51. Chmielowiec was a literary critic and an editor of *Wiadomosci*. In 1951, Chmielowiec wrote a nasty article on Milosz's exile, "Powitanie poety," *Zycie* (London) 29 (1951), 4. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 69, folder 942.

Milosz left the circle of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, but he remained anchored at the port of *Kultura*, which would be his main, if not the sole, venue for a dialogue with Polish readers in the next decade. In this way, Milosz responded to those readers who suggested that he establish a more distant horizon for his writing. His decision was a far echo of Sabina Sebyla's words: "A great poetry remains, but political stances and its valuation undergo constant affiliations."³⁷¹

³⁷¹ Sabina Sebyla's letter to Milosz, 11/07/1956. Czeslaw Milosz Papers; Box 58, folder 795.

CHAPTER 3

Beyond Nationalism:

Milosz in a Dialogue with East Central European Intellectuals

One who reads in Polish and entertains simultaneously the voices of many epochs and many generations can't be but a keeper of the myths he was taught. (...) He can't, since he is in motion, and the past changes depending on the point in time from which we approach it. It is like a traveler riding along a mountain range who sees the same peak from a different perspective.³⁷²

“I feel here as if I were a cow which has joined a ballet” – such were the opening words of one of the first letters Milosz sent from California to his friends at the *Kultura* House in Maisons-Laffitte.³⁷³ Heading to America on October 9, 1960, Milosz not only left behind his Parisian friends and family house in Montgeron, but also distanced himself even more from his physical homeland and the realm of European culture. “Besides, it is a wild feeling,” Milosz reported to his Polish friends, “to leave Paris after breakfast, be in San Francisco the same night, and give a lecture the next day.”³⁷⁴ After a few months, when Milosz settled down comfortably with his family in Berkeley, he started appreciating the ease of being an immigrant in a country of immigrants. He noted, “What is pleasant here is shedding the skin of a refugee, which I have worn for so long.”³⁷⁵ The university campus at Berkeley, where Milosz taught as a professor in the Slavic Department, sometimes even reminded him of Vilnius and of the Stefan Batory University.³⁷⁶ But when the initial excitement involved in coming to California had evaporated, Milosz started to experience the bitterness of his new existence, with solitude

³⁷² Czesław Miłosz, “Prywatne obowiązki wobec literatury polskiej,” *Kultura* 10 (1969): 3-28.

³⁷³ Czesław Miłosz's letter to Jerzy Giedroyc, 10/12/1960. Giedroyc, Jerzy, and Miłosz, Czesław, ed. Marek Kornat, *Listy 1952-1963* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2008).

³⁷⁴ Czesław Miłosz's letter to Jerzy Giedroyc, 11/02/1960. Giedroyc, Miłosz, Kornat, *Listy*.

³⁷⁵ Czesław Miłosz's letter to Jerzy Giedroyc, 12/05/1960. Giedroyc, Miłosz, Kornat, *Listy*.

³⁷⁶ Czesław Miłosz's letter to Jerzy Giedroyc, 12/03/1961. Giedroyc, Miłosz, Kornat, *Listy*.

and intellectual alienation accompanying him like shadows. He did not shy away from confessing his emotional distress to Giedroyc, even though their relationship had been complicated and harsh back in Paris. Milosz wrote to the editor of *Kultura* in April 1962, saying: “I regret that we can’t go together for a walk in the forest and talk. Sometimes I feel very lonely here, but I manage.”³⁷⁷ For Milosz, California meant yet again exile and solitude.

With his friends in Paris and his intellectual connections strained, Milosz said he felt overwhelmed by his new life in America, and therefore started looking for a point of reference. He had already experienced something similar in the early 1950s in France. Back then, Milosz had followed Stanislaw Vincenz’s advice and turned to his Lithuanian memories in order to feel at peace with himself. Vincenz, who was himself an exile from Subcarpathian Ukraine, told Milosz of his beloved region, inhabited by Ukrainians, Jews and Poles, which helped Milosz to discover the meaning of the world “homeland.” Milosz’s next books, pertaining to the question of “homeland,” *The Issa Valley* (1955) and *Native Realm* (1959), were the fruits of conversations with “a zaddik for people of different nationalities,” as Milosz once called Vincenz.³⁷⁸ Ten years later, in California, Milosz struggled with the notions of homeland and national belonging as issues critical for his individual identity, but also for his intellectual duties as an émigré writer composing in Polish.

Looking closely at Milosz’s relation with his fellow East-Central European exiles in the period 1960-1988, I argue that this audience played a decisive role in Milosz’s

³⁷⁷ Czeslaw Milosz’s letter to Jerzy Giedroyc, 04/1962. Giedroyc, Milosz, Kornat, *Listy*.

³⁷⁸ Czeslaw Milosz’s letter to Tomas Venclova, in: Tomas Venclova, Czeslaw Milosz, and Tomas Venclova, *Vilnius: A Personal History* (Riverdale-on-Hudson, N.Y: Sheep Meadow Press, 2009). Zaddik is a righteous and saintly person by Jewish religious standards.

survival as a Polish poet and his emergence as a leading twentieth-century East Central European intellectual. This chapter will examine Milosz's interaction with other exiles from the region in light of his search for "a center," defined in three respects: national identity, intellectual responsibilities, and the broader identity of his region. I will discuss these problems in the following three steps. First, I will address Milosz's quest for East-Central European identity by investigating his articulation of the in-between identity of a man with roots in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and his critical attitude toward narrow Polish nationalism. Second, the process of defining the role of an East-Central European intellectual will be examined on the basis of Milosz's discussions with his friends from the *Kultura* circle: Jozef Czapski, Jerzy Giedroyc, Witold Gombrowicz, Zygmunt Hertz, and Konstanty Jelenski. Finally, I will show Milosz's interaction with other exiles from the region: Joseph Brodsky, Milan Kundera, and Tomas Venclova, which inspired a project of finding common ground for the countries whose cultures had been dismissed by the East-West political divide. It was within this circle that Milosz contributed by literary means to the re-emergence of the idea of "Central Europe" – an anti-Soviet cultural concept, which became politically significant in the last decade of the Cold War era.

Within this three-part structure, I investigate the question of Milosz's Polish-Lithuanian roots and his national identity, since it is crucial for an understanding of Milosz's sense of intellectual duties toward his homeland, or toward Polish literature. Following Milosz's 1960 move to America, both Milosz's role and his national loyalties were constantly discussed and juxtaposed with those of other exiles from East-Central

Europe.³⁷⁹ I argue that the way Milosz structured his role in this dialogue, always privileging Polish literature and culture, revealed more about Milosz's definition of patriotic allegiance and complex national identity than his occasional responses to questions about his nationality. This dialogue also testifies to Milosz's paradoxical position - that of a man mentally arrested in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, having little in common with his imposed American homeland, and writing for an audience in Poland, whence he had been exiled. In a way, he did not belong to either of these places. The investigation of how Milosz and the circle of his émigré audience engaged critically with the issues of national sentiment and nationalist ideology serves as a lens for showing yet another aspect of the creation of Milosz's intellectual image. Accordingly, the chapter describes how a twentieth-century émigré writer from East-Central Europe came to terms with his identity and with the nationalist element underpinning the culture of his homeland, as a necessary step on the way to defining his intellectual role.

I aim to shed light on a hotly debated issue, namely Milosz's critical stance with regard to nationalist ideology, and more specifically, his dislike of the submission of Polish culture and literature to nationalist discourse. The historian Dariusz Gawin refers to Milosz's books in order to elucidate the poet's attitude toward "Polishness," with no acknowledgment of the fact that Milosz's published texts little reflect his life-long struggle with nationalist ideology.³⁸⁰ Contrary to this approach, my analysis is based on archival material, mainly correspondence from the period, since it is the most effective

³⁷⁹ On exiles and their intellectual duties, see, for example: Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000).

³⁸⁰ Dariusz Gawin, "Filozofia apostazji – rzecz o stosunku Czesława Miłosza do Polaków," *Teologia Polityczna* 1 (2003–2004).

way of investigating Milosz's resentment toward a certain genre of Polish nationalism as well as demonstrating how Milosz's position evolved over time. With an eye on the larger political and cultural context of East-Central Europe, I propose to approach the problem of Milosz's national belonging by going beyond the discussion of whether Milosz was Lithuanian or Polish. Instead, the goal here is to reveal the significance of an émigré initiative, of which Milosz was a part, to legitimize different shades of Polish national sentiment by reclaiming the multi-ethnic historical traditions of Poland.

My approach is innovative for two reasons. First, through the use of multiple sources, the existing image of Milosz as a leading East-Central European intellectual will be juxtaposed with the figures of a number of other intellectual exiles from the region. These people, by remaining in a dialogical relation to Milosz's writing and his intellectual role, helped him to succeed in his literary career. Second, a comprehensive look at the Polish émigré circle around the monthly *Kultura* provided in this chapter generates an intellectual history of postwar Poland that has not yet been fully addressed in American scholarship.

GENTE LITHUANUS, NATIONE POLONUS³⁸¹

In a certain sense I can consider myself a typical Eastern European. (...) Where I grew up, there was no uniform gesture, no social code, no clear rules for behavior at table. Practically every person I met was different, not because of his own special self, but as a representative of some group, class, or nation. (...) Modern civilization, it is said, creates uniform boredom and destroys individuality. If so, then this is one sickness I had been spared.³⁸²

³⁸¹ A Lithuanian person of the Polish nation.

³⁸² Czeslaw Milosz, and Catherine S. Leach, *Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 67.

“Who wants to understand the poet must go to the poet’s country,” Goethe famously said. Milosz had always been cautious to point to his childhood surroundings as the source of his poetic imagination. In a published 1973 letter to a fellow Lithuanian poet, Tomas Venclova, Milosz wrote: “I, or my imagination, at any rate, have remained true to Lithuania.”³⁸³ As is typical of writers living in exile, also in Milosz’s works memories of his youth, first Szetejnie and then Vilnius, happily coalesced, creating a semi-mythical space that nourished Milosz’s poetic self. One would be wrong to assume that the questions involved in his distant youth in Eastern Europe were of little significance to Milosz in 1960s California. Milosz captured this precious past in the two works of prose written in France: *The Issa Valley* (1955), and *Native Realm* (1959). These books, however, did not exhaust all the problems involved in Milosz’s past in the Polish-Lithuanian borderlands. Although national borders do not run through the metaphysical land of poetry, they certainly affect the lives of poets. Therefore, as a twentieth-century poet from East-Central Europe, Milosz faced a dilemma that concerned many of those born in this region at the dusk of a century: What nation did I belong to, and how did my national identity present itself against the background of *irredentist* national movements and the imperialist claims of the German and Soviet empires?

Far from being only a reflection of individual attitudes, the émigré discussion on nationalism in East-Central Europe, which Milosz often initiated, had a greater significance. Firstly, many East-Central European exiles were carriers of the pre-war tradition of the peaceful cohabitation of various ethnic groups within the borders of one state in the region, such as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Moreover, the exiles

³⁸³ Tomas Venclova, Diana Senechal, and Czesław Milosz, *Winter Dialogue: Poems* (Evanston, Ill: Hydra Books, 1997), 100.

were often the only ones interested in rescuing the memory of the multi-national regions of interwar East-Central Europe. The communist governments of their home countries often turned to nationalism in order to boost postwar development. While they were invested in building class brotherhood across borders, they also eradicated the memory of cohabitation across ethnic divides. In the case of Poland, which as a result of the World War II peace settlements became an ethnically uniform state, this meant fading out the notion of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodow) - a state in which ethnicities, languages, and religions had coexisted since the 15th century. Another important factor was that in addition to nurturing traditions of multiculturalism via a dialogue on nationalism, the exiles could also inspire trans-regional political solutions for the future. While East-Central Europe fell prey to unifying policies of sovietization, the émigré initiative inspired a sense of shared cultural heritage that distinguished the countries of the region from the Soviet cultural sphere. In this respect, Milosz's dialogue with East-Central European exiles was an attempt to save and hand over to the next generation a non-distorted narrative on the formation of their national identity. Therefore, certain émigré communities, such as *Kultura*, served as intermediaries between past and future as their home countries underwent a period of cultural, if not historical, rupture brought about by the implementation of communism by the Soviet occupant.

The logic of saving the past had already informed Milosz's 1959 book, *Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition*, of whose purpose Milosz wrote: "I wanted to introduce to literature our Eastern European hotchpotch, which even for the majority of

Polish readers remains unknown.”³⁸⁴ For Milosz personally *Native Realm* constituted a search for what Simone Weil called *l’enracinement* (rootedness), a search for his European self. By telling the story of a young man who grew up in the Eastern part of Europe, where he had coped with problems such as Marxist ideology, ethnic diversity and religious doubts, Milosz made his story universal. The Young Man described by Milosz was deeply immersed in the tumultuous history of his region and its traditions, his intellectual formation placed him within the Western European cultural nexus. With this *Bildungsroman*, Milosz attempted to restore the details of his own East-Central European path in order to juxtapose a particular experience with the generalizing logic of Marxist and nationalist ideologies. The Polish émigré writer Jerzy Stempowski provided a particularly insightful commentary on *Native Realm* in a 1960 letter to Milosz.

Stempowski, who grew up in the Russian-dominated part of Ukraine in the 1890s, identified himself with the multi-cultural tones present in Milosz’s intellectual formation.

He wrote to Milosz about his book:

Your formation is strikingly noble; its many traits are characteristic of a significant number of the borderland, Jagiellonian nobility. Your abomination of nationalism, of all collective acts and trends is such a feature. (...) The way you describe subtle experiences and thought processes is equally noble. Contemporary literature is all egocentric; the authors can’t describe any other experiences but their own. A borderland nobleman in turn had to know how to read the thoughts of Belarusians, Ukrainians, Jews, Old Believers, Karaims, Gypsies etc. (...) From these talents of the ancestors you have not lost a thing. One who understands all is cut out for being a negotiator and intermediary, an explorer of the middle ways.³⁸⁵

The idea of the “middle way” was best reflected in Milosz’s national sentiment, which he described using the formula *gente Lithuanus, natione Polonus* [a Lithuanian person of the

³⁸⁴ Milosz’s letter to Giedroyc, March 1963. Giedroyc, Milosz, Kornat, *Listy*, 299.

³⁸⁵ Jerzy Stempowski’s letter to Milosz, 7/07/1960. Czesław Milosz Papers. Box 59, f. 812.

Polish nation].³⁸⁶ How should we understand this term? It is, no doubt, an element of a still poorly developed historical debate on the ways nationalist ideology affected individual loyalties within the borders of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. As the Nobel-winning poet Tomas Venclova was right to state, also the intellectual tradition of the Polish-Lithuanian borderland cosmos has not been adequately addressed yet.³⁸⁷ In his book on the subject, the historian Timothy Snyder traces the emergence of four modern nations: Belarus, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine in the context of wars, revolutions, ethnic cleansing, state policies and international politics. It is a story of how elite patriotism was replaced by ethnic nationalism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Snyder discusses the multi-cultural history of the Lithuanian part of the *Rzeczpospolita*, with its rather successful cohabitation of Lithuanians, Poles, Ruthenians, and Jews, and the absence of widespread ethnic, religious and class conflicts. The book elucidates the *natione Polonus, gente Lithuanus* notion, showing that for centuries in this part of Europe one could be culturally Polish and speak Lithuanian at home, or be an Orthodox or Greek Catholic (Uniat) conversing in a Belarus dialect, or a Haskalah Jew of Vilnius. Assessing the national discourses of the four countries of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Snyder argues that modern national identity in this region mainly relies on “history.” While the elites constructed national discourse by appropriating selected events from the past, the memories cultivated by families, small communities and individuals remained in the background. The idea of the selective

³⁸⁶ In a letter to Giedroyc, Miłosz stated: “I have never declared myself a Lithuanian.” 12/1955. However, this was not true. Miłosz had a Lithuanian passport during World War II. Giedroyc, Miłosz, Kornat, *Listy*.

³⁸⁷ Sławomir Sierakowski, “Litwo, ojczyzna Twoja. An interview with Tomas Venclova,” In: Magdalena Błędowska, *Miłosz: Przewodnik Krytyki Politycznej* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2011): 212-234.

nature of national discourse, taken from Snyder, will be a handy methodological tool for the further discussion of Polish nationalism.

While the cultural heritage of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth involved the myth of a perfectly peaceful past, the ethnic conflicts that emerged upon its collapse were real. Not only was the Commonwealth de-constructed, with the Russian Empire gradually swallowing up its territory, but the ruptures of the late 19th and early 20th century brought about the dissolution of its traditional social structure, the development of distinct nationalist discourses and the rise of ethnic hatred. Obviously, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth collapsed before it could be affected by the modern discipline of national identification; yet it is interesting to think that the dissolution of such a great state organism left behind people of ambiguous identity. Its tradition proved very persistent and reemerged in the following generations of borderland intelligentsia. It seems that it was that very borderland *m entalit e* that made it hard for people like Miłosz to fit into the 20th century’s neatly delineated national borders. Living among Belarusians and Lithuanians, whose national identity was only just coming into being, and threatened with Russian imperial claims, Miłosz was just one example of such a dilemma. Not to mention that the two world wars brought more chaos to the region, with people transferred and territories passed from hand to hand. How could one define one’s national affiliation when the platforms constituting one’s identity were unstable? This dilemma was apparent in Miłosz’s dialogue with his fellow exiles, in which he tried to reconcile his urge to write in Polish with his yearning for a broader, supra-Polish national identity. Miłosz once stated that he was a Lithuanian who was not allowed to be one, since he did not speak the language. One could argue that it was the Polish language that

made the situation more complex for Miłosz, holding him a prisoner of Polish national identity.

With his love of the Polish-Lithuanian past, it was Vilnius that played a key role in Miłosz's poetic and national formation, connecting him to the Romantic literary tradition. He said: "In Wilno (Vilnius), I spent my boyhood thinking that life would fall into place in the usual way. [...] So Wilno became for me an index of possibility, the possibility of normalcy."³⁸⁸ The *spiritus loci* of Vilnius was defined by the fact that in the early 19th century the city was the cradle of Polish Romanticism, the place where the great Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz resided.³⁸⁹ Mickiewicz was born in 1798 in a territory that had been swallowed by the Russian Empire in the 1795 Third Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; he was therefore a subject of the Russian tsar. Mickiewicz's situation was not very different from that of Miłosz a century later, since he grew up in a family of petty Polish nobility in an area of linguistic diversity. Even though he was surrounded by Lithuanian, Belorussian and Jewish ethnic and cultural elements, for Mickiewicz, and later for Miłosz, speaking Polish was natural. That is why Mickiewicz began his 1834 masterpiece, *Pan Tadeusz* [Master Thaddeus], written in Polish, with the words: "Oh Lithuania, my fatherland!"³⁹⁰

It was in Vilnius in 1817 that Mickiewicz created the Philomats – a secret organization that advocated independence of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from the Russian Empire, and epitomized the intermingling of the fate of *irredentist* fighters with that of poets. These young Vilnius activists were the equivalent of the Russian

³⁸⁸ Venclova, Senechal, Miłosz, *Winter Dialogue*, 99.

³⁸⁹ On the relation between romanticism and Polish nationalism see: Andrzej Walicki, *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism: The Case of Poland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

³⁹⁰ Adam Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1995).

generation of Decembrists. Mickiewicz's political engagement cost him first an exile in the far east of Russia, and then in France, where he continued to compose poetry in Polish. In his émigré works, Mickiewicz laid the foundations for the messianic tradition, which would soon become a core element of the Polish Romantic tradition, and subsequently, of the Polish nationalist discourse. On the pages of his *Ksiegi Narodu Polskiego i Pielgrzymstwa Polskiego* [The Books of the Polish Nation and Polish Pilgrimage], Mickiewicz laid out his vision of Poland as the Christ of Nations that would save mankind. Mickiewicz's work, first published in Paris in 1832, also included his thoughts on the tasks facing the émigrés who had left Poland (formally *Krolestwo Polskie*, the Polish Kingdom) after the failed Uprising of 1830. Some of Mickiewicz's writing circumvented Russian censorship and reached Polish readers. Given the similarities of their fate, even a century and a half later, the figure of Mickiewicz hovered over Milosz's life and work.

“I HAVE TO ADMIT, TO POLISHNESS I AM ALLERGIC”³⁹¹

A scholar working on Milosz, Irena Grudzinska-Gross, once said that Milosz never admitted to being a Pole.³⁹² Although that is not quite exact, Grudzinska-Gross was right to describe the complex relation Milosz had with so-called “Polishness” in such a dramatic terms. As a man of leftist political leanings, Milosz found it problematic to accept nationalist ideology as an intellectual orientation point, or as a factor shaping his individual allegiances. Moreover, he was always concerned that nationalism could potentially be a terrifying engine in the region of East-Central Europe. There were certain

³⁹¹ Milosz, “Prywatne obowiązki.”

³⁹² Sławomir Sierakowski, “Z Czarodziejkiej Góry do polskiej kultury. An interview with Irena Grudzinska-Gross,” In: Błedowska, *Przewodnik po Miloszu*, 30-58.

features that made Milosz into an apt commentator of nationalism, such as his cultural inheritance from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, his exposure to anti-Semitism in the 1930s in Vilnius, and his hatred of the nationalist rhetoric employed by prewar right-wing movements and then by the postwar socialist government. Last but not least, since Milosz was an exile, he could, from afar, in a more sober way, assess the excesses of Polish nationalism.

Investigating Milosz's discussions over nationalism, I want to contribute to the recently reinvigorated field of Polish nationalism studies by situating Milosz's stance on the trajectory of the late nineteenth-century shift in Polish nationalism toward its radically exclusive version. Historian Brian Porter deals with the problem in his profound study, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland*.³⁹³ Porter traces the evolution of Polish nationalism from the late 18th to the early 20th century – when the historic Polish nation remained without a state. Up until the last partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795, the notion of national identity was reserved for the privileged. To be a “Pole” meant to be a nobleman, a *szlachcic*, and to enjoy full political rights. Many of those who a century later would be characterized as Lithuanians, Ukrainians or Belarusians, at that time were considered Poles. The legacy of the uprisings of 1830 and 1863 prolonged the notion of “Polishness” as transcending linguistic and even cultural bounds; but it still left out the broad mass of the peasantry. As Porter's study shows, it was only at the turn of the century that Polish nationalism underwent democratization. On its wave, a charismatic leader of the National Democratic Party (*Endecja*), Roman Dmowski, attracted wide support across social strata for his

³⁹³ Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth Century Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

stridently chauvinist and anti-Semitic version of nationalism. With socialist and federalist visions cast aside, the *Endek* (National Democratic) vision came to dominate Polish nationalist discourse. This exclusive nature of modern Polish nationalism was neither self-explanatory nor the only available option for the development of Polish nationalism. Rather, as Porter argues, it was the result of abandoning an evolutionary political model in favor of an activist right radical ideology. Using Porter's analysis, I reveal Milosz's role in recovering the abandoned, non-*Endek*, traditions of Polish nationalism, as well as his contribution to upholding multicultural national identity as a standard for East-Central Europe in the twenty first century.

Although it was not until the 1960s that Milosz started to develop a more systematic critique of Polish nationalism, his 1945 poem "A Nation" had already provided a foretaste of his future stance on Polishness. The poem, written in Krakow, reads:

The purest of nations on earth when it's judged by a flash of lightning,

But thoughtless and sly in everyday toil.

[...]

Ready to offer their lives to draw Heaven's wrath on their foes,

Smiting their enemy with the screams of orphans and women.

[...]

Great nation, invincible nation, ironic nation.

They know how to distinguish truth and yet to keep silent.

They camp on marketplaces, conversing in wisecracks,

They deal in old door handles stolen from ruins.

[...]

A man of that nation, standing by his son's cradle,

*Repeats words of hope, always, till now, in vain.*³⁹⁴

Milosz's poem encapsulated the main points of his future critique of Polish national character: the cult of the nation, love of martyrdom, and intellectual sluggishness. Milosz once defined in an ironic tone what it meant to be Polish. "(...) first," he said, "to sit on one another and keeping watch so that no one stands out; second, to look around if there is anyone suitable for consumption, which means capable of making a name for Poland in the world."³⁹⁵ In the two decades following his move to California, Milosz wrote and spoke about nationalism on multiple occasions. The way these interactions helped shape Milosz's intellectual role will be investigated on the basis of four selected debates, which took place in 1962, 1964, 1968, and 1972.

With no chance to be published in Poland, Milosz had his books published by the *Kultura* Publishing House, and he hoped to reach at least a small audience, instigating a discussion among the émigré circles. However, he soon learned that the Polish exiles, in their majority, had little interest in reading, not to mention commenting his works. Partially, as any émigré community, they were overwhelmed by the task of achieving material stability in their country of settlement; additionally, many of them held right-wing political views, and perceived Milosz through the lens of his service to the communist Polish government. Some of the books published by Milosz in the 1960s and 1970s met with no response at all! Milosz could have sided with a fellow émigré writer,

³⁹⁴ Czesław Miłosz, "A Nation," In: Miłosz, *New and Collected Poems*, 79.

³⁹⁵ Miłosz, "Prywatne obowiązki."

Witold Gombrowicz, who stated: “Not a soul would like to read my book.”³⁹⁶ In this situation, the very few fellow émigrés who responded to Milosz’s works were even more precious readers, since they soothed Milosz’s longings, but also helped to prevent a great poet from falling silent.

Since the debate on Milosz’s role took place mainly on the pages of *Kultura* or in correspondence within its circle, it naturally gravitated toward the questions of how Milosz, as an émigré intellectual from Poland, should serve the Polish cultural realm. The analysis of Milosz’s dialogue with his émigré friends: Jozef Czapski, Jerzy Giedroyc, Witold Gombrowicz, Zygmunt Hertz, and Konstanty Jelenski, reveals Milosz’s preoccupation with his responsibilities, not so much toward the Polish nation, but rather toward Polish literature and Polish readers. My reconstruction of several debates within this exiled circle shows how Milosz’s artistic self was nurtured and his public image co-authored in this polyphony of voices.

One of the best examples of how the discussion of Milosz’s attitude toward Polish nationalism overlapped with that of his intellectual duties was the 1962 debate on Milosz’s book, *Człowiek wśród skorpionów: studium o Stanisławie Brzozowskim* [A Man Among Scorpions: A Study on Stanislaw Brzozowski].³⁹⁷ This book, yet another written in Polish and addressed to Polish exiles, had a very personal underpinning. Milosz described the book’s leading question as follows: “How does one become a writer rejected by the very same people for whom he used all his strengths, believing that he rebuilds their conscience – or the conscience of their sons?”³⁹⁸ In this book, Milosz carefully chose to discuss the work of a 19th century Polish philosopher and writer,

³⁹⁶ Witold Gombrowicz’s letter to Milosz, 02/15/1954. Czesław Milosz Papers, b. 21, f. 350.

³⁹⁷ Czesław Milosz, *Człowiek wśród skorpionów: studium o Stanisławie Brzozowskim* (Paryż; Instytut Literacki, 1962).

³⁹⁸ Milosz, Introduction to *Człowiek wśród skorpionów*.

Stanislaw Brzozowski. Brzozowski's "obsession to break free of Poland" was a handy way for Milosz to express his own problematic relation to Polishness. The subject was intellectually stimulating, but also provocative, since Brzozowski had been accused of betrayal and collaboration with the Russian secret police. Although the charges were never proven, the stigma surrounding Brzozowski kept Polish writers and scholars from investigating the works of one of the very first East-Central European critics of Marxism. Ironically, the leitmotif of Brzozowski's work – his argument that anti-Russian resentment led to the sterilization of Polish intellectual life – also found confirmation in the reception of his own *oeuvre*.³⁹⁹

Reclaiming Brzozowski's thought, Milosz found not only a mirror of his own position of an outcast from Polish intellectual and literary life, but a partner for his own critiques of the Polish psyche: the stuffy atmosphere of the Polish Catholic Church, negligent attitudes toward intellectual effort, the cult of martyrdom, and the propensity toward what Milosz called the "herd-ness" of national life.⁴⁰⁰ Expanding on Brzozowski's critics, Milosz analyzed the Polish national character, emphasizing the negative aspect of the Romantic tradition. He argued that the crisis of prose in the Romantic period only strengthened the Polonocentric messianic thinking promoted by Romantic poetry. To this problem Brzozowski proposed a remedy in the form of a "philosophy of labor" - it was only via an individual, not a collective and national effort, he argued, that one could acquire one's freedom. "Our life, our self - is like an outpost," Brzozowski wrote, "When we abandon it, it is forever lost for the whole of humanity."⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁹ Apart from Milosz, two other Polish philosophers, Andrzej Walicki and Leszek Kolakowski, have stressed that in his interpretations of Marx's early works Brzozowski anticipated György Lukács and Antonio Gramsci.

⁴⁰⁰ For example, the periodicals of the Young Poland used word "an intellectual" with disdain.

⁴⁰¹ Czesław Milosz, *Człowiek wśród skorpionów*.

Milosz adopted these words as his *credo*. *A Man Among Scorpions* was Milosz's most systematic critique of exclusive Polish nationalism as defined by the *Endecja*, and one of very few, alongside Gombrowicz's, attempts by Polish exiles to take a critical stance with respect to their national tradition.⁴⁰²

Milosz's reassessment of Brzozowski's thought opened a debate with Czapski and Gombrowicz over Polish nationalism, in which Milosz's tasks were also discussed. Czapski was a painter and an art critic based at the *Kultura* House in Maisons-Laffitte. Before he became an exile in France, Czapski was an officer in the Polish Army during World War II. In 1939, the Soviets took him as a prisoner of war, and he was among the very few who survived the 1940 massacre at Katyn, where the NKVD murdered over twenty thousand Polish officers and intelligentsia. Upon the 1941 Polish-Soviet agreement, Czapski searched for the missing officers in Russia as an official envoy of the Polish government. He wrote about the negotiations with the Soviets in his 1951 book *Naneludzkiej ziemi* [*The Inhuman Land*]. Its English edition constituted an important document, since the Soviets refused to confirm their responsibility for the Katyn massacre. In exile, Czapski co-founded *Kultura* and became its life-time collaborator. In the early 1950s, Czapski supported Milosz in the initial period of his exile, and then after his 1960 departure to America he would keep stimulating Milosz's literary potential via correspondence, which spanned the next three decades.⁴⁰³

My analysis shows that Czapski inspired Milosz to work on *A Man Among Scorpions*. I would even suggest that it was Czapski who, in a long letter from 1956,

⁴⁰² Similar to Milosz, another great Polish writer Witold Gombrowicz was critical of the extremes of Polish nationalism.

⁴⁰³ Jozef Czapski's letters to Milosz are available at Beinecke Library at Yale. Milosz's letters to Czapski are unavailable. Czesław Miłosz Papers. box 13, f. 240-245.

suggested to Milosz that he write on Brzozowski, and then for years encouraged Milosz to work on this book.⁴⁰⁴ Similarly, five years earlier, Czapski had imparted the idea of *ketman*, which would become a leading motif of *The Captive Mind*, to Milosz. In May 1960, Czapski wrote to Milosz about a draft of the book on Brzozowski, saying: “Everything you write about his [Brzozowski’s] philosophy, (...) is revealing, and you could truly change the outlook of Polish literature, provided that you, with all your strengths and your potential, felt as his genuine inheritor.”⁴⁰⁵ Shortly after the 1962 publication of *A Man Among Scorpions*, Czapski congratulated Milosz for making an intellectual breakthrough in Polish literature. He referred to the moral responsibility borne by the Polish émigré intellectuals - not only to rescue independent Polish culture, but also to counteract its stagnation by undertaking ambitious and provocative projects. The book on Brzozowski, Czapski stated, was a challenge to which the other émigré intellectuals had not risen.⁴⁰⁶ Finally, he once again commented on Milosz’s longing for a wider audience, expressing his unwavering belief in Milosz’s greatness. Czapski said: “You want to be in Poland, to be in Paris, and to be in California. With your unusual vital power, dynamism and literary genius, you may be capable of it.”⁴⁰⁷

Yet another exile who discussed *A Man Among Scorpions* on the pages of *Kultura* was Gombrowicz – a leading twentieth-century Polish writer, who, like Milosz, often criticized the Polish messianic tradition and the intellectual shallowness of Poles. An ironic historical coincidence might have had a hand in Gombrowicz’s life, as he left Poland in August 1939 for a short trip to Argentina, from where he never returned to

⁴⁰⁴ Jozef Czapski’s letter to Milosz, 1956. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 13, f. 240.

⁴⁰⁵ Jozef Czapski’s letter to Milosz, 05/28/1960. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 13, f. 241.

⁴⁰⁶ Interestingly, in 1961 the Polish writer Andrzej Stawar published a book on Brzozowski in Poland. Stawar provided a Marxist critique of Brzozowski’s works. His interpretation was not objective, to say the least. Andrzej Stawar, *O Brzozowskim: 1 Inne Szkice* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1961).

⁴⁰⁷ Jozef Czapski’s letter to Milosz, 05/22/1962. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 13, f. 242.

Poland. Only toward the end of his life did he settle down in France. Although the position of an émigré writer struggling to make a living in Buenos Aires was not easy, Gombrowicz did not quit writing in Polish. He published mainly in *Kultura*, and similarly to Milosz, suffered ignorance or hostility on the part of the conservative Polish émigré readers. The parallel dynamics of Gombrowicz's and Milosz's life paths are striking, as it was in the solitude of exile and away from the "Polish national collective" that both became giants of twentieth-century Polish literature.⁴⁰⁸

In 1962, commenting Milosz's book on Brzozowski, Gombrowicz touched upon an important aspect of Milosz's image as an intellectual – his self-imposed duty to mediate between Polish intellectual and literary life and its Western counterparts. In his article in *Kultura*, Gombrowicz stated that Milosz wanted the Polish intelligentsia to catch up with the West.⁴⁰⁹ Milosz had to disagree. He stated that it had never been his goal to follow the West blindly, and that in his first book published in the West, *The Captive Mind*, he had offered a piercing critique of the superficiality of Western intellectual life. Responding to Gombrowicz, Milosz commented on his own role, saying: "I believe that I have been consistent in juxtaposing my own, specific experience, derived from one country, with the broader identity of the West. In my poetry, and prose, and in my translations of young Polish poets into English, [I have had] a clear goal – to show: see, this is *also* what modern poetry could be, quite different from yours."⁴¹⁰ As an example, Milosz pointed to Zbigniew Herbert, a rising Polish poet, whose poetry he promoted in the West. The above discussion with Czapski and Gombrowicz proved that dealing with Milosz's attitude toward Polishness tended to overlap with reconfiguring his

⁴⁰⁸ Gombrowicz's correspondence to Milosz. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 21, f. 350.

⁴⁰⁹ Witold Gombrowicz, "Fragment z dziennika," *Kultura* 10 (1962): 26-30.

⁴¹⁰ Czeslaw Milosz, "Uwagi do Gombrowicza," *Kultura* 12 (1962): 122-25.

role, and, in more general terms, the role of émigré intellectuals from East-Central Europe.

While in his book on Brzozowski Milosz openly dismissed what he called “potbellied-martyrial–religious Polishness,” in the articles in *Kultura* he nonetheless strived to initiate a constructive discussion on Polish intellectual and cultural problems.⁴¹¹ In the 1960s, Milosz regularly published essays in which he analyzed the condition of Polish poetry, the Polish literary canon, or, in more general terms, the place of Polish culture in the world. One such article was the 1964 text entitled “Dwustronne porachunki” [The Reciprocal Settling of Scores].

In “Dwustronne porachunki” Milosz reflected on the parochialism of Polish literature and culture as compared to the West, as well as on the suppression of individual views within nationalist discourse. The article opened with a provocative quote from Cyprian Kamil Norwid: “In a Pole, Poland is a giant, and a man is a dwarf.”⁴¹² Milosz argued that the major problem in Polish culture was Poles’ inability to take the position of emancipated individuals. Contrary to a man in the West, a Pole always remained stuck in the collective discourse of his homeland. Milosz explained:

Poland-goddess has liberated her worshippers from existential loneliness, covered them with her coat, and within her limits any contradiction has been solved. Although they were killed off and persecuted, Poles nonetheless lived in an unusual psychic luxury, when compared to other Europeans. A punishment for this luxury was the absence of reflection on the human condition, since this had been absorbed by the Polish condition. One of the results is the particularism of Polish literature, which calls for a painstaking interpretation in order to extract a universal element from it.⁴¹³

⁴¹¹ Czesław Miłosz, “Co smiem myśleć,” *Kultura* 7 (1960): 13-34.

⁴¹² Czesław Miłosz, “Dwustronne porachunki,” *Kultura* 6 (1964): 7-34.

⁴¹³ Miłosz, “Dwustronne porachunki.”

Having turned their homeland into a deity, Milosz continued, Poles were willing to overlook outrageous acts of nationalist chauvinism, such as prewar anti-Semitism or acts of destroying Orthodox churches. The postwar period, in turn, ushered in a pitiful version of Romantic nationalism catered to the people by the socialist government, which again deprived Poles of the opportunity to step outside the circle of their self-referential national agenda. The Poles' penchant for relying on the collective imagination, anchored in symbolism and messianic myth, rather than on a realistic approach, led to the idealization of one's self, cynicism and Machiavelism. This was characteristic especially of people holding right-wing political beliefs, Milosz stated. He concluded his article, saying: "I have stopped being concerned with political events there [in Poland], and nostalgia has haunted me rarely. Perhaps, it is because Poland is not the country of my childhood."⁴¹⁴ Milosz's ostentatious display of his disengagement from "things Polish," at least in the sphere of politics, provoked two of his friends - Jan Ulatowski and Konstanty Jelenski - to respond.

Jan Ulatowski interpreted Milosz's article, "Dwustronne porachunki", as a sign of Milosz's confusion as to his national allegiances and the ensuing duties, rather than an insightful analysis of the Polish condition. The correspondence with Ulatowski was one of the richest and most intimate in Milosz's papers, and attested to the fact that Milosz cared about Ulatowski's opinion. It therefore hurt his feelings when in July 1964, a few days past his fifty-third birthday, he received a letter attesting to how deeply Ulatowski misunderstood Milosz. Ulatowski commented on Milosz's recent article, saying: "When you finally reveal [your doubts], your reader asks what to do with the confessions of an American of Lithuanian descent who writes in Polish. [...] The reader even takes pity,

⁴¹⁴ Ibidem.

and he would even like to get to know this mythic Lithuania, from the highlands of which both Poland and Europe present themselves so tenuously.”⁴¹⁵ Even though Ulatowski mitigated the harsh tone of these words by acknowledging the importance of Milosz’s text, Milosz’s reaction made it clear how much he was disappointed. Responding to Ulatowski, Milosz expressed frustration at the fact that his close friend did not understand that his complex background had inclined him toward the intellectual position of a critic of Polishness. Milosz asked:

If one is not allowed to cope publicly with his Polishness and Europeaness [...] then what is allowed? I do not understand the source of this fierceness as to call me ‘an American of Polish descent.’ [Ulatowski used words ‘an American of Lithuanian descent’] In the article, there is neither an emphasis on my American-ness, which in fact would be ridiculous for those who know me, nor on my Lithuanian-ness, besides the sort Mickiewicz and Pilsudski represented.⁴¹⁶

The exchange with Ulatowski shed light on a deeper problem present in Milosz’s intellectual work – it was not only his disagreement with a certain genre of Polish nationalism as such that worried Milosz, but also the inability of his potential Polish intellectual partners to approach their Polish heritage critically. As seen in the Milosz-Ulatowski exchange, Milosz’s ambiguous position of a man coming from the Polish-Lithuanian borderland enabled, or perhaps doomed, him to choose a path more intellectually independent than that of many Polish exiles who lived secluded in their nostalgia for Poland.

Another of Milosz’s émigré friends, Konstanty Jelenski, had a very different understanding of the logic behind Milosz’s 1964 article on Polishness. Jelenski was yet

⁴¹⁵ Jan Ulatowski’s letter to Milosz, 6/29/1964. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 62, ff. 864-865.

⁴¹⁶ Milosz’s letter to Jan Ulatowski, 7/21/1964. Archives of the Emigration, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poland. Collection uncataloged. Interestingly, in her next letter to Milosz, Aniela Micinska (Jan’s wife) asked Milosz to overlook Jan’s words, and to sent back his letter, since Jan could not understand why Milosz was hurt by his words. Aniela Micinska’s letter to Milosz, 9/02/1964.

another East-Central European exile who played an important role in shaping Milosz's work and image, not only as Milosz's intellectual partner, but also, as Milosz himself stated, "his best reader." Jelenski's background was very different from Milosz's. He was born in Warsaw to a Polish diplomat, and was raised as a cultured European, living in luxury, surrounded by literary celebrities and his domineering mother, Rena. At the age of eighteen Jelenski left Poland to serve in the Polish Army in France. After the war, he remained in exile, first in Italy, and then after 1951, in France. An essayist and brilliant intellectual, Jelenski led the Eastern European division of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Paris, and therefore served as an intermediary between the CCF and *Kultura*, to which he also contributed his texts. Jelenski's criticism, translations and edited works address a wide range of literary, political and artistic topics, especially twentieth-century Polish literature and history. Jelenski and Milosz first crossed paths at the *Kultura* House; they then cooperated within the CFF, and over time their friendship became very intimate. Always attentive to Milosz's writing, in 1964 Jelenski congratulated Milosz on "The Reciprocal Settling of Scores" as the most important and revealing piece ever written by him. Praising Milosz's attempt at a "psychoanalysis of Polishness," Jelenski said: "All intelligent Poles, from Brzozowski to Gombrowicz, have revolved around these issues. But prior to you no one has outlined this Polish dialectic, which is simultaneously alienating and integrating, the dialectic between foolish idolatry and sacral nourishment."⁴¹⁷ After 1964, Jelenski and Milosz often discussed the problem of

⁴¹⁷ Konstanty Jelenski's letter to Milosz, 06/15/1964. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 32, f. 480. Citations from Jelenski's correspondence to Milosz come from my research at Beinecke Library. Milosz-Jelenski correspondence was published very recently, and it constitutes the source of citations for Milosz's correspondence. Jelenski, Konstanty, and Milosz, Czeslaw, *Korespondencja* (Fundacja Zeszytow Literackich, Warszawa 2011).

nationalism and continued their efforts to nurture the literary and cultural potential of Poland while leaving aside nationalist pretensions to Polish grandeur.

It was mainly in Milosz's correspondence with Jelenski that the poet spoke frankly about his complicated relation to Poland and Poles, and wondered whether it made sense at all to write for Polish readers. In a letter to Jelenski from July 1968, Milosz confessed: "I know that my relations with Poles are mainly based on understatements and misunderstandings; that this ambiguity has gone on for years, haunting me."⁴¹⁸ Further, he added in a grave tone: "One needs to be clear about it: I have nothing in common with Poland. What is my concern, they do not care about and *vice versa*. Only Gombrowicz's formula is a pertinent one."⁴¹⁹ By this Milosz meant Gombrowicz's intellectual aim, which, as Gombrowicz explained in his book *Trans-Atlantyck* [Trans-Atlantic], was to "defend Poles from Poland...to free a Pole from Poland...to keep a Pole from passively submitting to his Polishness, but rather have him treat it with superiority."⁴²⁰ However, in his letters to Jelenski, Milosz confessed that he was himself not "free" from Polish nationalist rhetoric, and that he struggled with "the Polish hunch," trying to keep it from hampering his intellectual endeavors.⁴²¹ At the same time, Milosz took it personally when others dissociated him from the Polish orbit. In 1971, for example, he complained to Jelenski about an anonymous Polish reviewer who, in an article for an American literary

⁴¹⁸ Milosz's letter to Jelenski 7/29/1968. Jelenski, and Milosz, *Korespondencja*, 133

⁴¹⁹ Milosz's letter to Jelenski 7/29/1968. Jelenski, and Milosz, *Korespondencja*, 133. Milosz referred to Gombrowicz also in a 1969 article entitled "Prywatne obowiązki," published in *Kultura*. Milosz said, "I was breaking through the solutions similar to that of Gombrowicz, but the émigré 'nation' does not understand a thing from it either."

⁴²⁰ Witold Gombrowicz, Preface to the 1953 edition of his book *Trans-Atlantyck*. Witold Gombrowicz, *Trans-Atlantyck; Ślub* (Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1953).

⁴²¹ Milosz's letter to Jelenski, 3/27/1970. Jelenski, and Milosz, *Korespondencja*, 190.

periodical, suggested that Milosz was not Polish, and that it was accidental that he wrote in Polish. “Let this,” Milosz wrote, “be the measure of my solitude.”⁴²²

Another important debate took place in 1968, this time between Czapski and Milosz. Czapski had for years been trying to mitigate Milosz’s unwavering resentment toward Poland, and therefore often disagreed with Milosz on his attitude toward the nationalist rhetoric omnipresent in Polish culture. Czapski, himself a child of the borderland, in general sided with Milosz in his fight against the predominance of this discourse in Polish intellectual life. In a letter to Milosz from 1963, he wrote: “We are not Poles only (...) and there is no reason to submit ourselves to nationalism.”⁴²³ At the same time, though, Czapski disliked Milosz’s harsh manifestations of anti-Polish resentment. One example was Czapski’s response to Milosz’s open letter to *Kultura* from 1968. In this letter, Milosz commented on the events of March 1968 in Poland.⁴²⁴ In March, amid a wave of student protests and faced with a political crisis, the Polish communist government turned the societal frustration against Poles of Jewish descent, orchestrating their political persecution and subsequent expulsion from the country. As a result of these anti-Semitic policies, by 1972 twenty thousand people, among them many intellectual and cultural celebrities, had left Poland never to return. The events of 1968 drew a curtain of shame over Poland.⁴²⁵ In his open letter, Milosz expressed his pessimism about the

⁴²² Milosz’s letter to Jelenski, 3/18/1971. Milosz spoke here of a review of the 1968 English edition of Milosz’s book, *Native Realm*. Jelenski, and Milosz, *Korespondencja*, 212.

⁴²³ Jozef Czapski’s letter to Milosz, 04/08/1963. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 13, f. 243.

⁴²⁴ Czeslaw Milosz, “List do redakcji,” *Kultura* 12 (1968): 141-42.

⁴²⁵ Certainly, Polish-Jewish relations have a long and complex history, which was especially convoluted and painful during the period of World War II and the Shoah. Many historical studies have recently been published to describe the dynamics of these relations. Historical analyses often pose moral questions: about human reactions to evil, about the limits of understanding and commiseration in Polish-Jewish communities, which even before the war were riven by anti-Semitic sentiments. While the most striking examples of extreme loyalty or cruelty on the part of Poles toward their Jewish neighbors are discussed, one recognizes the trend of overlooking the grey matter of everyday Polish-Jewish life in the decades before World War II. More about the events of 1968 in Poland in: Jerzy Eisler, *Polski Rok 1968* (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej - Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni Przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2006); Marek Tarniewski (Jakub Karpiński), *Krótkie spięcie: marzec 1968*, (Warszawa: Myśl, 1988).

condition of Polish society, which he described as a “collective paranoia that the dizzy nation got itself into.”⁴²⁶

Czapski responded to this, asking in a dramatic tone: “Why now? Despite thousands of miles you know what is going on in Poland, since you must encounter those people who are destroyed in Poland, by Poles, in the most sordid way. (...) Why did you choose this very moment to say, ‘I do not give a damn about you, because you are a nation of paranoid and stunted idiots?’”⁴²⁷ Further in the letter, Czapski tried to make Milosz realize that Poland and “things Polish” used to play an important role in Milosz’s life, and that he was now forcing himself into an extreme position of overarching contempt. Czapski said: “At the end of the day, a certain Milosz wrote ‘The Treatise on Poetry,’ which means that this country [Poland] existed for him at some point, and *he existed for the people in this country* [orig.], for Poles. And is it that easy to moon your readers, and then as a *vsetshelovek* [all-human man] write beautiful poems?”⁴²⁸ Czapski was right to suggest a change in Milosz’s attitude toward Polishness that had taken place over the preceding two decades. If in the late 1940s Milosz only worried about nationalist notes in the rhetoric of the Polish communist government, by exiling himself in 1951 he made his relation to Poland very painful. Subsequently, in the early 1950s, many Polish émigré circles turned their backs on Milosz, and his 1960s literary activity was widely ignored by Poles in exile. Archival material corroborates what Czapski alluded to in his letter - Milosz’s unfulfilled desire for a wide Polish readership was conducive to his development of a condescending position toward Polishness in general.

⁴²⁶ Czesław Miłosz, “List do redakcji [O stosunku pisarzy emigracyjnych do wydarzeń w kraju],” *Kultura* 12 (1968): 141-142.

⁴²⁷ Józef Czapski’s letter to Miłosz, 12/04/1968. Czesław Miłosz Papers, b. 13, f. 243.

⁴²⁸ *Ibidem*.

A few years later, in 1972, Milosz's aim to instigate a debate that would galvanize intellectual circles in exile and in Poland found partial fulfillment in the debate on nationalism in *Kultura*, which included both domestic and émigré voices. The incentive for the debate came from Tomasz Stalinski's 1971 book *Cienie w pieczarze* [Shadows in the Cavern], which had been published by *Kultura*.⁴²⁹ "Stalinski" was a pseudonym concealing another person. In fact, the author of the book was Stefan Kisielewski, an unruly Polish journalist, who could only freely express his criticism of the communist Polish government writing under a pseudonym in *Kultura*. Stalinski's *Cienie w pieczarze* was a novel on communism, but also a literary essay and political morality play. The leading hero was a writer who decided to adopt a stance of conformism toward the communist system. In his book, Stalinski addressed, among other issues, a problem that had always interested Milosz: the contrast between the orchestrated nationalism of the communists and the nationalist character of the Polish independence movement.

The first response to Stalinski's book in *Kultura* was an article by Jacek Salski in which he frontally attacked the condition of the Polish intelligentsia, in particular writers, who had been demoralized by subjection to communism, conformism and officially administered privileges. "Salski" was a pseudonym of Wojciech Karpinski – a young Polish intellectual, who, whenever the communist authorities allowed it, would travel to the *Kultura* House in France.⁴³⁰ Soon Milosz joined the discussion, commenting on how the Polish intelligentsia had been impoverished by the nationalist rhetoric applied by the communist government. In his article, "Big Shadows," Milosz argued that Poles from the borderlands (*Kresy*), such as the writers Stanislaw Witkacy and Jerzy Stempowski,

⁴²⁹ Tomasz Stalinski (Stefan Kisielewski), *Cienie w Pieczarze* (Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1971).

⁴³⁰ Wojciech Karpinski, "Słowo niepodległe," *Kultura* 9 (1972).

represented a very different genre of Polish national sentiment. Marked by multicultural awareness, this group of Polish intelligentsia often remained opposed to the messianic agenda of the intelligentsia from the central region of Poland, ethnically dominated by Poles.

A few weeks later, Czapski published an article in *Kultura*, in which he chastised Milosz for his myopic approach, arguing that Milosz had gotten some facts wrong by assigning a nationalist attitude to all Polish intellectuals, and that he even distorted Stalinski's account of communist Poland in order to back up his own theses regarding Polish nationalism.⁴³¹ In a subsequent letter to Milosz, Czapski accused him of simplifying Polish Catholicism into a function of nationalism, and of constant attacks on Polish émigrés *en masse*, as if *Kultura* had never existed. Juxtaposing Milosz's poetic sensitivity with his fierce and unfair critique, Czapski asked rhetorically: "What does Milosz the poet have to do with it?"⁴³² The fact that Milosz was unhappy about Czapski's article was proven by the harsh tone of his letter to Jelenski, where he said: "Has he [Czapski] gone mad? What is his point?" From the response Milosz sent to Czapski, the latter got the impression that they could no longer understand each other when it came to the question of Polish nationalism.⁴³³

The analysis of Milosz's correspondence with Czapski, Gombrowicz, Jelenski, and Ulatowski reveals how Milosz's émigré friends strived to re-coin Milosz's antipathies into a constructive force that would work in the interest of Polish literature and culture without supporting Polish nationalism. In one letter, Czapski focused on the motivation underlying Milosz's constant critique of Polishness. He addressed Milosz in a

⁴³¹ Jozef Czapski, "Dwie prowokacje," *Kultura* 12 (1972).

⁴³² Jozef Czapski's letter to Milosz, 12/30/1972. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 13, f. 244.

⁴³³ Jozef Czapski's letter to Milosz, 01/21/1973. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 13, f. 244.

warm tone, saying: “In your letter, you write me words which you have never published, ‘I have always defended a different Poland.’”⁴³⁴ As demonstrated above, Milosz was defending the multicultural identity of the citizen of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and it was extreme Polish nationalism he was defending it against. Some of the measures Milosz could introduce to protect this “different Poland” were defined in the dialogue with his audience of fellow exiles. He also looked to this audience to help answer the questions: What is the point of writing poetry in Polish when one is permanently cut off from Poland? And what other intellectual responsibilities could one, as a lone player, undertake to contribute to the realm of Polish literature?

PRIVATE OBLIGATIONS

In an unfinished 1962 letter from Berkeley, Milosz wrote to Jelenski:

Dear Kot, I often think that it goes beyond my strength.(...) I, loving and hating, have cut off my hand and found myself here, where there is no place for love or hate – in California, a land of perfect alienation. Why would I conceal my failure to myself? Perhaps out of pride – but I want to be frank now. (...) No, I can’t speak to the ocean, to sea lions on the basalts of coastal islands, to the trees and deer. (...) The urge for communication is so strong that it forces one to abandon all means too general, it draws away from the art; so that what bothers us could be expressed empathically, like a voice of a man to a man. And if I address all, I would speak to no one. Therefore, what I write is intended for you.⁴³⁵

Having left his natural element of European culture in 1960, Milosz felt estranged in California, where he painfully experienced the absence of his Parisian intellectual partners. He would not only write letters to himself just for the sake of receiving mail, but also seek solace drinking in front of a mirror. Certainly, the position of a tenured professor in the Slavic Department at UC Berkeley guaranteed him professional stability

⁴³⁴ Jozef Czapski’s letter to Milosz, 01/21/1973. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 13, f. 244.

⁴³⁵ Milosz’s letter to Jelenski, 1962, Jelenski, and Milosz, *Korespondencja*, 33.

and provided a sense of security to his family. They made their home on Grizzly Peak Boulevard in Berkeley. Milosz's wife Janina, who had for years been concerned about Cold War instability in Europe, was happy to return to America, which she considered the homeland of their American-born young sons: Antoni and Piotr. When the Miloszes moved to California in 1960, Antoni was thirteen years old and Piotr was nine. The elder fit easily in the American environment, the younger, however, had a more difficult path.⁴³⁶ After unstable years of exile in France, the Milosz family settled in California for good.

In the years following the move to California, Milosz strived to define his new intellectual responsibilities, which he saw as closely linked to the realm of Polish literature. Milosz's love of the Polish language and his writing philosophy made it clear that he would only compose verses in Polish and remain an active participant in the discussion on Polish literature. Milosz obviously lectured and occasionally published articles in English, but for a long time he wrote mainly in Polish, addressing the Polish readers of *Kultura*. Milosz pointed to the peculiarity of his situation in a 1969 article, saying: "I was not born in Poland, I did not grow up in Poland, I do not live in Poland, but I write in Polish."⁴³⁷ The article, entitled "Prywatne obowiązki" [Private Obligations], left no doubts that Milosz had his heart set on Polish language and literature, which in turn defined the horizon of possibility and necessity for his work.

⁴³⁶ A sensitive child, Peter developed mental illness in the 1970s. Initially, it was thought to be no more than the common psychological problems of adolescence. Peter spent prolonged periods of time as a physical worker in Alaska. Over time, he became violent, depressed and unmanageable. Additionally, he abused alcohol and perhaps also drugs. In the mid-1970s, Peter committed a criminal act with weapon, and served a prison sentence. His illness had worsened and he needed psychiatric treatment. Milosz first put his son in a secluded hospital in California, and later sent him to France. He hoped that a return to the country of his childhood would help Peter. Milosz was very reluctant to discuss these issues, and in his letters to close friends he expressed a sense of guilt when discussing Peter's illness. He would discuss Peter's misfortune mainly with the priest Jozef Sadzik. The Sadzik-Milosz correspondence is located at the Beinecke Library and restricted until the death of Peter Milosz.

⁴³⁷ Milosz, "Prywatne obowiązki."

Since Milosz's books published in the 1960s and 70s met with a feeble response from the broad Polish émigré audience, the *Kultura* circle proved crucial not only as Milosz's readers, but also as the agents shaping his intellectual duties. It was exclusively this tiny group of fellow émigrés (Czapski, Giedroyc, Hertz, Jelenski, the Ulatowskis and Vincenz), who helped Milosz first to define and then to carry out his tasks with respect to Polish literature. The editor of Milosz's letters to Jelenski, Barbara Torunczyk, stated that in the absence of a response to his published works, Milosz was slowly navigating toward "private obligations."⁴³⁸ My analysis of Milosz's correspondence suggests that his understanding of his own intellectual duties, their execution, and his final contributions all took place within four areas of dialectical exchange with his friends. First, employing a variety of mobilization strategies, Milosz's friends simply pushed him to write, perhaps saving his talent for Polish literature. Next, they celebrated Milosz in his building of cultural bridges for Polish literature in America by popularizing knowledge about Polish literature, promoting Polish poets and writers, and translating their works into English. Furthermore, motivated by a desire to overcome Western ignorance about East-Central Europe, Milosz worked hand-in-hand with *Kultura* to reveal to Anglophone audiences a modern, multicultural and intellectually attractive image of Poland. Finally, while on the intimate level Milosz's friends helped him overcome personal crises, for the public eye they co-created Milosz's image as that of a leading Central European intellectual with a growing number of readers in Poland. The exchanges Milosz had with his émigré friends in the 1960s and 1970s will be discussed individually in order to underline differences in the influence that various friends had on Milosz. Like puzzles, these one-on-one

⁴³⁸ Barbara Torunczyk, "Nota do listow Jelenskiego," Jelenski, and Milosz, *Korespondencja*.

exchanges will come together to reveal a picture of Milosz as he was “co-authored” into a Literary Nobel Prize winner and a major East Central European intellectual.

One of Milosz’s closest friends was Jelenski, whose intellectual sophistication, culturally rich background and artistic inclinations made him into Milosz’s “ideal reader.” Looking at their intellectual friendship, I argue that Jelenski played a key role in nourishing Milosz’s poetic work and stimulating his intellectual endeavors. Jelenski’s contribution was indeed unique; not only was he the first reader of Milosz’s poetry, but also an insightful critic of his writing. In the mid 1960s, Milosz disclosed his artistically difficult position to Jelenski, asking: “But who am I for you, Kot? A pot from which coffee is poured, and the pot remains a pot – like for my family – or am I something else?”⁴³⁹ What Jelenski meant for Milosz could not be stated more emphatically than in Milosz’s own words. In 1969, upon the publication of his book *Widzenia nad Zatoka San Francisco* [Views from San Francisco Bay], Milosz wrote to Jelenski, saying: “I assume that this book will have five (5) readers, and you are one of them. Therefore, it is important for me that you write sincerely what you think about it.”⁴⁴⁰ Although Milosz greatly valued his artistic independence and was often hostile to critics, he would always seek Jelenski’s opinion. “I showed him my poems before I sent them to be published,” Milosz stated, “his opinion counted most for me.”⁴⁴¹ The almost two hundred letters that Milosz exchanged with Jelenski in the years 1953 – 1987 reveal a dialogue between an unusually humble Milosz and his sensitive reader, Jelenski. Their correspondence serves not only as a source for reconstructing the influence of this one-man audience on

⁴³⁹ Milosz’s letter to Konstanty Jelenski, 10/1965. Jelenski, Milosz, *Korespondencja*, 55.

⁴⁴⁰ Milosz’s letter to Jelenski, n.d. 1969. Jelenski, and Milosz, *Korespondencja*.

⁴⁴¹ Czeslaw Milosz, and Madeline G. Levine, trans., *A Year of the Hunter* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994), 455. Barbara Torunczyk talks about their friendship in her note to: Jelenski, and Milosz, *Korespondencja*.

Milosz's literary self, but also as a window onto the intellectual history of Polish émigré elites.

In 1961, just a few months after Milosz's move to California, Jelenski responded to Milosz's sorrowful letter, reassuring his desperate friend about the importance of his literary output:

I am certain, Jelenski wrote, that your chances *to remain present* in Polish literature are 10 out of 10. Perhaps with interludes – like Brzozowski. You rightly write that you are more interested in *participation* than in “remaining present.” But perhaps a *real* influence (although hardly verifiable) is better than fictional participation, which is the fate of so many writers in Poland. All that is not *pour remonter le moral* [to improve your morale], but because I am *convinced* of it. [emphasis orig.]⁴⁴²

Since Milosz often expressed regret about his lack of readers, Jelenski prepared an anthology of Polish poetry in French, with Milosz's poems in Jelenski's translation included, in order to reach a new audience for his friend. The book was published in 1965. Moreover, together with Professor Alexander Schenker, Jelenski prepared the 1976 Polish edition of Milosz's collected poems. The publication of the so-called “green volume” had a long history, and it was no doubt an act of friendship and dedication on the part of Milosz's friends.⁴⁴³ Addressing another of Milosz's frustrations, the lack of a critical reception of his poetry, Jelenski published a series of articles in *Kultura*, providing insightful literary critiques of Milosz's works.⁴⁴⁴ One of Jelenski's articles was published in 1978, a year after Milosz had asked Jelenski in a dramatic tone: “I would like you to write about me in any language. I would be very grateful.”⁴⁴⁵ In a 1977 letter, once again reassuring Milosz about the significance of his poetry for Polish literature,

⁴⁴² Jelenski's letter to Milosz, 04/27/1961. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 32, f. 480.

⁴⁴³ Alexander Schenker, “Historia zielonego tomu,” *Zeszyty Literackie* (2011).

⁴⁴⁴ Konstanty Jelenski. “Poeta i historia,” *Kultura* 1 (1954): 179-185; Jelenski. “Poeta i przyroda,” *Kultura* 11 (1968): 3-22; Jelenski. “Pojedynek na cytaty,” *Kultura* 4 (1976): 139-140; Jelenski. “Milosz et Gombrowicz,” *La Discordance* (1978): 14-16; Jelenski. “O ‘Ziemi Ulro’ po dwóch latach,” *Kultura* 6 (1979): 15-31.

⁴⁴⁵ Milosz's letter to Jelenski, 3/14/1977. Jelenski, and Milosz, *Korespondencja*.

Jelenski casually mentioned other efforts on behalf of his friend. “In Dublin,” Jelenski wrote, “we had a gathering with Leszek Kolakowski and Zimand devoted to lobbying for the Nobel Prize for you.”⁴⁴⁶

As his confidant, Jelenski went through endless discussions with Milosz responding to the poet’s new doubts about his literary heritage for the future, and about his image in the eyes of his slowly emerging audience in Poland. Since the late 1960s, some of Milosz’s books were smuggled into Poland from *Kultura*, which, given the makeshift character of this activity, gave rise to the question about the image of Milosz that would be constructed from this random selection of texts. Milosz, as always, was extremely worried that he would be perceived as someone he was not, and dreaded that his literary profile would be determined by his old works circulating in Poland and read in a political context. In 1968, Milosz explained his worries about the politicization of his image, both in Poland and abroad, in a letter to Jelenski:

Perhaps, it is my fault, perhaps it is the circumstances – in any case, it is distressing to feel that one is cheating, that a mask put on one is taken for one’s face. (...) There are these poems, which were emotionally squeezed out of me by events, i.e. *The Voices of the Poor People*, *The Treatise on Morals* - they are now circulating underground and are somewhat legendary in Poland. (...) There is some kind of anticipation and misunderstanding, the automatism of the traditional formula: the Nation and its poets. However, there is yet another part of my so-called output which bothers me even more, these books in prose. And the most when my foreign readers know me as the author of these books only – therefore the press clippings usually bring me to despair - it is not me that they write about.⁴⁴⁷

Striving to attract attention to Milosz and his literary work, Jelenski managed to get Milosz on a prestigious 1974 interview series with intellectuals in France, but Milosz refused to participate. He was unhappy with the questionnaire suggested by the authors,

⁴⁴⁶ Jelenski’s letter to Milosz, 10/16/1977. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 32, f. 480.

⁴⁴⁷ Milosz’s letter to Jelenski, 11/15/1968. Jelenski, and Milosz, *Korespondencja*.

since it mainly revolved around *The Captive Mind* and Milosz's political views. "You have to understand," Milosz wrote to Jelenski, explaining his decision, "that I have worked for over twenty years on effacing the image of me as of a political figure, which emerged as a result of my breaking with Warsaw. (...) I have become a professor of Slavic Literatures and a poet. All the brainy people in Poland take me for nothing else than a poet."⁴⁴⁸ Clearly, even Jelenski could not fully satisfy Milosz's constant concern about his image. Despite that, Jelenski had enormous merits in uplifting Milosz's artistic self and promoting him as the greatest twentieth-century Polish poet. In October 1987, a few months after Jelenski's death, Milosz reminisced about his friend, saying: "I realized just how much space he had occupied in my life and how much he deserved my gratitude. For years I had only one reader, him. (...) The sole confirmation of the value of what I was doing was in Jelenski's letters. One reader – but what a reader!"⁴⁴⁹

While Jelenski remained in an intimate and devoted relation to Milosz's literary call, Jerzy Giedroyc conversely shaped Milosz's role through constant conflicts, in which he tried to impose political responsibilities on Milosz. The lively dialogue between Milosz and Giedroyc, who was the most influential Polish press editor in exile, mostly took place in a very rich correspondence spanning the years 1952-2000.⁴⁵⁰ An analysis of hundreds of letters reveals a powerful multi-layered dynamic between the two. Giedroyc's pressure to engage Milosz's intellectual capital in Polish political problems was instrumental for Milosz's self-definition, since it made him search for an alternative to political ways of fulfilling his obligations toward Polish literature. It was against

⁴⁴⁸ Milosz's letter to Jelenski, 7/22/1974. Jelenski, and Milosz, *Korespondencja*.

⁴⁴⁹ Milosz, *A Year of the Hunter*, 67. Milosz noted this on 10/12/1987.

⁴⁵⁰ The three volumes of their correspondence have been edited by Marek Kornat. Giedroyc, Jerzy, and Milosz, Czeslaw, ed. Marek Kornat, *Listy 1952-2000*.

Giedroyc's postulates of political engagement that Milosz had to defend the sovereignty of his literary work. At the same time, though, Giedroyc was successful in stimulating Milosz's supra-literary tasks, which fell under *Kultura*'s agenda of building an East-Central European community of shared cultural heritage. Finally, thanks to Giedroyc, Milosz always had at least a tiny Polish audience he could address via the articles and books published in and by *Kultura*.

In order to understand Giedroyc's place in Milosz's intellectual orbit, one has to understand the contribution of *Kultura*, an émigré monthly published in a Parisian suburb by four people, to the mainstream of twentieth-century Polish literary and cultural life. It would not be an overstatement to say that Giedroyc played a key role in saving two pearls of Polish twentieth-century literature - Gombrowicz and Milosz - from material misery and consequent artistic crisis. For decades, Giedroyc promoted Polish émigré and domestic writers, building networks between them and protesting against the communist-imposed division of Polish literature into two branches: the "good" domestic and the "bad" émigré one. Giedroyc's protégées included Polish literary exiles, such as: Gustaw Herling-Grudzinski and Andrzej Bobkowski, as well as writers residing in Poland: Zbigniew Herbert, Stefan Kisielewski and Marek Hlasko. *Kultura* also helped many intellectual exiles from Poland, among them two philosophers - Zbigniew Bauman and Leszek Kolakowski - in settling down in the West. With its politics of uniting Polish intellectuals beyond the Iron Curtain and publishing literary masterpieces, *Kultura* became a landmark of twentieth-century Polish culture. One of the members of the *Kultura* team, Zygmunt Hertz, commented on the periodical in a 1967 letter to Milosz, saying: "Good books have been published. It [*Kultura*] was a light aircraft, where you,

Stawar, Hlasko [Polish writers] landed. It was an accommodation and a feeding trough for hundreds of people, it was a means for milking money for those people, it was a spring-board for Gombrowicz....”⁴⁵¹ With so many obligations toward Polish culture and with his love of politics, Giedroyc strived hard to galvanize the potential of “his writers,” often inducing them to make political contributions to the monthly. This idea was a sticking point in Giedroyc’s relations with Milosz.

While Giedroyc and Milosz had a kind of love-hate relationship, Giedroyc did shape, to some degree, Milosz’s intellectual endeavors by pushing Milosz to write, suggesting literary themes, or advising him against shaky literary projects. The analysis of their correspondence shows that Giedroyc tended to ignore the value of Milosz’s literary contribution, instead throwing at Milosz “laundry lists” of political texts Milosz should write and causes he should support. Milosz, in turn, was obsessed with a fear of having a political affiliation assigned to him, and overlooked *Kultura*’s contribution, relentlessly criticizing Giedroyc for putting too much emphasis in his periodical on politics. In a 1964 letter, annoyed with constant pressure from Giedroyc to comment on political developments, Milosz stated: “But my value for *Kultura* is based on my literary, not political repute. I will never be a political banner; I do not have the qualifications for it.”⁴⁵²

The relationship between Milosz and Giedroyc has been discussed by the historian Marek Kornat, who pointed to five sets of problems on which Giedroyc and Milosz agreed: first, they loathed the idea of a division between domestic and exile Polish literature; they were cautious not to pass judgment on intellectuals behind the Iron

⁴⁵¹ Zbigniew Hertz’s letter to Milosz, 16/10/1967. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 27.

⁴⁵² Milosz’s letter to Giedroyc, 12/1964, Giedroyc, Milosz, Kornat, *Listy*.

Curtain; they agreed as to the intellectual stagnation of the émigré circles in London.⁴⁵³

On top of this, Giedroyc and Milosz were partners in two key projects: first, striving to overcome the collective and parochial character of Polish intellectual life; and second, stimulating a dialogue between East European nations to create understanding between Poles, Lithuanians, Belarusians, Russians and Ukrainians, and to come to terms with the Jewish past.⁴⁵⁴ In 1970, Giedroyc wrote to Milosz, saying: “It is not at all your invention that to be a Pole is not easy, and that it means to drown in some s... at every step.

However, since we won’t move out from this nation – at least I won’t – then we have to strike this coarse skull, and not to take offence.”⁴⁵⁵ Milosz responded, saying: “Our role, therefore, is to simultaneously advance conscience, which is not formed by politics, but rather by thinking of all things human.”⁴⁵⁶ Both critics of the Romantic entrenchment of Polish culture, Milosz and Giedroyc were brothers in arms in the uprising against narrow-minded Polish nationalism, parochialism and intellectual indolence, hoping to transform their compatriots by the power of word sent from exile. That, ironically, sounded like a purely Romantic project.

If Giedroyc was the head of *Kultura*, then its heart was Zygmunt Hertz – a convivial pre-war Polish entrepreneur, who extended a helping hand to numerous Polish intellectual exiles, among them Milosz, providing a refuge for their persecuted minds. Hertz was a very thoughtful friend of Milosz, who never stinted his energy to rescue Milosz from emotional malaise, and who partnered with Milosz in creating opportunities for other Polish intellectuals, either those exiled or those persecuted in Poland. His

⁴⁵³ Marek Kornat, “Introduction,” Giedroyc, Milosz, Kornat. *Listy*.

⁴⁵⁴ In order to reach a non-Polish speaking audience in East-Central Europe Giedroyc published for example a Russian issue of *Kultura*. Giedroyc’s letter to Milosz, 12/28/1974. Giedroyc, Milosz, Kornat. *Listy*.

⁴⁵⁵ Giedroyc’s letter to Milosz, 08/17/1970. Giedroyc, Milosz, Kornat. *Listy*.

⁴⁵⁶ Milosz’s letter to Giedroyc, 12/06/1972. Giedroyc, Milosz, Kornat. *Listy*.

friendship with Hertz was even more precious to Milosz, since Hertz met regularly with visitors from Poland in Paris, and kept Milosz informed about the reception of his works which were smuggled to the country. One has to remember that the regime of People's Poland became somewhat more liberal after 1956, and some intellectuals were allowed to travel to the West. Although they knew that the Polish Secret Service kept the *Kultura* House under surveillance, many took the risk and met with the editors of the periodical they had been reading secretly in Poland for years. Over time, *Kultura* became Mecca for desperate Polish intellectuals who knocked on its doors the moment they left their homeland - temporarily or for good. Hertz spent hours with guests, discussing the situation in Poland, exchanging jokes and gossip. While he literally nurtured the exiles in Paris, feeding and giving them pocket money, *Kultura* provided spiritual nourishment to people in the country by having the visitors smuggle banned books into Poland. In their discussions with visitors, Giedroyc sought information for sketching his political plans, but Hertz came closer to the tissue of everyday life in Poland.

Sensitive to echoes of Milosz's reception in Poland, Hertz played the role of an intermediary for the slowly emerging contacts between Milosz and his readers in the country. One cannot imagine anything more precious for the poet who used to think that he had been writing poetry for seagulls.⁴⁵⁷ Their correspondence shows Hertz explaining to Milosz the intricacies of the literary image which had been created of him from the available fragments by readers in Poland. In February 1960, Hertz wrote to Milosz about the fact that he was held in high esteem by the members of *Klub Krzywego Kola* [Club of the Crooked Circle], a group of Warsaw intellectuals who gathered to rally for ideological independence. Hertz got this information first-hand from Andrzej Kijowski –

⁴⁵⁷ Milosz's correspondence with Zygmunt Hertz is not yet available.

a young intellectual and member of the *Klub* – who was allowed to pay a short visit to Paris.⁴⁵⁸ Similarly, Hertz passed the words of a Polish writer, Jerzy Andrzejewski, who wrote him that the audiences coming to his author’s evenings often asked about Milosz.⁴⁵⁹ A philosopher Andrzej Walicki enthused over Milosz’s writing during his 1961 visit to *Kultura*.⁴⁶⁰ A Warsaw stage designer, Irena Nowicka, wrote that the Warsaw intelligentsia knew how much Milosz had done for Polish culture, and that he was widely respected in intellectual circles.⁴⁶¹ During his stay in Rome, the Polish anti-communist cardinal Stefan Wyszyński praised Milosz’s works.⁴⁶² Over and over again, Hertz would bombard Milosz with such signals of his importance to Polish readers, even if their number was not great. Writing about a report he had had from one dramatic 1968 meeting of the Polish Writers’ Union in Warsaw, Hertz said: “You were named there as the greatest living Polish poet.”⁴⁶³ An analysis of Milosz’s correspondence with Hertz also allows a discussion of the scope of Milosz’s presence in Poland in the 1960 and 70s, when his works, even though officially banned, reached certain intelligentsia circles. What must have been particularly dear to Milosz’s heart was the fact that young writers and intellectuals coming from Poland, like Marek Hlasko or Wojciech Karpinski, simply

⁴⁵⁸ At this time, the question of who was allowed to travel abroad was very complex. To international conferences Polish authorities sent either their loyal intellectuals or those who were smart enough not to take risks. The leader of the Polish Writers’ Union Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz was sent as a delegate several times. Over time, more people were allowed to travel. As research conducted in the archives of the Polish Security Service has recently shown, those traveling abroad often had to pay a high price for the right to leave Poland. Depending on their political attitude and social status, they would typically have to sign some kind of document, promising to provide the Secret Service with information upon their return. Some did not refrain from snitching on their co-workers in order to obtain a passport. Those who often traveled abroad were often treated with suspicion, not only by friends in Poland, but also by the émigrés. The Polish poet and Milosz’s friend at one time, Zbigniew Herbert, for example, had to negotiate with the Security Service in order to secure for himself the right to travel abroad. Milosz commented on Herbert’s situation in a 1970 letter to Giedroyc, saying: “I have received a postcard from Amsterdam sent by Herbert. It says that he has absconded again, and that in a few months he will be in America. Perhaps you deign to write me honestly what you think about that. I do not understand [...] these travels and who is interested in that he is let loose.” Milosz’s letter to Giedroyc, 7/07/1970. Giedroyc, Milosz, Kornat. *Listy 1964-1973*.

⁴⁵⁹ Zygmunt Hertz’s letter to Milosz, 20/02/1960. Czesław Milosz Papers, box 26.

⁴⁶⁰ Zygmunt Hertz’s letter to Milosz, 3/06/1961. Czesław Milosz Papers, box 26.

⁴⁶¹ Zygmunt Hertz’s letter to Milosz, 09/23/1964. Czesław Milosz Papers, box 26.

⁴⁶² Zygmunt Hertz’s letter to Milosz 09/23/1964. Czesław Milosz Papers, box 26.

⁴⁶³ Zygmunt Hertz’s letter to Milosz, mid-March 1968. Czesław Milosz Papers, box 27.

rushed at and devoured Milosz's books at the *Kultura* House.⁴⁶⁴ On the one hand, this spoke to the extent of literary deprivation in Poland; on the other, it proved that at least fragments of Milosz's oeuvre – mainly those published in and by *Kultura* - circulated among the young Polish intelligentsia.

Perhaps at this point it was not such a big deal to read Milosz and speak about his work publicly, one may ask. Although the Polish government did not take the most severe, totalitarian measures to eradicate underground cultural life, it did persecute those who would discuss banned works in public. A dramatic example involving Milosz was Stefan Kisielewski's speech at a special gathering of the Polish Writers' Union in Warsaw on February 29, 1968. The session was devoted to a discussion of recent events, unleashed by the banning of Mickiewicz's play *Forefathers Eve* at one of Warsaw's theaters, since the authorities feared its patriotic themes. This decision started a tumultuous year, as already discussed. In the following months, students protesting against the government were removed from universities, workers were prompted to beat students, and Polish Jews were made into a *bête noir* and exiled from the country. In this historically grave moment, Kisielewski spoke in front of his older literary colleagues, in the heart of Warsaw, about the fake character of Polish culture, from which the names of great writers such as Gombrowicz and Milosz had been erased. That same night Kisielewski was beaten up by an unknown offender.⁴⁶⁵ Clearly, discussing émigré literature was still a risky business under the communist regime, and many of Hertz's guests learned that first-hand.

⁴⁶⁴ Zygmunt Hertz's letter to Milosz, 10/03/1965. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 26.

⁴⁶⁵ Zygmunt Hertz's letters to Milosz, mid-March 1968, and 26/03/1968. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 27.

Analyzing Hertz's influence on Milosz in light of their correspondence, one sees Hertz using "a carrot and stick" strategy, scolding, then complimenting Milosz in order to prevent him from questioning the importance of his literary work, not to mention abandoning it. In the first few weeks of Milosz's stay in California, Hertz reminded his friend that he should take advantage of his family's material stabilization and focus on writing. "Write reasonable pieces: poems, essays," Hertz wrote, "And fuck off from politics, because it stinks."⁴⁶⁶ A year later he would write to Milosz in an ironic tone, saying: "Get published, get published (...) you are a GREAT POET (...) therefore there is no doubt that it is worth publishing these hallucinations of yours."⁴⁶⁷ On other occasions, however, responding to the tone of resignation present in Milosz's letters, Hertz took a disciplining tone, as in the letter below:

Don't write, you idiot, that no one needs you. [...] It is nice to go to a café and be welcomed with a whisper, as at the beginning of a striptease, that the girl certainly has a nice bust. But think about it, is it really that important. [...] Sit on your ass in healthy California, write poems, write books, don't get dirty with ideology, because it is foam and nothing and a passing trend, and do things ahead of us, and this will remain.⁴⁶⁸

Characteristically, Hertz would also take practical steps to alleviate Milosz's exilic misfortune, and, for example, ask Milosz to record his poems on tape, which would then be smuggled to selected people and intellectual circles in Poland, such as: *Klub Krzywego Kola* [Club of the Crooked Circle], Miron Białoszewski, Igor Abramow and Agnieszka Osiecka. Then, Hertz would repeatedly urge Milosz to send the material, luring him with the vision of a broader audience. "Poles like secret educational gatherings," Hertz wrote

⁴⁶⁶ Zygmunt Hertz's letter to Milosz, 11/20/1960. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 26.

⁴⁶⁷ Zygmunt Hertz's letter to Milosz, 10/24/1961. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 26.

⁴⁶⁸ Zygmunt Hertz's letter to Milosz, 9/22/1962. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 26.

to Milosz, “so they will copy those tapes.”⁴⁶⁹ Since Hertz had none of Jelenski’s literary sophistication and taste, his amateur reviews often unnerved Milosz, but the letters from Hertz had a very special place in his life.

While Hertz did a lot to support Milosz, their friendship reached out toward other people as they built a safety net within the *Kultura* circle for the newly arrived, often desperate, intellectual exiles from Poland. In 1951 Milosz had benefited from such support, and now, he would, in cooperation with Hertz and Giedroyc, help secure temporary university positions for several Polish intellectuals and writers, who had either fled political persecution, or sought a break from the reality of People’s Poland. Among them were: the philosopher Leszek Kolakowski, the poet Artur Miedzyrzecki and the scholar Witold Jedlicki.⁴⁷⁰ Sensitive to the fate of young intellectuals whose activity in Poland had been suppressed, Hertz, Giedroyc and Milosz recommended them for scholarships at various European and American institutions. Milosz was particularly effective in placing people at the year-long Iowa Writing Program which played a role in the careers of many rising literary talents from Poland, including Andrzej Kijowski, Tymoteusz Karpowicz, and Artur Miedzyrzecki.⁴⁷¹ In the exilic net, a helping hand was

⁴⁶⁹ Zygmunt Hertz to Milosz, 3/06/1961. Other letters discussing the subject of recordings for Polish audience: 11/20/1960, 1/17/1961. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 26. Klub Krzywego Kola brought together dissident intellectuals who gathered in Warsaw to discuss illegal books and political developments in the country. One of its members was the future dissident leader Adam Michnik. The Polish writer Igor Abramow-Newerly supported the Club, although he was a member of the communist party and a cultural official. Miron Bialoszewski, in turn, was a poet whose home served as a forum for more or less clandestine gatherings where literature, also émigré, was read aloud and discussed.

⁴⁷⁰ The writer Witold Jedlicki left Poland for Israel in 1960. In exile, he wrote for *Kultura*. Jerzy Giedroyc supported Jedlicki’s application for the Ford Fellowship that would allow the writer to move to the USA. In 1964, Jedlicki was granted a stipend at the University of California at Berkeley, and stayed in the USA until 1969. The philosopher Leszek Kolakowski was relegated from professorship at the Warsaw University in the aftermath of the March 1968 events. Known for his critical attitude toward the communist authorities, in 1968 Kolakowski was accused of being an instigator of student demonstrations. Thanks to Giedroyc and Milosz, Kolakowski secured the position of a visiting professor at the University of California at Berkeley. In 1970, he was offered a job as a Senior Research Fellow at All Souls College at Oxford University, where he worked as a professor for the next three decades. Artur Miedzyrzecki was a Polish poet, who lived in the USA in the years 1970-1974. Both Milosz and Giedroyc supported Miedzyrzecki in his efforts to establish his academic career in the USA.

⁴⁷¹ Milosz’ letters of support for Tymoteusz Karpowicz, Artur Miedzyrzecki, and Leszek Szaruga, among others, are included in his papers. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 16, f. 289.

sometimes a way of paying off moral debts. Jelenski's professional position allowed him to promote Milosz and Gombrowicz in Europe. Later, in America, Milosz lectured on Gombrowicz, and even had one of his graduate students translate Gombrowicz's works into English, creating for Gombrowicz an audience outside the Polish-speaking circle.⁴⁷²

Working along *Kultura*'s line of unearthing the multicultural East-Central European past, Milosz saved Aleksander Wat's account of living in twentieth-century Eastern Europe as a Pole, a Jew and a communist. Wat was a Polish poet, writer and art theorist, born in 1900 in a Warsaw Jewish family. He graduated from the Faculty of Philology, and became one of the precursors of the Polish futurism movement in the early 1920s. Although Wat was a communist, the NKVD arrested him upon the outbreak of World War II, and then exiled him to Kazakhstan. Due to a period of torture and persecution in Soviet Russia, Wat's health deteriorated dramatically, and his sympathies for communism evaporated. Upon his return to Poland, Wat worked for an official publishing house, but was banned from publishing his own works. In 1959, having lived through the Stalinist era in Poland, Wat exiled himself to France. Constantly struggling to make a living, Wat collaborated with and found support in *Kultura*. In 1967 in Paris, exhausted by terrible incurable headaches, Wat committed suicide.

One exilic friend who tried to help Wat in his misfortunes was Milosz. In 1960, Milosz passed over to Wat the scholarship he had received from the New Land Foundation, and a few years later he helped Wat secure a year-long fellowship at UC Berkeley, during which Wat was supposed to write his political autobiography. However, Wat's illness made writing virtually impossible. In this situation, Milosz, possibly

⁴⁷² Louis Iribarne translated the following works by Gombrowicz into English: *The Marriage*, *Operetta*, *The Three Plays*.

prompted by Hertz, took the role of an interviewer, and recorded Wat's recollections on tape.⁴⁷³ Urging Giedroyc to publish Wat's memoir, Milosz explained its value, saying: "This conjugation of elements [Polishness – Jewishness – communism – Russia] happens only once [orig.]. It is a great tombstone of the Poland which once had the Jewish intelligentsia."⁴⁷⁴ Since Giedroyc had been refusing to publish it, Wat's memoir came out in 1972, only after Milosz had himself edited it and found a publisher for the book.⁴⁷⁵ Besides Wat's memoir, Milosz hoped to reconstruct bridges to Jewish cultural heritage, also by means of literature. "I have the best interest of Polish-Jewish studies at heart," Milosz admitted in a 1970 letter to Giedroyc.⁴⁷⁶ Many decades before it became a widespread conviction among Polish intellectuals, Milosz had understood the importance of, and put into practice the discussion of the Polish-Jewish past.

While Milosz helped many intellectual exiles from East Central Europe, no one owed him so much in terms of making a career in the West as his younger friend Zbigniew Herbert. Born in 1924 in Poland, Herbert was a poet who struggled with political persecution by the Polish communist authorities because he did not submit to the social realist aesthetic. Consequently, Herbert was doomed to keep his writing in the sock drawer, his poems circulating in the domestic underground and occasionally smuggled to

⁴⁷³ In his letter to Milosz, from July 28^t 1967, Zygmunt Hertz suggested that a book could be produced on the basis of the recordings with Wat. Czesław Milosz Papers, box 27.

⁴⁷⁴ Milosz's letter to Giedroyc, 02/04/1970. Giedroyc, Milosz, Kornat. *Listy*.

⁴⁷⁵ Aleksander Wat, *Mój Wiek: Pamiętnik Mówiony* (London: Polonia Books Fund, 1977). For years Giedroyc had been refusing to publish Wat's memoir, and argued repeatedly with Milosz on this issue. More on the editing of the memoirs in Milosz's correspondence with Ola Watowa (Wat's wife), Aleksander Wat, and Jerzy Giedroyc. See: Czesław Milosz, Ola Watowa, Aleksander Wat, Barbara Toruńczyk, Jan Zieliński, and Mikołaj Nowak-Rogoziński, *Czesław Milosz, Ola Watowa: Listy o Tym, Co Najważniejsze* (Warszawa: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich, 2009); Czesław Milosz, Aleksander Wat, Ed. Alina Kowalczykova, *Korespondencja*, (Czytelnik, Warszawa, 2005); Giedroyc, Milosz, Kornat. *Listy*.

⁴⁷⁶ Milosz's letter to Giedroyc, 12/27/1970. In his correspondence with Giedroyc, Milosz often discussed his efforts to promote and develop Polish-Jewish historical and literary studies. In 1970, for example, Milosz tried to teach the first course on Polish-Jewish literature in America at University of California at Berkeley. He discussed this issue in letters to Giedroyc from 10/02/1967, 07/07/1970, and 11/22/1970. Giedroyc understood the need expressed by Milosz, and himself worked toward a better understanding between the nations and ethnicities of East-Central Europe. Giedroyc, Milosz, Kornat, *Listy*.

the West. In the late 1960s, the Polish authorities would allow Herbert to travel from time to time. Abroad he could write to Miłosz openly.⁴⁷⁷ The two kept up an intimate correspondence, in which Herbert constantly paid homage to his master, confessing his affection by saying: “I will follow you with my dark love.”⁴⁷⁸ Miłosz made a name for Herbert in the West by translating and publishing his poems in the Anglophone world, as well as nominating Herbert for prestigious international literary prizes and fellowships. Miłosz’s effort was so vigorous that the situation reached a dramatic climax in 1975, when at a poetry reading a moderator introduced Miłosz as a translator of Herbert, not even mentioning Miłosz’s own poetic work. That came as a shock to Miłosz, as he discovered that the duties he had carried out for years had the effect of producing an image of him that once again was only a distorted version of who he felt he truly was.

Miłosz was the best PR specialist any national literature could have dreamed of. Teaching Slavic literatures to American students in California, Miłosz understood that the power of literature lay in discussing universal problems. Therefore, for his literature classes and translating seminars Miłosz picked Polish authors whose works reached beyond the confines of the national agenda. “I teach them about the theater, Witkacy, Gombrowicz, and not about *The Books of Polish Pilgrimage*,” Miłosz wrote about his philosophy of teaching to Giedroyc.⁴⁷⁹ Fulfilling yet another pressing need, Miłosz prepared *The History of Polish Literature*. Ironically, this 1969 textbook not only

⁴⁷⁷ The Polish poet and a friend of Miłosz, Zbigniew Herbert had to negotiate, and perhaps cooperate, with the Security Service in order to secure the right to travel abroad. Miłosz commented on Herbert’s peculiar situation in a 1970 letter to Giedroyc, saying: “I have received a postcard from Amsterdam sent by Herbert. It says that he has absconded again, and that in a few months he will be in America. Perhaps you deign to write me honestly what you think about that. I do not understand [...] these travels and who is interested in that he is let loose.” Miłosz’s letter to Giedroyc, 7/07/1970. Giedroyc, Miłosz, Kornat, *Listy*.

⁴⁷⁸ Zbigniew Herbert, Czesław Miłosz, Katarzyna Herbertowa, Marek Skwarnicki, and Barbara Toruńczyk, *Korespondencja: z faksymiliami listów i wierszy, fotografiami oraz aneksem zawierającym nieznane wypowiedzi Herberta o Miłoszu i Miłosza o Herbercie, a także komentarze Katarzyny Herbertowej i Marka Skwarnickiego oraz wiersze obu Poetów* (Warszawa: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich, 2006).

⁴⁷⁹ Miłosz’s letter to Giedroyc, 1969. Giedroyc, Miłosz, Kornat, *Listy*.

provided an intriguing guide for American students of Slavic languages, but also excited writers in Warsaw, when they flipped through the textbook looking for their names.⁴⁸⁰ On top of these, for years Milosz had been translating poetry from Polish into English, which culminated in the 1965 publication of *Postwar Polish Poetry: an Anthology*.⁴⁸¹ This volume was a milestone in the reception of twentieth-century Polish poetry in the English-speaking world. The literary critic Jan Blonski stated that Milosz had single-handedly shifted the path of Polish poetry from the Francophone to the Anglophone sphere in the postwar period, as he translated and published English-speaking poets, many of them for the first time. Now in 1965, with his anthology, Milosz opened the door to Polish poetry for the American audience. This volume laid the foundation for the phenomenon of the American love of Slavic poetry.⁴⁸² Thus, the research I conducted in Milosz's archives made it clear that a striking number of literary and intellectual émigrés from Poland owed their recognition in the West to Milosz. The role of *Kultura* as a cultural transmission belt between the West and Poland and of the Giedroyc-Milosz team as the promoters of literary talents will be discussed more extensively in chapter five.

After twenty years of fulfilling his “private obligations” toward Polish literature, Milosz reached a turning point, and upon reflecting on his past work, decided to return to his true calling - poetry. “Now it is *fini*, period, no more translations or introductory texts,” Milosz wrote to Giedroyc in 1969, “I think that I have earned the right to take care of my own writing. (...) my various passions turn me into an omnibus, someone like

⁴⁸⁰ Upon the publication of *The History of Polish Literature*, Milosz received multiple letters from Polish writers who were disappointed that Milosz did not discuss them in the textbook.

⁴⁸¹ Czesław Miłosz, *Postwar Polish Poetry: An Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

⁴⁸² Clare Cavanagh, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics: Russia, Poland, and the West* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009). In 1964, a year prior to publishing an anthology of Polish poetry, Milosz wrote to Giedroyc: “When you show post-1956 Polish poetry to Americans, they go completely crazy. I have never in my life received a letter from an editor like the one in response to a sample of my translations that I sent to New York. But it is not at all that they value the Westernness of this poetry, but rather its dissimilarity and specificity.”

Marcin Bielski, who worked on *The Chronicle of the Whole World*.⁴⁸³ A year later, the fifty-nine year old poet added: “Now, I really do not have that much time ahead.”⁴⁸⁴ Carrying out the tasks defined within the *Kultura* circle, Milosz gave testimony of a different shade of Polishness, one characterized by open-mindedness, high intellectual standards and cultural diversity. Despite his dislike of the nationalist stigma marking Polish culture, Milosz, with the support of his friends, remained a Polish writer. Although he described his activity as fulfilling “private obligations,” Milosz in fact operated on the grand scene, since he designated new horizons for Polish literature and culture by introducing universal topics. He commented on his activity, referring to a famous saying that Poles tended to approach any subject, even that of an elephant, in the context of their national agenda. “I admit,” Milosz wrote, “that I would probably have no desire to write in Polish if I were not convinced that this way I am dealing with the very elephant – the issues that are important for *homo sapiens*, and not only the attitude of one distant *margraviate* to the elephant, which always gambols somewhere else.”⁴⁸⁵

The analysis of Milosz’s interactions with his émigré friends shows not only how he negotiated his intellectual duties against the demands placed upon him, but also how his friends helped him become more of the writer he wanted to be. Although Czapski, Giedroyc and Hertz all lived at the *Kultura* House in Maisons-Laffitte and often met with Jelenski, the four of them kept individual correspondence with Milosz and did not necessarily inform one another of news from Milosz. Czapski’s words from his 1962 letter to Milosz spoke to that: “Write to me...after all, you know that if not for the letters

⁴⁸³ Milosz referred to Marcin Bielski, *Kronika wszystkiego swiata* (Kraków, 1551). Milosz’s letter to Giedroyc, 06/12/1969. Giedroyc, Milosz, Kornat, *Listy*.

⁴⁸⁴ Milosz’s letter to Giedroyc, 7/07/1970. Giedroyc, Milosz, Kornat, *Listy*.

⁴⁸⁵ Czeslaw Milosz, “Powikłania jednej porażki,” *Kultura* 4 (1963): 23-38.

from you, I could know nothing or next to nothing about you – even if you died or were appointed the president of the United States (...) Jerzy [Giedroyc] does not say a word.”⁴⁸⁶ All of Milosz’s Parisian friends, however, were united in supporting Milosz, also by lobbying for a Literary Nobel Prize for him in the 1970s.⁴⁸⁷ As the letters in the *Kultura* Archives show, Giedroyc commenced this campaign in 1975, corresponding with the Polish librarian at the Swedish Academy. In October 1980, Milosz received the Nobel Prize. Expressing his happiness about the news, Czapski wrote to Milosz, saying: “You are a dragonfly, and you had wings from the very beginning; the Nobel is indeed ‘*un incident agréable de parcours*,’ [a nice incident] but it is not what counts in the winged world.”⁴⁸⁸ For the last thirty years, Milosz had suffered from different kinds of deprivation: of family, homeland, professional stabilization, audience, or material well-being. But even at a time when he felt “less than one” on the Californian coast, his Parisian friends kept him company, if only in letters.

LOOKING FOR A CENTER

In the 1980s, a group of East-Central European émigré intellectuals, including Milan Kundera, Danilo Kis, Josef Skvorecky, Gyorgy Konrad and Milosz, set off to recover a lost cultural and ethnic pluralism in their part of Europe, spiritually impoverished by the homogenizing policies of the Soviets. In the process of defining their regional identity, they revived the term “Central Europe.” While in the mid-1980s political situation of East-Central Europe was usually discussed, these intellectuals

⁴⁸⁶ Jozef Czapski’s letter to Milosz, 05/22/1962. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 13, f. 244.

⁴⁸⁷ Jerzy Giedroyc’s correspondence with Katarzyna Gruber. Gruber was a librarian at the Swedish Academy. *Kultura* Archives at Maisons-Laffitte. Collection uncataloged.

⁴⁸⁸ Jozef Czapski’s letter to Milosz 10/12/1980. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 13, f. 245.

focused on the region's literary, cultural and historical heritage. They argued that the mentalities in the particular countries of the region were not only distinct from both the Soviet and the Western European realm, but actually constituted a coherent ensemble, which could be called "Central Europe." The idea of Central Europe, as the historian George Schöpflin argues, became one of the specters that came to haunt the politics of Europe in the 1980s.⁴⁸⁹ The concept, which would have otherwise been a subject reserved for literary historians, became powerful, provoking heated discussion in the last decade of the Cold War because of its clear anti-Soviet overtones. Since the history of the 1980s debate on the concept of "Central Europe" has been sufficiently addressed by other scholars, for the purpose of this chapter I will focus on three texts, two by Milosz and one by Milan Kundera, in order to elucidate their contribution to the re-emergence of the concept.⁴⁹⁰

It is worth emphasizing that Milosz had already implemented the Central European agenda in the 1960s, when reaching beyond the Polish realm, with the support of *Kultura*, toward intellectual exiles from the region, helping Joseph Brodsky, Györgi Gömöri and Tomas Venclova. Extending a helping hand to his intellectual colleagues from the region, Milosz managed to persuade the university authorities at Berkeley to offer a *visiting professor* position to a number of them. This was the case with the Hungarian intellectual Gömöri, who came to spend a year at UC Berkeley in 1963.⁴⁹¹ In 1972, Milosz sent a welcoming letter to Joseph Brodsky – a Russian poet from

⁴⁸⁹ George Schöpflin, and Nancy Wood, *In Search of Central Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1989).

⁴⁹⁰ For more on the concept of Central Europe see: Roman Szporluk, "Defining Central Europe," *Cross Currents* (1982), pp. 30-38; Joseph Brodsky, "Why Kundera is wrong about Dostoevsky," *Cross Currents*; Jenő Szűcs, *The Three Historical Regions of Europe: An Outline* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1983); Stern, J.P. *The Heart of Europe: Essays on Literature and Ideology*. (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1992); Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1994).

⁴⁹¹ Györgi Gömöri was a Hungarian poet and writer, who left his homeland in 1956. Gömöri held the position of visiting professor at the University of California at Berkeley in 1963/1964.

Leningrad, who had just been exiled from the USSR for writing anti-government literary works. As Grudzinska-Gross demonstrates in her book on the two poets, Milosz's letter commenced a beautiful friendship, with Brodsky's and Milosz's poetic voices reverberating on the American continent.⁴⁹²

In 1972, Milosz first heard from Brodsky about the Lithuanian poet Tomas Venclova, who was persecuted for his oppositionist stance in Soviet Lithuania.⁴⁹³ Soon after, they began corresponding secretly, and in a letter from Vilnius, Venclova confessed that his poetry had drawn on Milosz.⁴⁹⁴ In 1973, Milosz translated and published a poem by Venclova in *Kultura*, in which the Lithuanian poet commented on events from Polish history – the December 1970 anti-government demonstration in Poland. Three years later, in 1975, having been expelled from his homeland, Venclova found a safe harbor in the United States thanks to the efforts of Milosz and *Kultura*. He initially taught at the University of California at Berkeley, across the hall from Milosz.⁴⁹⁵ This episode in building cultural bridges opened up thirty years of dialogue, in which Milosz and Venclova shared the same intellectual goal: “For Polish-Lithuanian relations to be different than in the past,” and for nationalism to be mitigated. They saw a possible

⁴⁹² Irena Grudzińska-Gross, *Czesław Miłosz and Joseph Brodsky: Fellowship of Poets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). Josif Brodsky was a Russian poet and essayist. In 1968, the Soviet authorities sentenced Brodsky for “societal parasitism” and sent him to a labor camp. Even though Brodsky was eventually released, the Soviet authorities kept persecuting him for the unruly character of his poetry and because he was Jewish. Brodsky was officially expelled from the USSR in 1972, and following a short stay in Western Europe, he settled down in the USA. Yet again, Giedroyc and Milosz strived to help an intellectual émigré from the Soviet bloc. Brodsky was very successful as a poet in the USA, where he lived until his death in 1996.

⁴⁹³ “Twierdzi że najlepszy poeta, młody, w Sojuszu, to Tomas Venclova – postaram się jego wiersze zdobyć i może przetłumaczyć parę.” [He claims that the best young poet in the Soviet Republics is Tomas Venclova – I will try to get his poems and perhaps translate a couple of them.] Milosz's letter to Giedroyc, 12/10/1972. Giedroyc, Milosz, Kornat, *Listy*.

⁴⁹⁴ Milosz's letter to Giedroyc, 1974. Giedroyc, Milosz, Kornat, *Listy*.

⁴⁹⁵ Tomas Venclova – Lithuanian poet, essayist, and literary historian. In the early 1970s, Venclova was active in the Lithuanian *samizdat*, he also joined the Lithuanian section of the Helsinki Group. In his famous 1975 letter addressed to the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party, Venclova accused the Soviet authorities of violating human rights and submitting literature to ideological purposes. In 1977, after a period of political repressions, Venclova emigrated from the Soviet Republic of Lithuania. He settled down in the USA, where he taught as a professor at Yale University.

common ground for the two nations in the special role that poetry played in Lithuania and Poland. As the literary critic Tomasz Fialkowski claims, Milosz's and Venclova's 1970 literary exchange, entitled *Dialogue on Vilnius*, became a lasting and important text for contemporary Polish-Lithuanian relations.⁴⁹⁶ "My relations with Venclova are very warm," Milosz wrote to Giedroyc in 1977.⁴⁹⁷ Brodsky and Venclova would soon form a poetic triad with Milosz - an outpost of East-Central European poetry in America - which, in reference to the car make, they ironically called "the BMW."⁴⁹⁸ In 1977, Milosz commented on their relation: "Our triumvirate absolutely works, and it is a beautiful thing, such friendship between a Russian, a Lithuanian and a Polish poet."⁴⁹⁹

In the early 1980s, Milosz supported the journal *Cross Currents* in its project to build cultural and historical understanding between nations in order to stem nationalist agendas in East-Central Europe. *Cross Currents*, published by Ladislav Matejka at the University of Michigan, was a publication dedicated to "defending the spiritual identity of national cultures in the Central European region, which were endangered by the Soviet occupation."⁵⁰⁰ As Jesse Labov elaborately argues in her thesis, during the twelve years of its activity, *Cross Currents* published important texts by leading East-Central European intellectuals, and played the role of a major English-language forum for Central European literature and criticism. Tellingly, for the debate on Central Europe, it was English, not Russian that served as the *lingua franca*. *Cross Currents* was successful at what *Kultura* had been struggling to achieve for the previous three decades - generating

⁴⁹⁶ Czesław Miłosz, Tomasz Venclova, Barbara Toruńczyk, and Mikołaj Nowak-Rogoziński, *Powroty Do Litwy* (Warszawa: Zeszyty Literackie, 2011); Tomasz Fialkowski, "Czesław Miłosz-Tomasz Venclova, Powroty do Litwy" http://www.culture.pl/baza-literatura-pelna-tresc/-/eo_event_asset_publisher/eAN5/content/czeslaw-milosz-tomasz-venclova-powroty-do-litwy.

⁴⁹⁷ Miłosz's letter to Giedroyc, 1977. Giedroyc, Miłosz, Kornat, *Listy*.

⁴⁹⁸ Sierakowski, "An interview with Tomasz Venclova."

⁴⁹⁹ Miłosz's letter to Giedroyc, 1977. Giedroyc, Miłosz, Kornat, *Listy*.

⁵⁰⁰ Ladislav Matejka, "Introduction to the Electronic Version of *Cross Currents*." <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/crossc/intro.html>

the intellectual history of Central Europe via a trans-regional approach in literary and historical discussion. One of the major contributions of *Cross Currents* was bringing East-Central European intellectuals, including Milosz, to conceptualize the idea of “Central Europe.”⁵⁰¹ In this respect, a critical step has to be made by establishing Milosz’s earlier work within the *Kultura* circle as the foundation for the 1980s reinvention of the idea of Central Europe.

It was in the 1950s within the realm of *Kultura* that Milosz first started grappling with the problems of shared cultural heritage across East-Central Europe. Over the next few decades he strived to build a supranational sense of community in the region, with multiculturalism and plurality as its core values. Starting with the chapter on the Baltic people in his 1953 book *The Captive Mind*, through his accounts on Vilnius, the quest for Central European identity in *Native Realm*, and multiple articles, Milosz had been constantly promoting what Stempowski called “the middle ways.”⁵⁰² There are many examples of how *Kultura* built dialogue across national boundaries: publishing special issues of *Kultura* in Russian; translating and publishing writers from the region, like Anna Akhmatova, Boris Pasternak, Alexander Solzhenitsyn; or reaching out to individuals and covert cultural organizations behind the Iron Curtain.

Here once again in my reading of the intellectual history of East-Central Europe, the power of personal contacts and dialogue across the East-West divide comes to light. Working in exile on the foundations for an anti-chauvinist conscience and cultural pluralism in Poland, Milosz and *Kultura* had over time galvanized underground activity

⁵⁰¹ I refer to the dissertation by Jessie Labov, which proved very helpful for my work. Jessie Labov, *Reinventing Central Europe: Cross-Currents and the Émigré Writer in the 1980s* (2004). In her thesis, Labov uses a term “the reinvention of the concept of Central Europe.” This is an apt formula, since it points out the fact that although the term had circulated in the earlier decades, it only came to bear a new meaning in the 1980s.

⁵⁰² Jerzy Stempowski’s letter to Milosz, 7/07/1960. Czesław Milosz Papers. Box 59, f. 812.

in the country, inculcating to the Polish culture an element of diversity that had been artificially cleansed under the communist regime. Research in the recently opened *Kultura* archives leaves no doubts as to the importance of this periodical for promoting friendly relations and intellectual exchange throughout the East Central European region. *Kultura's* long-practiced politics of building cultural allegiances across borders finally found an ally in the form of *Cross Currents*. In a way then, the concept of Central Europe had a transatlantic quality, existing simultaneously in the cultural underground of the Soviet bloc and in exile, on American shores.

Certainly, Milosz's 1980 Nobel Prize gave authority to his engagement in the emerging forum of émigré East-Central European intellectuals, who by dealing with literary and cultural problems of the region, were re-defining their own intellectual responsibilities. In his 1982 article in *Cross Currents*, "Looking for a Center: on Poetry of Central Europe," Milosz discussed the problem:

Standing on one's own feet, liberating oneself from the vestiges of unhappy love for the West is a good thing, provided it doesn't lead to entrenching oneself in a morbid nationalism. [...] The remedy for (...) a division is a clear understanding of the past, which, in spite of national differences, is common, for East-Central Europe was ruled by the North-South axis and the East-West axis. It is quite a task, the task of bringing to light what unites those countries in their present struggle for cultural identity, and it also awaits its poets, whether they are Polish, Lithuanian, Czech or Hungarian. A sense of history is a specific contribution of our geographic area to world literature; and if a poet must sometimes turn against the nationalism of his compatriots to remain faithful to his historical imagination, he will be vindicated sooner or later.⁵⁰³

The above is a quotation from Milosz's article on the poetry of Central Europe, in which he announced the decline of the Western paradigm for Polish poets who had developed their own artistic paths. While the Western center lost its charm for the 1970s generation

⁵⁰³ Czeslaw Milosz, "Looking for a Center: on Poetry of Central Europe," *Cross Currents* 1 (1982).

of Polish poets, they started to comment on a more proximate “center,” giving priority to the poets of the past and to the moral choices of individuals under the communist system. That, Milosz argued, stimulated a development of critical public opinion.⁵⁰⁴ Once again using commentary on literature to make a broader statement, Milosz posed a question about shifting centers of gravity, and about the way in which a man living in what today is defined as East Central Europe organized his geographical space. Certainly, speaking about the “center,” Milosz meant that East-Central European countries played the role of periphery in relation to the two centers: the East (possibly defined as Moscow), and the West (defined as Paris). Milosz suggested, however, that the Cold War division into East and West had ceased to reflect the situation in the region, and that for the dissatisfied “Easterners” the search for a “center” did not necessarily mean looking up to the West. A new “central” quality might have been at stake.

Upon the publication of Milosz’s article “Looking for a Center,” the subject was touched on by a recognized Czechoslovak émigré writer, Milan Kundera, who launched a debate with his article, “The Tragedy of Central Europe,” in the April 1984 issue of *The New York Review of Books*. Although Kundera said: “Central Europe is not a state: it is culture or a fate. Its borders are imaginary,” in his text, similarly to Milosz, he defined it as Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Kundera argued that the tragedy of Central Europe stemmed from the fact that while it truly belonged to the West, it had lost its potential due to Soviet suppression and disconnection from the West. Besides this quite obvious factor, another aspect of the “tragedy” was the fact that Central Europe had lost its “intellectual cement” – the Jewish genius. Pointing to the hybrid identities of cultural

⁵⁰⁴ In his article, Milosz discussed several Polish poets: Adam Zagajewski, Julian Kornhauser, Ryszard Krynicki, and Stanislaw Baranczak.

figures such as Edmund Husserl, Sigmund Freud, Gustav Mahler or Joseph Roth, Kundera emphasized the historical importance of intellectual activity in a region that transcended national boundaries. Like Milosz, Kundera called for a better understanding of the past in order to prevent outbreaks of nationalist hatred in the future. Extremely successful in activating the intellectuals of “Central Europe,” Kundera’s text met with a response in the 1986 issue of *Cross Currents*, in which Milosz’s voice was also included.

“I assume there is such a thing as Central Europe,” with these words Milosz began his 1986 essay entitled “Central European Attitudes.” Four years earlier, in 1982, Milosz had defined Central Europe abstractly as a cultural unit that strived to maintain its own identity while “placed in the eastern orbit by force of arms and by pacts between superpowers.”⁵⁰⁵ Now, in 1986, with his characteristic intellectual persistence, Milosz “assigned himself an ungrateful task: the attempt to define specific Central European attitudes.”⁵⁰⁶ He knew well the pains of looking for a “center,” since he had already embarked on the quest for his own cultural identity in his 1959 book *Native Land: A Search for Self-Definition*. While back then Milosz had defined his Central European self, now, in the 1986 article, he defined for the others the five qualities that made Central Europe a distinct unit. These were: an awareness of history, the experience of Marxism, irony as a way of coping with reality, traces of the two totalitarian systems: Nazism and Stalinism; and the ethos of the intelligentsia. Milosz argued that these qualities were to be found in contemporary writing from the region. He said:

Anybody familiar with the history of the Czechs, the Hungarians or the Poles knows that a certain code of behavior mandatory for the intelligentsia goes back several centuries. A civic commitment, a pursuit of a dream as to what the political and social life of a country should be.

⁵⁰⁵ Milosz, “Looking for a Center: on Poetry of Central Europe.”

⁵⁰⁶ Milosz, “On Central European Attitudes,” *Cross Currents* 5 (1986).

(...) A specific confluence of Enlightenment ideas and of a *Schillerian* enthusiasm. All this is far from being forgotten and gives Central European writings a tinge of nostalgia, utopianism, and hope.⁵⁰⁷

Elaborating on the concept of “Central Europe,” Milosz emphasized similarities between the cultural life of Warsaw, Prague and Budapest and that of Paris and London, rather than Moscow, once again placing cultural factors before political ones. Since he was aware of the transplantation of texts produced by intellectual exiles in the West to the underground in East Central Europe, Milosz made a case for a specific task to be undertaken. He urged, “By delineating how we all, who speak the languages within the pale, are akin, by practicing a long overdue comparative investigation of our patrimony, we can make national conflicts less likely.”⁵⁰⁸ For Milosz, “Central Europe” emerged less as a concrete geo-political unit, but more as a duty, a shared responsibility of the intellectuals from the region. His own responsibility.

Thinking about works by Kundera and Milosz, one discovers a powerful interconnectedness between the two projects: the increased activity of intellectual exiles from the region and the reinvention of the concept of Central Europe. As Kundera and Milosz strived to reconstruct the seemingly lost cultural space, they simultaneously took on a personal task of “re-inhabiting the role of the public intellectual.”⁵⁰⁹ With their agenda to discuss the multicultural, turbulent past, which had so far been neglected, Milosz and Kundera fell into Said’s definition of public intellectuals as those who speak openly the covert truth and who represent the unprivileged.⁵¹⁰ The discussion on Central Europe continued on the pages of *Cross Currents* and in other venues, with Milosz’s “mission statements” from 1982 and 1986 often quoted, as the splendor of his Nobel

⁵⁰⁷ Ibidem, 106.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibidem, 107.

⁵⁰⁹ Labov. *Reinventing Central Europe*.

⁵¹⁰ Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*, 22.

Prize attracted even more attention to the increasingly politicized subject of Central Europe.

While one can wonder about the existence of Central Europe as a physical quality, there is no doubt that in the 1980s East Central European intellectuals re-invented the idea that came to constitute an almost tangible political challenge, if not a threat, to Soviet domination in the region. “Looking for a center,” the writers would direct their attention to society rather than to the state. Therefore, it was logical that they debunked the materiality of Moscow as an imposed center in favor of a more elusive “center,” defined as a set of values or attitudes and a collective memory. While Labov sees Central Europe as a “mythopoetic” concept, I would argue that it had in fact a clear political echo. This was witnessed by the reaction of writers involved in the Central European project who refused to be made into yet another political banner. At the 1988 Lisbon conference, the Serbian writer Danilo Kis said that Central European writers’ texts had been impoverished by reading them in a purely political light. Additionally, Kis revealed a risk hidden in the concept, as the term “Central Europe” could be used to ascribe a collective identity and agenda to individual literary voices from the region. Kis said, “We existed here and there before this word Central Europe came into vogue; writers like Czeslaw Milosz, Josef Brodsky, Josef Skvorecky, established individual identities and became recognized. They helped give the rest of us an identity...”⁵¹¹ Perhaps, when Milosz and other émigré writers came together to oppose the Soviet cultural politics of *divide et impera*, they allowed themselves to merge somewhat under the conceptual umbrella term of “Central Europe.” However, they emerged again as individuals once the concept lost its attractiveness. Strikingly, the writers operated in parallel to the countries

⁵¹¹ Labov. *Reinventing Central Europe*.

of East-Central Europe, which lived their moment of solidarity toward the end of the 1980s, and then walked their individual paths after the 1989 transformation. While recovering the shared historic experience and values which had defined peoples throughout the region, the émigré writers, including Milosz, defined and fulfilled the essential responsibilities of an East Central European intellectual.⁵¹²

⁵¹² Later in his life, Milosz strived to create the Central European Institute. His project did not come to fruition. A version of it, embodying some of Milosz's ideas, is the Vienna Institute for Human Sciences, which was headed, until recently, by the Polish philosopher Krzysztof Michalski. Yet another center that fulfills the mission of cooperation among the East-Central European nations is the Borderline Foundation in Poland. Milosz often praised its activity on the field of mitigating nationalistic rhetoric and building friendly relations at the Polish-Lithuanian borderline, as well as in other parts of Europe. Milosz's writing in which the poet reminisced his childhood in the borderline has been constantly inspiring the founders of the Borderline Foundation. My interview with Krzysztof Czyzewski, Krasnogruda, October 2010.

CHAPTER 4

Found in Translation: Milosz and His American Audience

When your *Bells in Winter* fell into my hands - a reader wrote to Milosz - I was living in a small village in Alaska that could only be reached by plane; and winter was setting in. The poems seemed to me, then and now, a great gift; and for many days, when the jaws of winter snapped shutting us there, I read your poems and felt as if survival was really possible. For weeks, we endured -50 F; we had ice and planes couldn't land; we ran out of fruit and vegetables; and the town generator worked erratically, cutting off light and heat. (...) I wrote a poem:

*I slowly read Milosz and am silent
to absorb the sound of his intelligent mind
and the Slavic bells.*⁵¹³

Milosz was ten when he first traveled to America. His imagination served him for a ship and his curiosity for a guide. He was sitting in the library in Vilnius reading Thomas Mayne Reid's adventure books on America, but in his mind, he was traveling through spacious American territory.⁵¹⁴ In 1960, coming to California from Europe, Milosz complained about America's ahistorical character, and its lack of century-old tradition and culture. Describing his impression of the American notion of time, Milosz said: "No years, no clocks, no memory."⁵¹⁵ Not to mention an absence of an audience for his poetry written in Polish.

⁵¹³ Katherine McNamara's letter to Milosz, 02/21/1981. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 40.

⁵¹⁴ Czeslaw Milosz, *Prywatne Obowiazki* (Paryz: Instytut Literacki, 1972), 189.

⁵¹⁵ Czeslaw Milosz, poem "Kresy," 1962, In Czeslaw Milosz, *Miasto bez imienia; poezje*. (Paryz: Instytut Literacki, 1969), 55.

This chapter aims to reveal how Milosz's image as a poet in America was created by investigating the exchange that took place between Milosz, American poetry critics, and readers of poetry. While the other audiences discussed in the dissertation were invested in creating a certain intellectual image of Milosz which would be useful for their political battles, Milosz's American readers did not share this interest. Political pressure was levied on Milosz to a large extent because of positions the interested parts occupied in the Cold War world. Therefore, after a long initial period of Milosz's absence from the American literary scene, he arose as a poet. The goal of this chapter is to show in a historical perspective how Milosz as a poet "was made" or self-made in America.

On the one hand, Milosz was privileged to find in America an audience interested primarily in the literary aspect of his writing. On the other hand, the American audience enjoyed a privileged position since, contrary to the previously discussed groups, it was free from the burden of overwhelming political context and from a Romantic national tradition and could dwell in the world of Milosz's poetry for personal pleasure. The audience, which is the subject of this chapter, consists of critics, poets, and readers who, since 1973 when Milosz took the critical step of translating his poetry into English, had read his poetry and commented on it, either in the press or in private correspondence with the poet. Although, as Clare Cavanagh rightly stated, Milosz's impact has reached English-speaking readers throughout the world, in my analysis I will focus on the American audience and its role in creating Milosz's image in the USA in the period from early 1970s to 1990s.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁶ Clare, Cavanagh, Clare. *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics: Russia, Poland, and the West* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2009), 235.

While Milosz had always been extremely careful about how his image was portrayed, historic and personal pressures often stood in his way. Coming to California as a fifty-year old poet Milosz attained a status that allowed him to make thought-through choices. It was true that, in 1960s Americans did not truly have the chance to discover Milosz's poetic work, as it was not available in English. Paradoxically, this initial constraint proved to have a liberating quality – Milosz could construct anew his image as a poet. He did not have an ideal audience but he was in an ideal situation as he could develop a number of strategies of self-presentation to project a desired image of himself to American readers. Of course, this does not mean that it all came easily.

This chapter reveals the multi-sided dynamics in Milosz's developing poetic career in America, including Milosz's skepticism about finding readers in America, his efforts in familiarizing the American literary audience with Polish poetry and its historic context, his arduous translation of his own poems, the literary critics' debates on Milosz's poetry, and finally the involvement of a broader poetry readership in a dialogue with the poet. In this chapter, I enter into a conversation with scholarly works on Milosz's reception in America by Bogdana Carpenter, Clare Cavanagh and Bozena Karwowska.⁵¹⁷ While their studies are invaluable in tracing the development of Milosz's career in America, my analysis adds to theirs by looking at Milosz's reception by groups that extended beyond literary and intellectual circles. In order to discuss this little-known element of Milosz's reception in America, I have looked closely at letters that Milosz received from his readers across America. Reading this correspondence allows us to understand what role poetry could play for its readers and, more specifically, what role

⁵¹⁷ Bogdana Carpenter, "The Gift Returned," in: Halina Stephen, *Living in Translation: Polish Writers in America* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003); Cavanagh, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics*; Bozena Karwowska, "Czeslaw Milosz's Self-Presentation in English-Speaking Countries," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 3-4 (1998).

words coming from an East European poet could play in a life of an American reader with a distinctly different cultural background.

A POET IN EXILE

The literary scholar Michael Seidel once stated that the center of an exile's life is "postponed" and as a consequence an exile would strive to construct a new axis mundi because he longed for a point of reference.⁵¹⁸ Milosz related to the problem of the center in his notes, saying: "Imagination is always spatial, pointing to the south, north, east and west from some central, always privileged place, which is probably the village of our childhood or our country."⁵¹⁹ In the case of Milosz's exile, it seemed that the new center under construction had a dual character as it accommodated both the elements of actual time and space with the elements of time and space lost. Milosz noted:

An exile displaces the center or rather creates two centers. Imagination relates everything in one's surroundings to 'over there' and, in my case, somewhere on the European continent. It even continues to designate the four cardinal points, as if I still stood there. At the same time the north, south, east and west are determined by the place in which I write these words.⁵²⁰

Milosz was very sensitive to the differences in people's mentalities in Europe and America, but he seemed to be also overwhelmed with the vastness of American landscape and magnitude of its nature. He started exploring how other American, and specifically Californian poets, dealt with the issue of space and wild elements. Throughout the 1960s, Milosz reflected on and translated poems by Robinson Jeffers, a Californian poet who lived in a stone tower on the Pacific coast. Milosz's attitude toward Jeffers' poetry was

⁵¹⁸ Michael Seidel, *Exile and the Narrative Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 8.

⁵¹⁹ Czeslaw Milosz, "Notes on Exile," *Books Abroad*, vol. 50 Spring 1976.

⁵²⁰ *Ibidem*.

ambiguous. On the one hand, in Jeffers Milosz found an ally in his struggle for granting significance to poetry, and for liberating it from the realms of pure aesthetics. On the other hand, Jeffers' verses glorifying the elements, the cycle of disintegration and creation in which humans did not seem to be of any importance, were completely alien to Milosz's poetic vision of the world. In response to Jeffers' a-humanistic approach, Milosz proposed a more peaceful, deeply rooted in his Lithuanian childhood, image of the world. In a 1963 poem, Milosz addressed Jeffers, saying:

[...]

*All your life listening to the ocean. Black dinosaurs
wade where a purple zone of phosphorescent weeds
rises and falls on the waves as in a dream. And Agamemnon
sails the boiling deep to the steeps of the palace
to have his blood gush onto marble. Till mankind passes
and the pure and stony earth is pounded by the ocean.*

[...]

*What have I to do with you? From footpaths in the orchards,
from an untaught choir and shimmers of a monstrence,
from flower beds of rue, hills by the rivers, books
in which a zealous Lithuanian announced brotherhood, I come.
Oh, consolations of mortals, futile creeds.⁵²¹*

While he was fully aware of the precipice between the two centers of his world, at the same time Milosz recognized the transcendent character of his American and

⁵²¹ Czeslaw Milosz, "To Robinson Jeffers." *New and Collected Poems, 1931-2001* (New York: Ecco, 2001), 252.

European experiences, saying: “That is why a curious phenomenon appears; the two centers and the two spaces arranged around them interfere with each other or – and this is a happy solution – coalesce.”⁵²² The coalescence of the two centers happened to Milosz, who two years after moving to Berkeley noted: “I am astonished to see that the homelands have overlapped or one has been incorporated into the other.”⁵²³

Writing enabled Milosz to interweave his European and American experience and create a new realm in his artistic imagination. In his notes and poetry, Milosz intermingled the American spacious territory with European historical and cultural elements and constantly dwelled upon his European past in order to bring to life what had seemed to be forever lost. In his unpublished notes from 1962 Milosz said: “I am walking under the eucalyptus trees and repeating Lubianiec, Lubianiec”⁵²⁴ Lubianiec was name of a priest, of whom Milosz had heard from his grandma in childhood and whom he later recollected in the exotic setting of the eucalyptus trees. In the poem “Throughout our lands,” which was written in 1961, the Lithuanian and California centers overlapped, as parts 4, 6 and 11 of the poem pictured Lithuania and the others presented California.⁵²⁵ In the 1977 long piece entitled “The Separate Notebooks,” Milosz described the Sacramento River and the American landscape together with the castle upon the Dzwina River in Lithuania, an old chronicle of his family and lives of a few Lithuanian characters.⁵²⁶ The reader could recognize Milosz’s effort not to forget the precious memories by integrating the current reality into them. The old thread was woven into the linen of a new life like an Ariadne’s thread; one that would always lead home. One day while studying in the map

⁵²² Ibidem.

⁵²³ Czeslaw Milosz. *Pisanie mialo dla mnie*. (Unpublished essay), 1962. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. Box 2, folder 26; p. 8.

⁵²⁴ Ibidem, p. 4.

⁵²⁵ Czeslaw Milosz, “Po ziemi naszej,” In Czeslaw Milosz, *Poezje* vol. 2. (Paryz: Instytut Literacki, 1981), 87.

⁵²⁶ Czeslaw Milosz, *The Separate Notebooks* (The Ecco Press, 1984), 20-24.

room at the University in Berkeley Milosz found German military maps from WW I on which the house in which he was born was marked. As time went by Milosz acquired a strong sense of destiny and, in the late 1970s, he stated: “I didn’t choose California. It was given to me.”⁵²⁷

Although Milosz thought of himself as a son of “the Lithuanian peripheries,” he undertook a postmodernist project that revitalized the concept of periphery by negotiating sharp dichotomies between the Lithuanian periphery and the American center. In the process, he underlined for his American audience the role of contact zones in which, as James Clifford argues, cultures and identities are made.⁵²⁸ Milosz’s construction of a poetic space with interspersed elements of the Lithuanian and Californian landscape is an example of an intellectual adjustment to what scholars describe as the twentieth-century shift from two-dimensional space to a multidimensional global space with unbounded sub-spaces.⁵²⁹

In an essay on writers in exile, Eva Thompson advocates some of the productive aspects of artistic life in exile.⁵³⁰ One may say that this was true for Milosz, for whom writing about his European experience was a self-curing practice that alleviated the grief of a lost homeland. Later in his life, Milosz admitted: “You know nobody chooses loneliness. (...) But when you get to accept it, from today’s perspective, you can discern how it was necessary and how it was beneficial. I think that without this isolation it is likely that I would not have written as much as I did.”⁵³¹ The artistic work of the poet

⁵²⁷ Milosz, *The Separate Notebooks*, p. 22.

⁵²⁸ James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Harvard, 1997.

⁵²⁹ Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (1983); Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (Durham 1996).

⁵³⁰ Eva Thompson, “The Writer in Exile: The Good Years,” *Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 33, no. 4 (Winter 1989): 499–515.

⁵³¹ Czeslaw Milosz, Haven, Cynthia L., *Czeslaw Milosz: conversations* (Jackson, 1996), 20.

benefited from the exile because Milosz subsequently sharpened and refined his memories of Lithuania which, in exile, had become even more real. Additionally, Milosz was much more sensitive in his artistic perception of America because, as he claimed, a hawk-eyed exile could see what remained hidden for a native.⁵³² It was as if Milosz used glasses with “native lenses” that provided an unusual clarity of vision from a distance and simultaneously focused on what was near yet unfamiliar. Still, Milosz could not help noting the painful fissure between the European and American periods of his life. The late 1970’s poem “The Separate Notebooks” testified to it. Milosz wrote:

[...]

Here is the island Kauai, an emerald set among white clouds,

Warm wind in the palm leaves and I think of snow

In my distant province where things happened

*That belong to another, inconceivable life.*⁵³³

While Milosz’s two homelands occasionally happened to coalesce in his writing, the imagination of the poet remained divided; it was like a healed body marked with the scar of a past wound.

⁵³² Milosz. “Pisanie miało dla mnie,” 6.

⁵³³ Milosz, *The Separate Notebooks*, 47.

PAINS OF ADDRESSING AN AMERICAN AUDIENCE

*If you have not read the Slavic poets,
So much the better.*⁵³⁴

Milosz wrote these words in a poem in 1963, three years after moving to California. What did it mean to write poetry in Polish on the coast of California? Milosz once said that it was like placing his poems in a tree hollow. In the years after his 1960 arrival in Berkeley Milosz suffered loneliness and hated his detachment from intellectual circles in Europe, but what bothered him most was the sense of futility that he found in his writing. Composing verses in Polish in a West-coast American town seemed to him a pointless activity, while his career as a poet appeared doomed. Was there at least a handful of Americans who would recognize him as a poet? Month after month, Milosz expressed his unfulfilled artistic dreams and sense of abandonment in letters to his Parisian friends: Czapski, Giedroyc, Hertz, and Jelenski. While Milosz was finally free from imminent personal, financial, and political constraints and had been given a chance to do what he loved, the linguistic barrier made it impossible to find resonance to his poetry.

Back in Paris, in order to make a living Milosz had been writing articles for the English-language press of the Congress, and had also worked on prose pieces in Polish: *Dolina Issy* [*The Issa Valley*] and *Rodzinna Europa* [*Native Realm*]. Even before his 1960 move to the United States, Milosz had already been sounding out the potential market for these books in America. His attempts at reaching the American audience through a publishing agent were fruitless. The response from New York's Curtis Brown agency

⁵³⁴ Milosz, "To Robinson Jeffers."

read: "We have had little luck in placing your books."⁵³⁵ Clearly, at the time, given the intellectual context of the Cold War, Milosz's works on non-political issues were not a worthwhile investment for American publishers.

Now, in the early 1960s, Milosz's mindset toward winning over an American reader resembled to some degree his mindset from two decades prior when he served as a diplomat in the USA and strived to sense the country's intellectual atmosphere. Back in the 1940s, Milosz revealed his initial plans to write for Americans in a letter to his Polish friend Jerzy Andrzejewski, saying:

I could not wait to enter the market here (...) but I have abandoned this idea completely. In order to translate poems, one would need a poet who knows Polish but there is none here. Moreover, neither this nor any sort of writing prose in Polish profits morally, given that I have nothing in common with the worldview that they [Americans] have in their heads.⁵³⁶

Two decades later Milosz came to the USA free from the baggage of his public role but with the label of a political writer - the author of *The Captive Mind* - which was an image he was to set out to change. Coming to terms with new life circumstances, Milosz became a successful academic teacher at UC Berkeley; he did not give up writing poetry and continued a transatlantic dialogue with a handful of friends in Paris and Poland. On this new path, Milosz could count on his friends from *Kultura* for words of encouragement. But then, what did they know about an American academic life or the audience for poetry in America?

Throughout the 1960s, besides scholarly texts for English language periodicals, Milosz only published in Polish and resisted the idea of writing poetry in English, since he believed that he could only write poetry in his native language. Explaining in a letter

⁵³⁵ Curtis Brown Ltd. Correspondence with Milosz 03/07/1960 and 10/1961. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 13, f. 239. Eventually, *The Issa Valley* was published in the USA in 1981, and *Native Realm* in 1968.

⁵³⁶ Milosz's letter to Jerzy Andrzejewski, 1948. Andrzejewski, Jerzy, Czesław Milosz, and Barbara Riss. *Listy 1944-1981*, 2011.

to his trusted American friend, the writer Thomas Merton, Milosz said: “It is not only that I do not attempt to translate my poetry, but I am also unable to write prose in any language other than my own. I assume that it is a kind of psychological impediment or inclination towards self-protection.”⁵³⁷ Perhaps it was Milosz’s reluctance to be defined as someone he was not and having a distorted literary image assigned. So, with no luck in publishing the books he had written in France in the USA, and with no hope of finding a reader for his poetry written in Polish, Milosz focused mainly on his academic duties and on fulfilling the role of an ambassador of Polish literature.

In 1962, Milosz wrote with pride to Giedroyc, about his translations from the leading twentieth century Polish poets. He said:

Thus far this summer I have spent time on writing, reading and translating Polish poetry into English. I have already created English versions of plenty of poems by Wat, Herbert, Rozewicz, Czechowicz, Staff, Tuwim, Slonimski etc. (...) Polish poetry comes out exquisitely when compared with Anglo-Saxon. Here and there, guys claim that it is the best poetry available today, to which I have contributed a bit (...) and hope to contribute more through an anthology [of Polish poetry].⁵³⁸

Three years later, in 1965, Milosz indeed published *Polish Postwar Poetry*, in which he provided Western readers with a panoramic view on Polish poetry and its historic context. The one hundred and fifty page volume also included six poems by Milosz, mainly from the wartime period. Milosz had sensed how attractive Polish poetry could be for a reader raised in the tradition of twentieth-century Anglo-Saxon poetry. In a 1964 letter to his long-time friend Iwaszkiewicz, Milosz said: “Polish poetry carries a pitch that does not exist in American poetry and the readers or listeners of my translations are completely

⁵³⁷ Milosz’s letter to Thomas Merton, 01/17/1959. Merton, Thomas, Czesław Milosz, and Robert Faggen. *Striving Towards Being: The Letters of Thomas Merton and Czesław Milosz* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997).

⁵³⁸ Milosz’s letter to Jerzy Giedroyc, 09/04/1962. Giedroyc, Jerzy, Czesław Milosz, and Marek Kornat (ed.), *Listy 1952-1963* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2008), 366.

crazy about it.”⁵³⁹ One of the critics who fell under the spell of Polish verses, commented on its specific tone, saying: “These poems speak in a way that brings joy and solace: with openness, anger, irony, and tenderness – they manifest the greatness men are capable of.”⁵⁴⁰ On the pages of *The New York Review of Books*, the prominent literary critic Al Alvarez enthused on *Postwar Polish Poetry*, saying:

Milosz himself, along with Rozewicz, Karpowicz and above all Zbigniew Herbert – who seems to be one of the best European poets – have perfected a style in which one can sense political tension beneath the most intimate issues. They are great ironists, separate, very intelligent, yet still open to feelings. (...) It is a remarkable achievement and Professor Milosz’s translations are equally splendid.⁵⁴¹

In tandem with the anthology, Milosz continued with a project he had commenced translating English poets in wartime Warsaw, and building bridges between Anglo-Saxon and Polish poetry. If T.S. Eliot’s lines of “The Waste Land” first appeared in Polish under Milosz’s hand, it was also Milosz who endowed the Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert with an existence in the Anglophone poetry world. “[In the 1940s] in Poland,” Cavanagh argues, “Milosz singlehandedly shifted the cultural axis away from France, which had previously dominated the literary culture in Poland and towards poetry written in English.”⁵⁴² Two decades later, serving as a mediator between the two literary worlds, Milosz put Polish poetry on the map for American writers. According to Cavanagh, many American poets would recollect reading *Postwar Polish Poetry* as a turning point in their own artistic development.⁵⁴³

⁵³⁹ Milosz’s letter to Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, 07/21/1964. Milosz, Czesław, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Barbara Toruńczyk, and Robert Papieski. *Portret Podwójny: Wykonany Z Listów, Wierszy, Zapisków Intymnych, Wywiadów I Publikacji*. (Warszawa: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich, 2011).

⁵⁴⁰ Babette Deutsch, in: “Krytycy amerykańscy o “Antologii” Milosza,” *Kultura*, 7/1965.

⁵⁴¹ Al Alvarez, “East is East,” *The New York Review of Books*, 11/11/1965.

⁵⁴² Cavanagh, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics*, 246.

⁵⁴³ Anthology included poems by: Leopold Staff, Antoni Slonimski, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Aleksander Wat, Tadeusz Rozewicz, Miron Białoszewski, Adam Wazyk, Stanisław Grochowiak and Zbigniew Herbert. Cavanagh, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics*, 237.

Ironically, it was Milosz's younger admirer Herbert who emerged as the star of the anthology and whose recognition in the English-speaking poetry world was further advanced with the 1968 volume *Selected Poems*. It was Milosz who, in collaboration with the poet Peter Dale Scott, translated his younger friend's poems into English.⁵⁴⁴ Happy to have opened the treasury of Polish poetry to an Anglophone audience, Milosz nonetheless felt uncomfortable being perceived solely as a translator of Herbert. Those familiar with Milosz's poetic output in Polish understood the irony of the situation when the elder, accomplished poetry giant received praise for his translations of the younger poet. The Krakow-based literary critic Jan Blonski commented on this development in a letter to Milosz: "[...] I very much like the poet Herbert and I admire him but there is indeed something not right about you being a translator of Herbert, as if a horse was carrying a colt and they applauded the colt."⁵⁴⁵ Milosz himself became concerned with the situation and in an outburst in a 1973 letter to Artur Miedzyrzecki wrote: "Why the hell do I always, my whole life, have to appear in someone else's shoes?"⁵⁴⁶

While the poetry anthology proved somewhat unfortunate for Milosz's image, it provided a historic and literary context for Polish poetry for an American audience, which would later become essential for the reception of Milosz's writing. *Polish Postwar Poetry* could be seen as an element of Milosz's strategy to find a place in the Anglophone poetry world via the following actions: first, familiarizing the American audience with twentieth-century Polish poetry via the anthology; second, by publishing *The History of Polish Literature* laying out the historical context essential for understanding Polish poetry; and third, by bringing up a group of students who would become translators and

⁵⁴⁴ Herbert, Zbigniew, Czeslaw Milosz, and Peter D. Scott. *Selected Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968).

⁵⁴⁵ Jan Blonski's letter to Milosz, 02/15/1975. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 9.

⁵⁴⁶ Milosz's letter to Artur Miedzyrzecki, 01/26/1973. Museum of Literature Archives, Warsaw, collection uncataloged.

critics of his own work.⁵⁴⁷ These undertakings, some of which have been discussed in chapter 3 as Milosz's service toward Polish literature, now took on a new meaning, turning into key elements in opening a poetic career in America for Milosz. The scholar Bozena Karwowska emphasizes in her essay, "Czeslaw Milosz's Self-Presentation in English-Speaking Countries," that both in the anthology and in *The History of Polish Literature*, Milosz took the liberty of introducing himself and his poetry to the Anglophone audience. He inserted a biographical note next to six of his poems included in *Postwar Polish Poetry*. The note read:

The landscape of his native Lithuania has always been at the core of Milosz's imagery... The term "classicism" applied to his poetry probably means that his experimentation is mitigated by an attachment to old Polish verse. His poetic work presents a great variety of forms ranging from mock odes and treatises in the spirit of the eighteenth century to notebooks of dreams. Some critics see in him a symbolist in reverse: in symbolism the poet proceeds from external reality towards the ineffable veiled by it, while Milosz circumvents the essential being of things with his symbols, which seems to be his main concern. He says his best poems are childishly naïve descriptions of things. Yet because of his civic passions he has always been the victim of dichotomy. In 1948 he published a "Treatise on Morals" in iambic verse deriding the rule of terror...⁵⁴⁸

From this brief introduction, an American reader of poetry learned that Milosz was a poet torn between his lyric talent and "civic passions" - a heritage of the East European *intelligentsia* ethos.

Milosz developed his self-presentation in *The History of Polish Literature*, where he traced stages of his artistic development in relation to literary trends and events of twentieth-century Polish literature, with an emphasis on his status. "His poetic work," the textbook read, "collected in the volume called *Rescue...* (1945) and published as one of the first books in postwar Poland, marked a new approach to historical tragedy and,

⁵⁴⁷ Czeslaw Milosz, *The History of Polish Literature* (New York: Macmillan, 1969).

⁵⁴⁸ Czeslaw Milosz, *Postwar Polish Poetry: An Anthology* (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1965), 57.

together with the volumes of Wazyk, Jastrun and Przybos, left its stamp upon the development of Polish poetry for the next two decades.”⁵⁴⁹ Milosz was also cautious to point out that despite years of exile, when his poetry remained alien to émigré readers and forbidden in his homeland, his ties to the Polish literary scene had not been severed.⁵⁵⁰ *The History of Polish Literature* was an essential element of Milosz’s self-presentation, notes Karwowska, as it enabled the poet to show his work in the light of the impact of history on recent Polish literature and to introduce the concept of a national poet to the Anglophone audience. The two works left American readers with the image of Milosz as a poet characterized by a dichotomous nature, with antinomies of paganism and Christianity, philosophical wisdom and childish naïvete, civic passions and metaphysical concerns reflected in his poetry.⁵⁵¹

Finally, already in his first year of teaching at Berkeley, Milosz introduced his students to Polish poetry in a translation seminar, which paved the way to one-on-one work with the most talented students - the future translators and critics of his poetry.⁵⁵² Among the students who contributed most to the English-language volumes of Milosz’s poetry were: Richard Lourie, Louis Iribarne, Lillian Vallee, Catherine S. Leach, and Lawrence Davis.⁵⁵³ Translating Milosz’s verses posed quite a challenge for these young people as his poetry was characterized by specifically Polish-language melody and stylistics and personal and historical references that were hard to understand for a non East-Central European. Milosz was happy to share the pleasures of Polish poetry with this tiny audience. As it turned out later, the young people became deeply engaged in the

⁵⁴⁹ Milosz, *The History of Polish Literature*, 413.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, 530.

⁵⁵¹ Bozena Karwowska, “Czeslaw Milosz’s Self-Presentation in English-Speaking Countries,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 3-4 (1998): 286.

⁵⁵² *Ibidem*.

⁵⁵³ Also the poet Peter Dale Scott worked with Milosz on translations of Milosz’s poetry.

world of literature. Lourie is a critically acclaimed author of both fiction and nonfiction, and a translator from Russian. Iribarne has translated into English works by the Polish writers: Gombrowicz, Lem, Milosz, Schulz, and Witkiewicz; he has also taught Polish and Russian literature at the University of Toronto. Vallee is an award-winning translator, writer, and scholar writing on Milosz. Also Leach has continued her work in translation of Polish literature.

The decade of artistic frustration must have changed Milosz's stance on expressing oneself in a poetic mode in an acquired language, as he decided it was time to get his poems out of the tree hollow. Despite the 1967 disappointment when the editors at Penguin dented his pride by offering to publish his poetry in a joint volume with a certain Attila Jozsef, Milosz wanted to try his luck once more. In 1973, after months of arduous work on translations, with help of American collaborators, Milosz had his first volume of poetry in English published. *Selected Poems* started Milosz's reception in the language and culture of his adopted homeland. Milosz's position was privileged, as he had chosen, translated and assembled the selection for this volume.⁵⁵⁴ He was in control of the process of creating his image for the American audience of poetry. He was becoming a poet anew.

THE POET OF AFTERMATH

The 1973 thin volume of his poetry in English translation that Milosz placed in the hands of American readers was a breakthrough in his career or, rather, it was the beginning of his literary presence as a poet in America. Two years after publishing *Selected Poems*, Milosz explained to Blonski the logic behind his previous reluctance to

⁵⁵⁴ Czeslaw Milosz, *Selected Poems*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1973).

publish in English: "I was forced by Rexroth [an American writer], so I've published my own volume. (...) Certainly, it is not that I have ever been uninterested in reputation but (...) when reading my poems in English at authorial evenings I felt as if I had been cheating, since you must know the distance between a translation and an original."⁵⁵⁵

The title of Milosz's volume, *Selected Poems*, bore a certain amount of meaning; Milosz was performing a slight censorship on his life *oeuvre* in order to prepare a piece that would be the best reflection of how he perceived his own image at that moment. At the same time it was physically impossible to present more of his work given the limited availability of trusted translators and the strict control he wanted to exercise over the process of translation. The poems came mainly from the Californian period of Milosz's writing with a few derived from the 1945 volume *Rescue* and the 1953 volume *Swiatlo dzienne* [*Daylight*]. *Selected Poems* consisted of fifty one pieces divided into four parts. Part one carried no title, part two was entitled "How He Once Was," part three "What Did He Learn," and four was simply marked "Shore." Quite tellingly Milosz opened his volume with the poem "The Task," which read:

*In fear and trembling, I think I would fulfill my life
Only if I brought myself to make a public confession
Revealing a sham, my own and of my epoch:
We were permitted to shriek in the tongue of dwarfs and demons
But pure and generous words were forbidden
Under so stiff a penalty that whoever dared to pronounce one
Considered himself as a lost man.*⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁵ Franaszek, *Milosz: Biografia*, 665.

⁵⁵⁶ Czeslaw Milosz, "The Task," In: Milosz, *Selected Poems*, 10.

It was not until two decades later in the very first monograph devoted to Milosz that the critics Leonard Nathan and Michael Quinn discussed *Selected Poems* with keen insight, arguing that the poem “Task” encapsulated the idea underlying the volume: to reintroduce a hierarchy of values into the cultural world of roar and howl.⁵⁵⁷ ”In the States,” Cavanagh explained, “the 1960s witnessed, not surprisingly, the growing restlessness of American poets, chroniclers of the personal unjustly confined, or so they felt, to the margins of a society that had little use for the selves they lamented or extolled in their poems.”⁵⁵⁸ Milosz lived through the students’ protest of 1968 in California, when the university was brought to a standstill by those demonstrating against the university administration and the war in Vietnam. One day, unnerved, Milosz pushed his way through a student blockade at the UC Berkeley campus, saying: “You, spoiled children of the bourgeoisie!” For years, the poet had been observing in America unbridled consumerist culture, a culture of finding easy comfort in drugs and a perpetual challenge of the existing world with, what he thought, no constructive plan to build a better reality. If back in time Milosz had thought that the forces of darkness described by the Polish writer Stanislaw Witkiewicz had been fulfilled by communist ideology, now he found them operating again, this time in the drug culture. Milosz described his experience with the California social scene, some of which he thought to be undergoing a process of nihilistic self-destruction, in his 1969 book, *Widzenia nad Zatoka San Francisco* [Visions from San Francisco Bay].⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁷ Leonard Nathan, and Arthur Quinn. *The Poet's Work: An Introduction to Czeslaw Milosz*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991), 76.

⁵⁵⁸ Cavanagh, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics*, 238.

⁵⁵⁹ Czeslaw Milosz, *Visions from San Francisco Bay* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1982).

To follow Nathan and Quinn's analysis, Milosz rejected the solutions proposed to these problems by Herbert Marcuse, Henry Miller, or Allen Ginsberg, since these authors "left the reader without a hierarchy of values," opening the way to destructiveness.⁵⁶⁰ For Milosz, in order to retain one's humanity, one needed to place the discontents of the age in a hierarchical structure. He proposed such a hierarchy in *Selected Poems*, whose guiding principle was the idea that even knowing one's limitations, one could not give in to despair. Nathan and Quinn noted that in this volume, Milosz developed in verse the idea of the acceptance of human limitations, and sought his own response to the contemporary discontents, often finding a solace in a moment that combined both ecstasy and despair. The critics described the poetic mechanism employed by Milosz, saying: "Most frequently he achieves this by juxtaposing the ecstasy of reliving some unique moment of experience with the despair of never getting that moment into poetry."⁵⁶¹ Such was the case with the 1971 poem "Gift," which read:

A day so happy.

Fog lifted early. I worked in the garden.

Hummingbirds were stopping over the honeysuckle flowers.

There was no thing on earth I wanted to possess.

I knew no one worth my envying him.

Whatever evil I had suffered, I forgot.

To think that once I was the same man did not embarrass me.

In my body I felt no pain.

When straightening up, I saw blue sea and sails.

⁵⁶⁰ Nathan and Quinn, *The Poet's Work*, 77.

⁵⁶¹ Nathan and Quinn, *The Poet's Work*, 88.

In Milosz's case, perhaps given his experience of the evil of the two totalitarian systems, the tone of his poetry was distant from one of the main trends of American verses of the late 1960s and 70s, which was characterized by egocentrism and a narrow perspective on the relationship between the self and the world – a development that the critic Sven Birkerts called “pulling one’s bitterness inside out.”⁵⁶² While “personal” had always been and will remain the starting point for lyric poets, in 1960s America a need arose among readers for poetry to connect the private to the public. This fact attracted readers to East-European poetry. Cavanagh gives voice to the British poet A. Alvarez, who, in his introduction to the aforementioned volume of Herbert’s poetry in Milosz’s and Scott’s translation, explained:

In Western Europe we take for granted that there is a fundamental split between poetry and politics. The problem is not that the twain can never meet but that they can do so only at a great cost. The complexity, tension and precision of modern poetry simply doesn’t go with the language of politics, with its vague rhetoric and dependence on clichés.⁵⁶³

While Milosz’s volume *Selected Poems* did not attract a wide audience, it was well received by literary critics and opened a “political reading” phase in the reception of Milosz’s poetry in America, with his works interpreted mainly in the light of the poet’s historical experience.⁵⁶⁴ On the pages of *The New York Review of Books*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *Partisan Review*, *The National Observer*, and several other periodicals, critics strived to make sense of the East-European poet, who had overcome the barrier of language to share his verses with American readers.⁵⁶⁵ The three selected reviews below will shed light on this phase of Milosz’s critical reception in the

⁵⁶² Cavanagh, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics*, 238.

⁵⁶³ Cavanagh, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics*, 239.

⁵⁶⁴ Carpenter, “The Gift Returned.”

⁵⁶⁵ Rimma Volynska-Bogert, and Wojciech Zalewski. *Czeslaw Milosz, an International Bibliography, 1930-1980* (Ann Arbor: Dept. of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Michigan, 1983), 32.

Anglophone world. In the February 9th, 1974 issue of *The National Observer* the critic Michelle Murray discussed Milosz along with five other American poets whose works stood out among what she described as the “mulch of mediocrity” that had crossed her desk during the recent boom of poetry publishing.⁵⁶⁶ Addressing the debut in English of the sixty-three year old Polish poet, Murray emphasized that amidst unkind waves of history and despite his various professional obligations, poetry had always been the most important thing for Milosz. In Milosz’s volume, Murray noted, a reader would find “an entire civilization in each poem, an assertion of the power of the individual sensibility even against the extremity of terror represented by the Polish experience of World War II.”⁵⁶⁷ Providing no explanation to the quoted 1945 poem “Flight,” Murray moved on to praise the other reviewed poets, leaving the reader with the impression that Milosz was first and foremost a poet in history and of history.⁵⁶⁸ In a tone similar to Murray’s, Stephen Miller on the pages of the Spring 1977 issue of *Partisan Review* provided an image of Milosz as a poet “preoccupied with the devastations of history.”⁵⁶⁹ Pointing to the fact that thus far Milosz had been an almost non-existent persona on the American literary scene, Miller described his poetry as one of the best available in English, comparing it’s artistic value to that of Yeats, Montale and Mandelstam. Struggling, as other critics were, to capture the essence of Milosz’s poetry on the basis of selected works in translation, Miller coined an interesting term describing Milosz’s position in the Anglophone poetry world at that time. “He is a really strange breed of cat,” Miller stated, “a Polish-English poet.”⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁶ Michelle Murray, *The National Observer*, February 9 (1974), 25.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibidem.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibidem.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibidem.

⁵⁷⁰ Stephan Miller, “Writer’s Choice,” *Partisan Review* 2 (1977), 318.

It was Terrence Des Pres' 1978 review entitled "The Poetry of Aftermath" that best encapsulated the tone of the early reception of Milosz's poetry in America, when the preoccupation with its historical aspect served as the main interpretative model for the critics.⁵⁷¹ Investigating Milosz's poetry, Des Pres had at his disposal not only his *Selected Poems* but also Milosz's 1978 volume *Bells in Winter*. The new volume consisted of thirty poems, including what the critics would later declare Milosz's masterpiece, the poem "Gdzie wschodzi slonce i kedy zapada" [From the Rising of the Sun], and was the result of Milosz's work with the student translator Lillian Vallee.⁵⁷² The literary critic Jonathan Galassi stated that through *Bells in Winter* Milosz "challenged American poetry to exit from the labyrinth of the self and begin to grapple again with the larger problems of being in the world."⁵⁷³ In his review of Milosz's work, Des Pres argued that while *Selected Poems* was a story of loss, *Bells in Winter* brought recovery, revealing the very distinct character of Milosz's poetics. The critic set the tone for his article, stating: "People, places, things, everything for Milosz is densely historical and destiny is shared, it is human destiny." For students of modern poetry in America this approach would sound old-fashioned and out of literary place, Des Pres continued. American poetry ignored history, Des Pres argued:

Even for a poet as obsessed with events as Robert Lowell the world's agony is but mirror and emblem of his own internal torment. From Emerson and Dickinson onward, American poetry celebrates perception for perception's sake, it focuses on the interior drama of wholly isolated selfhood, it posits destiny in solely individual terms. For a poet like Milosz, who saw Warsaw leveled and was among the handful to survive the generation's murder, such attitudes must not only sound out of place, but out of the world altogether.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷¹ Terrence Des Pres, "Czeslaw Milosz: The Poetry of Aftermath," *The Nation*, 12/30/1978, 742.

⁵⁷² Czeslaw Milosz, and Lillian Vallee, *Bells in Winter* (New York: Ecco Press, 1978).

⁵⁷³ Jonathan Galassi, "The Horses of Fantasy and Reality," *The New York Times Book Review*, 03/11/1979, 25.

⁵⁷⁴ Des Pres, 742.

In the case of Milosz and other East European poets, the question of origins and context was essential; a case of knowing where the poem came from, “out of what wreckage, defeat, aftermath.” Des Pres was aware that such an approach was unfamiliar to the American poetry reader: “This way of reading poems is not congenial to Americans, but it is indispensable to much of the best poetry now coming out of other traditions.”⁵⁷⁵

Analyzing further Milosz’s poetics, Des Pres juxtaposed Milosz’s knowledge of evil informed by his experience of WW II to the celebratory and joyous notes present in his poetry. He admitted:

I know of no poet more driven to celebration, to sing of the earth in its plainness and glory and therefore no poet more' tormented [...] by the terrible detour through history which must be taken if, in pursuit of joyous song, the authority of poetic affirmation is not to remain untested or open to the charge 'of ignorance. But after witnessing the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto, after the Soviet betrayal of the Polish uprising, after the protracted misery of the Baltic resettlement, the will to praise life meets hard objections.⁵⁷⁶

Des Pres emphasized that to the task of bearing the burden of historical consciousness, seemingly a task above one’s strength, Milosz responded quietly and without despair. The critic quoted a snippet from Milosz’s 1969 poem “Calling to Order:”

You could scream

Because mankind is mad.

*But you, of all people; should not.*⁵⁷⁷

Arriving at the problem of Milosz’s definition of what was the responsibility of a twentieth-century poet, Des Pres referred to the poem *Encounter*, included in *Bells in Winter*. Although the poem had been written long before Milosz witnessed the evil of war

⁵⁷⁵ Des Pres, 743.

⁵⁷⁶ Des Pres, 743.

⁵⁷⁷ Czeslaw Milosz, “Calling to Order,” In: Milosz, *New and Collected Poems*, 271.

and totalitarian system, its closing phrase was what Des Pres thought still best defined Milosz's poetic credo decades later. The 1936 poem read:

*We were riding through frozen fields in a wagon at dawn
A red wing rose in the darkness.*

*And suddenly a hare ran across the road.
One of us pointed to it with his hand.*

*That was long ago. Today, neither of them is alive,
Not the hare, nor the man who made the gesture.*

*O my love, where are they, where are they going
The flash of hand, streak of movement, rustle of pebbles.
I ask not out of sorrow, but in wonder.⁵⁷⁸*

While fixated on the historic interpretation of Milosz's poetry, in his review Des Pres nonetheless made two contributions to the future, more advanced reception of the poet: first, he touched on the question of Milosz's understanding of the role of poetry. Second, Des Pres made a statement about certain similarities between Milosz's poetics and that of his Anglophone predecessor Eliot, saying:

And yet the aim of both Milosz and Eliot is identical: to go back and work through the detritus of one's own time on earth, to gather up the worst along with the best, integrate past and present into a culminating moment which transcends both, which embraces pain and joy together, the whole of a life and a world redeemed through memory and art, a final restoration in spirit of that which in historical fact has been forever lost.⁵⁷⁹

The observation that while bringing fresh air to contemporary American poetry, Milosz was not necessarily completely divorced from its very roots, was later made by Cavanagh in her critical reception of Milosz. Linking Milosz's writing to American poetry, currently

⁵⁷⁸ Czeslaw Milosz, "Encounter," In: Milosz, *New and Collected Poems*, 27.

⁵⁷⁹ Des Pres, 743.

going through a crisis, Des Pres suggested that attention to history could offer a solution to this crisis. “History is the self’s other half, its boundary and nemesis, a foundation fearful, unstable, yet essential, without which the poet sings thinly and cannot claim the authority, nor confer the solace, we rightfully expect from the art,” he concluded.⁵⁸⁰

By the late 1970s, Milosz became recognizable in literary circles as the author of two poetry volumes, and was adored by a small group of young poets; he was also honored with the 1978 Neustadt International Prize for Literature. At last he was back among the poets. Shortly after publishing *Selected Poems*, in the fall of 1974, Milosz gave a series of poetry readings on the East Coast and was particularly happy to find an attentive, “non-Polish” audience at his authorial evening in New York. Milosz wrote in a letter to Giedroyc: “they were celebrating me as an American poet.”⁵⁸¹ The first successful volume of poetry in English brought some attention to Milosz, and his long-time admirer, the poet Joseph Brodsky nominated Milosz for the Neustadt Prize. Two decades prior to this, Brodsky, then a citizen of Leningrad, had been studying Polish in order to read Polish poetry, particularly Milosz. Since Brodsky’s 1972 expulsion from the USSR, he and Milosz had become close friends. In a 1978 laudatory speech to the prize, Brodsky spoke about his years of clandestine reading of Milosz’s poetry and stated: “[...] I state with no hesitation that Czeslaw Milosz is one of the greatest poets of our times, if not the greatest.”⁵⁸² While Brodsky’s words must have sounded surprising to a wide Anglophone audience, at the time there were only two American scholars familiar enough

⁵⁸⁰ Des Pres, 743. Besides the three above discussed texts, there were other eight short reviews of *Selected Poems* published in the American press, which inscribed into the historical interpretative model. Volynska-Bogert, *Milosz*, 32.

⁵⁸¹ Franaszek, *Milosz*, 666.

⁵⁸² Franaszek, *Milosz*, 672.

with the laureate's work to write for the special issue of *World Literature Today*, which accompanied the Neustadt Award. The majority of the texts came from Polish critics.⁵⁸³

This well-prepared, but still unexpected acceleration of his career in America not only brought Milosz joy but also left him amazed. He discussed recent developments in an October 1978 letter to Giedroyc. For years Giedroyc had been persuading Milosz to engage more in political writing, yet always had his columns opened to Milosz's poetry.

Milosz admitted to Giedroyc:

To jump into a position of an international writer by writing poems in Polish – it is perhaps the strangest thing that can happen in the 20th century and I cannot believe in it. And I have to note how much I owe to the American poets with their tolerance and also to Josif Brodski, who has advertised me broadly – usually, only the newcomers from there, either Russia, or Poland, value the significance of poetry and also my poetry. (...) Now an authorial evening at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, with signing the copies [of my volume.]⁵⁸⁴

That Milosz might have overestimated the extent of his literary success could be seen in one anecdote. During the 1979 poetry festival in San Francisco people kept asking: “Who is that guy?”⁵⁸⁵

GETTING RID OF A HISTORIC MASK

The recognition that came with Milosz's 1980 Nobel Prize in Literature generated huge interest in the poet and heightened demand for his works; many among American readers of poetry had not had the chance to assess Milosz's literary profile. Given the lack of substantial poetic material by Milosz available in English, the publishers rushed to release new editions of his books in prose: *The Captive Mind*, *Native Realm*, *The*

⁵⁸³ *World Literature Today* 3 (1978).

⁵⁸⁴ Milosz's letter to Jerzy Giedroyc, 10/14/1978. Giedroyc, Milosz, Kornat, *Listy*.

⁵⁸⁵ Franaszek, *Milosz*, 666.

Emperor of the Earth, as well as the recently translated novel *The Issa Valley*. Ironically, Milosz – a Nobel Prize winner for his poetry – remained unknown as a poet to a wide Anglophone audience. The sudden fame made it barely possible for Milosz to carry on with his academic duties, not to mention continuing translation of his poems, or responding to fan letters that were delivered by the sackful.

As Franaszek recounts, at the turn of 1980/1981 an informal translation group – The Grizzly Peak Collective – was formed to come to Milosz’s aid.⁵⁸⁶ In a cottage in Milosz’s garden, the two American poets Robert Hass and Robert Pinsky, with the support of the Polish journalist Renata Gorczynska, spent hours working with initial translations of poems provided by Milosz. Neither of the two poets knew Polish so they relied on Gorczynska’s linguistic intuition and on Milosz, who popped in during the evenings to explain, for example, the idiosyncrasies of his Lithuanian childhood presented in a poem. Hass recollected this immersion in Milosz’s poetry: “[...] I was struck not by any of the philosophical or artistic things, but by the drama of the humanity, of its voice. I don’t mean humanism, I mean human honesty, modesty, bewilderment and persistence, the powerful sense not of the Poet but of a man trying to understand his experience.”⁵⁸⁷ The American poet shared his reflections of “living in” Milosz’s poetry and slowly arriving at an understanding of his poetics in a 1981 review essay published for *Ironwood*. Hass provided a thorough and insightful sketch of Milosz’s literary career, discussing the life context for particular works and familiarizing the American reader with the richness of Milosz’s poetry, much of which still was still unavailable in English. Hass did not shy away from talking about the misconception he had had of Milosz before

⁵⁸⁶ Franaszek, *Milosz*, 669.

⁵⁸⁷ Robert Hass’ note, 06/01/1988. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. B. 24.

he could read more of his poetry. He said, “He is not clearly the embittered sage of my fantasy, nor is he the patriot and freedom fighter of his current Polish popularity. Of course what one decides is that he depends on a perception of the strength of his work.”⁵⁸⁸ The review was no doubt enriched by translations of Milosz’s poetry that Hass was carrying out at this time.

While Milosz remained closely involved in the work of the Collective and exercised full control over the final product, the three enthusiasts were no doubt jointly responsible for the further development of Milosz’s literary image for American readers. Translation theory says that translation in itself is an interpretation but in this case the freedom of the interpreters was limited. Milosz was present throughout the process of translation, correcting on the go and pushing his own linguistic solutions. The Polish poet Stanislaw Baranczak noted: “English versions of his [poems] present us with a rare opportunity to deal with translations that, even though they may differ to some extent from the original for natural linguistic and cultural reasons, are still texts for which Milosz assumes total responsibility.”⁵⁸⁹ Cautious about how his poems came out in English, Milosz needed translators, and the poet was indebted to the Collective for creating an expedient opportunity to address a wider American audience with the 1984 volume *The Separate Notebook* and the 1988 volume *The Collected Poems, 1931-1987*.⁵⁹⁰ The translations were praised as smooth and flowing and were placed next to the best modern poetry to be written in English.⁵⁹¹ While various translators’ contributions will not be discussed here, it is worth mentioning that some critics argued that Milosz’s

⁵⁸⁸ Robert Hass, “Reading Milosz,” *Ironwood* 18 (1981), 141.

⁵⁸⁹ Stanislaw Baranczak, “Introduction,” In: Nathan and Quinn, *The Poet’s Work*, 10.

⁵⁹⁰ Czeslaw Milosz, *The Collected Poems, 1931-1987* (New York: Ecco Press, 1988).

⁵⁹¹ Carpenter, “The Gift Returned,” 50.

linguistic choices were sometimes less fortunate than those of his translators and that by publishing poems in his authorial translation he harmed his poetry.

Carpenter argues that it was not until the 1988 publication of *The Collected Poems* combined with the 1983 publication of a series of lectures Milosz gave in 1981/82 at Harvard, entitled *The Witness of Poetry*, that a breakthrough came in Milosz's poetic career in America:

While the poems sealed Milosz's reputation as 'one of the greatest poets of our time,' his (...) lectures provoked an extended and animated discussion among critics and poets about the nature of poetry and in particular its relationship to history. Together the three books established their author as a powerful presence in the American poetic landscape and a voice to reckon with.⁵⁹²

The 1988 volume, published almost thirty years after Milosz's arrival in the USA, was crucial for his further reception in America because it offered a relatively complete picture of the poet's oeuvre. *The Collected Poems* consisted of poems already translated into English, a number of old poems not translated before, and new poems.⁵⁹³ This time Milosz decided to put the poems in chronological order; moreover, he subtracted from and rearranged the structure of *Selected Poems*. Nathan and Quinn rightly state that Milosz employed a sophisticated mechanism to provide his readers with a carefully designed picture of his poetic output. There was no doubt that by choosing which poems to translate, add, or subtract from and how to rearrange them, Milosz desired to remain in control of his literary image. While the volume was entitled *collected*, it nevertheless remained a *selected* version of Milosz's poetic path. With many of his early poems written in Poland not included, *The Collected Poems* did not mirror Milosz's poetic career, but rather conveyed a literary image he thought more appropriate in the late

⁵⁹² Carpenter, "The Gift Returned," 48.

⁵⁹³ Czeslaw Milosz, *New and Collected Poems 1931-2001* (New York: Ecco, 2001).

1980s.⁵⁹⁴ He wanted to distance himself from many Polish problems, and to present himself as a poet speaking to an international audience.

Taking the advantage of critical attention, Milosz took the opportunity of his 1981/82 Norton lecture series at Harvard, later published as *The Witness of Poetry* (1983), to explain the choices a twentieth-century Eastern European poet made in his poetry and to reflect on the poet's role in the modern world. Instead of discussing arcana of his poetic craft, Milosz decided to "create a critical space in which his kind of poetry and poetic goals assume their proper place and value."⁵⁹⁵ He described a poet "as a man in love with the world," who is at the same time "condemned to eternal insatiability because he wants his words to penetrate to the very core of reality."⁵⁹⁶ Milosz claimed that, in their pursuit of words to reflect reality, many twentieth-century poets received training in pessimism, sarcasm, and despair. Yet another reason for "the gloom of twentieth-century poetry," he stated, was the fact that the poets alienated themselves from their readers. In this respect, Milosz continued, Polish poetry stood out as being closer to the "human family," one dealing with problems encountered by contemporary "ordinary people." Developing his theses on twentieth-century poetry, Milosz was skillfully projecting his own image as a poet. He said:

What can poetry be in the twentieth century? It seems to me that there is a search for the line beyond which only a zone of silence exists and that on the borderline we encounter Polish poetry. In it a peculiar fusion of the individual and the historical took place, which means that events burdening a whole community are perceived by a poet as touching him in a most personal manner. Then poetry is no longer alienated.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁴ Nathan and Quinn, *The Poet's Work*, 173.

⁵⁹⁵ Karwowska, "Czesław Miłosz's Self-Presentation," 291.

⁵⁹⁶ Czesław Miłosz, *The Witness of Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983), 74.

⁵⁹⁷ Miłosz, *The Witness of Poetry*, 94-95.

Karwowska noticed that while the Norton lectures allowed Milosz to proclaim his poetic manifesto, it also constituted an apologia for his own kind of poetry – one that refused to submit to despair.⁵⁹⁸

The formula of “witnessing” used in the Norton lectures was soon applied by critics to explain the relation between Milosz’s poetry and history – a fact that made the poet furious, as he hated the simplified use of his poetry as a mere record of historic events. In 1988, Milosz entered into a polemic with the literary critic Al Alvarez who had recently published a review of Milosz’s *Collected Poems* under the title “Witness.”⁵⁹⁹ In his essay for *The New York Review of Books*, Alvarez used historic lenses and focused on the political context of Milosz’s poetry: the Second World War, communist ideology, and political exile. Presenting Milosz in an influential highbrow periodical as a scribe passing historic events to posterity by use of his verses, Alvarez put Milosz’s literary image at risk. Milosz rarely responded to reviews of his work in the Anglophone press, yet this time the poet protested immediately. In a sharp letter to the editor, Milosz expressed his irritation, saying that he was concerned to see the long evolution of his poetic work encapsulated by Alvarez in the word “witness,” which the poet did not take as praise. Milosz also added: “Perhaps some Western writers are longing for subjects provided by spasms of historical violent change but I can assure you, Mr. Alvarez, that we, natives of hazy Eastern regions, perceive History as a curse and prefer to restore to literature its autonomy, dignity and independence from social pressures.”⁶⁰⁰

Being a Polish poet, Milosz knew the risk involved in wearing the “historical mantle,” and while many American readers saw historical perspective as the strength in

⁵⁹⁸ Karwowska, “Czeslaw Milosz’s Self-Presentation,” 294.

⁵⁹⁹ Al Alvarez, “Witness,” *The New York Review of Books*, 06/02/1988, 21-22.

⁶⁰⁰ Czeslaw Milosz. “A Poet’s reply,” *The New York Review of Books*, 07/21/1988, 42.

his poetry, Milosz dreaded that it would become his curse. The polemic with Alvarez revealed that Milosz was walking a fine line in projecting his image to the American audience. He indeed stated firmly in the 1983 *The Witness of Poetry* that a Polish poet lived in history; at the same time, however, he could not allow the American audience to perceive him as a Romantic poet, for whom history was the sole orientation point. Milosz did not want to be but a speaker for his doomed nation and for his poetry to be a record of historic events in verse. Was the poet both attracted to and repulsed by the idea that he would function as a national poet, a seer, this time for the American audience? Did he first use the historic perspective to attract readers, only to then object to being labeled as “the poet of witness”? What was the explanation behind Milosz’s somewhat confusing literary strategy? The American reception of his poetry made Milosz once again face the specter he had been evading for decades: the image of the national poet who dwelled in the martyrdom of his people. The deeper Milosz reached in time, providing translations of his early poems to the American readers, the more traps he encountered along his way. This, apparently, was the price of translating the literary-historical context of his poetry to a culturally distinct audience.

In an effort to better relate to the term “witness” in the context of Milosz’s poetry, yet another critic, Peter Filkins discussed this issue in his 1989 review essay, “The Poetry and Anti-Poetry of Czeslaw Milosz.” A careful reader of Milosz’s response to Alvarez, Filkins distinguished between Milosz the witness of historic events and Milosz the poet. Filkins explained:

In short, Milosz the man may be praised for having witnessed, survived and reported many of the atrocities inflicted on his native Poland and Europe as a whole, but it’s a distinction which has little to do with the making of good poems. Milosz the poet, however, is quite another matter.

For it is the way he has conveyed his experience, the leaps in invention, form, expression and craft that he has used to get at it, which, if nothing else, has made him a witness to poetry at its finest, as well as one of the most complex and imaginative writers this century has seen.

And further:

[...] perhaps more than any living poet, [Milosz] stands as a testament to the power of poetry to encompass human suffering on a large historical scale without ignoring the difficulty, if not impossibility, of the poet bearing such burdens to still advocate poetry's inherent capacity and urge for praise. In fact, *despite his refusal to accept the role, Milosz is a witness* [emphasis mine] and one of the very best our own dim century has to offer us.⁶⁰¹

What Milosz struggled against in the reception of his poetry, some critics saw as his great contribution. Once again, the poet realized that his literary image did not correspond perfectly with the one he wished to project. For once, Milosz's self-presentation to the American audience bore traits of his dichotomous nature and the poet could not assume that the critics would fully sense its complexities. Second, with more of his poetry available to American readers, Milosz could not respond to and control multiple readings of his works. That, however, was the nature of a writer-reader relationship, in which the American critics exercised their freedom to interpret Milosz's poetry.

In the initial phase of Milosz's reception in America, critics focused on investigating the relation between his poetry and history, but later they recognized that Milosz's poetry was anchored in history not by the poet's choice, but rather as a consequence of his life experience. In 1988 the leading American poetry critic Helen Vendler argued: "[Milosz] cannot help being a historical [poet]. (...) It seems that he has suffered the twentieth century all alone, vividly aware of historical cataclysms... yet

⁶⁰¹ Peter Filkins, "The Poetry and Anti-Poetry of Czeslaw Milosz," *The Iowa Review*, Spring-Summer (1989), 189.

living in catastrophe as a hermit, sounding like Blake's Mental Traveller."⁶⁰² On pages of *The New Republic*, the well-known New York intellectual Irving Howe went even further, picturing Milosz as "a poet who detests history and struggles to break away from it," but at the same time "can no more escape his century... than flee his skin."⁶⁰³ With Milosz's *Collected Poems* out in the market and a fresh attitude emerging from the critics, a critical potential arose to break with reductionist interpretation presenting Milosz as a poet immersed exclusively in history.

"MY NAME WAS MADE IN AMERICA"⁶⁰⁴

By end of the 1980s the second phase of Milosz's reception in America began with the American critics Donald Davie, Leonard Nathan, Arthur Quinn, Helen Vendler, and others involved in a dialogue revealing philosophical, moral, aesthetic, religious, or even mystical aspects of Milosz's poetry.⁶⁰⁵ The critics emphasized the significance of Milosz's life-long artistic search for a "more spacious form" with elements of prose woven into his poetry, which was an eye-opening experience for the American poets. Seamus Heaney described the liberating quality that Milosz's poetry had on his generation of poets, who had been raised in a very different literary tradition. Heaney, who came to develop a close friendship with Milosz, recollected listening to the Polish poet reading his poem "Incantation" for the first time:

We were enjoying a poem which did things forbidden within an old dispensation to which... I was subject. The poem was, for example, full of abstractions... [its] unabashed abstract nouns and conceptually aerated adjectives should have been altogether out of the question... and indeed

⁶⁰² Helen Vendler, *The Music of What Happens. Poems, Poets, Critics* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988), 211.

⁶⁰³ Carpenter, "The Gift Returned," 50.

⁶⁰⁴ Czeslaw Milosz. "Nobel Speech."

⁶⁰⁵ Donald Davie, *Czeslaw Milosz and the Insufficiency of Lyric* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986).

the poem aspired to deliver what we had once long ago been assured it was not any poem's business to deliver: a message.⁶⁰⁶

It was this very message, thus far often reduced to a narrative of historic events, that the critics set out to discuss. The words by Heaney explain how a leap from the first to the second phase of Milosz's critical reception in America happened. In a 1988 interview, Heaney said:

What I really like about Milosz is hearing a personal voice in which the poignance and emotional coloring and coloratura spring from the inner lining of the self. And yet at the same time, one recognizes that the feeling center is situated within a large, stern intellectual circumference. What Milosz can do is to rhyme, if you like, his personal biography with the history of western civilization. He passed a childhood among the woods of Lithuania in a scene that was fundamentally still medieval – hay wains and orchards, hunts and lake and church bells. This was all authentic. He has gone through that, the 30s in Poland; he's gone through Warsaw, the Nazi and Soviet devastations; he has gone through himself, intellectually, coming within the sphere of Marxist orthodoxy, detaching himself from that at the cost of great personal solitude and hurt, leaving that milieu in the 1950s, ending up now in his own 60s, 70s and 80s in California in a kind of free gravity-less modernity... He can be a serf on the road to Mass or he can be a weightless astronaut walking out there. And I find that authority irresistible, because there is the weight of personal hurt and loss and the weightlessness of impersonal despair for the humanistic venture.⁶⁰⁷

Heaney emphasized that Milosz's special poetic power was based on the ability to talk in many voices, to present in his poems a "binocular" vision, "seeing things from the top of a high mountain and from the back of the child's eye," as well as to be able to unite "the here and everywhere, the now and always."⁶⁰⁸

While Heaney provided insightful comment on Milosz's poetics, the two professors at the University of California at Berkeley and friends of Milosz, Leonard

⁶⁰⁶ Seamus Heaney, "The Impact of Translation," *The Government of the Tongue: Selected Prose 1878-1987* (New York, 1986) Quoted in: Cavanagh, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics*, 248.

⁶⁰⁷ Seamus Heaney, "An Interview," conducted by Randy Brandes, *Salmagundi* 80 (1988): 8-9. Quoted in Carpenter, "The Gift Returned," 52.

⁶⁰⁸ Seamus Heaney, "Milosz and World Poetry," *Partisan Review* 1 (1999): 22. Quoted in Carpenter, "The Gift Returned," 53.

Nathan and Michael Quinn, investigated Milosz's oeuvre, focusing especially on its philosophical content. In their 1991 book *The Poet's Work*, Nathan and Quinn followed the evolution of Milosz's thought, picturing him as, above all, a philosophical poet. Nathan, who was also a translator of Polish poetry, on one occasion described the phenomenon of Milosz on the American poetry scene, saying:

He is an example of (...) a philosophical poet. (...) We do not have philosophical poets. We do have lyrical poets, who are concerned with their own shoes, trousers, hands and hearts. (...) He had mastered this skill to give meaning to things which threaten our common sense, the things we cannot deal with in any other way than either by ignoring them or turning our back on it. He [Milosz] proves the salvation.⁶⁰⁹

In their monograph, Nathan and Quinn address the problem of Milosz's duality reflected in his poetry, with moments of despair followed by verses full of life affirmation. This attitude, they argued, had a lot to do with Milosz's idea of poetry as inextricably linked to celebrating the world, even amidst historic apocalypse, of which the poet talked in his Norton lectures. This approach was also informed by yet another factor - Milosz's religious ambivalence. By looking closely at Milosz's reading of Blake, Dostoevsky, Swedenborg, and Simone Weil in the light of a religious trope in Milosz's poetry, Nathan and Quinn constructed a more complex image of the Polish poet. Their analysis of philosophical and religious aspects opened a new interpretative realm for the reception of Milosz's poetry in America.⁶¹⁰

Yet another breakthrough in Milosz's critical reception came with the works of Vendler, who found existing thematic analysis of Milosz's poetry insufficient and engaged in a discussion of aesthetic aspects of his lyric. Vendler pointed to two

⁶⁰⁹ Leonard Nathan, "On przynosi ratunek," tłum. JS, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 26 (1996). Quoted in Franaszek, *Milosz*, 661.

⁶¹⁰ Nathan and Quinn, *The Poet's Work*.

characteristics of Milosz's poetics that brought a tone of duality to his verses: sternness and austerity were combined with unrelenting mildness. In this juxtaposition, Vendler argued, laid the power of Milosz's poetry. "The struggle between a clarifying, if inhuman, light and the darkness of a particular fate underlies everything that he writes," Vendler said of Milosz, "and it provides, in fact, an endless fertile resource for invention, as particulars and light dispute each other for room in his work."⁶¹¹ The critic acknowledged that since Milosz's youth his "ecstatic" nature had been constantly confronted with the opposite powers: darkness, evil and sadness; all of that found reflection in his poetics. One such instance was Milosz's practice of appending to a poem a second poem. Always on the quest to capture reality in verse, the poet revealed his philosophical thoughts in the first poem only to contradict it by giving way to emotions in a poetic commentary to it. "The aesthetics of alternating moods" was how Vendler labeled Milosz's practice of poetical dialectics.⁶¹²

After the British poet and literature professor Donald Davie first introduced the subject in his 1986 book, *Czeslaw Milosz and the Insufficiency of Lyric*, aesthetic and formal aspects of Milosz's poetic craft were more often discussed.⁶¹³ The critics referred to Milosz' poems with elements of prose involved and with unorthodox use of the lyrical "I." Discussing Milosz "departure from the lyric" in search of more heterogeneous forms, Davie argued that it was a tool to describe the complexity of twentieth-century experience. Robert Hass recognized in it a reflection of the poet's dualistic nature and of his artistic desire to find a poetic form that could carry contradictions. Peter Filkins, in

⁶¹¹ Vendler, *The Music of What Happens*, 211.

⁶¹² Helen Vendler, "Tireless Messenger," *The New York Review of Books*, 08/13/1992, 44.

⁶¹³ Davie, *Czeslaw Milosz*.

turn, saw Milosz's efforts to incorporate prose into poetry as the poet's most significant contribution to the style of contemporary poetry.⁶¹⁴

Milosz's accomplishment of introducing twentieth-century Polish poetry to the American reader was even better visible in the 1980s, when many poets admitted that reading *Postwar Polish Poetry* had been a turning point in their artistic development. The poet Jonathan Aaron commented on Milosz's role, saying: "No single writer of our time has with such profound effect brought another literature across the distances of language and history to the readers and writers of our own. His contribution to our literary self-awareness has been and continues to be crucial."⁶¹⁵ Milosz's introductory, critical and translation work done with Polish poetry on the American literary ground was a success in itself, his efforts at the same time proved an effective literary strategy for the advancement of his own career as an American poet. While Milosz played such an important role in introducing Polish poetry to a broad American audience, he also had a strong influence on the young generation of American poets. Vendler stated firmly: "I don't think that there's any poet in America who has not read Milosz."⁶¹⁶ Cavanagh, in turn, listed a number of names of poets who gave credit to Milosz for their poetic sensitivity and growth. Among them were Robert Pinsky, Edward Hirsch, Rosanna Warren, Robert Hass, Charles Simic, Mary Karr, Carolyn Forché, Yusef Komunyakaa, Mark Strand, and W.S. Merwin.⁶¹⁷ In his biography of Milosz, Franaszek discussed one such life-changing encounter with Milosz's verses that happened to the American poet Edward Hirsch. In 1973, Hirsch was a twenty-three year old alumnus of Grinnell College

⁶¹⁴ Carpenter, "The Gift Returned," 17.

⁶¹⁵ Cavanagh, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics*, 239.

⁶¹⁶ Franaszek, *Milosz*, 661.

⁶¹⁷ Cavanagh, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics*, 236.

and fascinated with poetry. One day, Hirsch recollected, he purchased a volume by Milosz:

I have adored Milosz's writing since that day in 1973, when I expended five dollars and ninety-five cents on his *Selected Poems*. This was a considerable amount for a fresh graduate – and I took the volume for my trip through Europe, carrying it as a talisman, finding a Vergilian guide in it. In a dark Viennese café, I frantically flipped pages when reading “A Portrayal from the mid-20th Century,” and “Mittelbergheim.” I remember unusual excitement, almost an ecstatic heartbeat, when I was reading “On Trumpets and Cithers,” seated in a Parisian café, where Sartre often dropped by. (...) I was happy and transformed, being able to know poetry that was initiated in all apocalyptic flames of history and at the same time [poetry] touching the limits of what could be said, overreaching to the side of un-spoken.⁶¹⁸

Many American poets expressed their gratitude to Milosz for inspiring or guiding their literary development. The poet Jane Hirshfield wrote to Milosz from California, saying:

As always reading your poems returns me to your deep intimacy with what it is to be alive. Tender without ignoring the omnipresent face of cruelty. Faithful to what has been tasted for oneself, the friends and conversations and places and passing moments. Inquisitive, evaluative, contemplative, playful. Called to praise not only what cannot be entirely named but also the particular, which can and which you do with both detachment and compassion. (...) You will say, 'unattained', or only 'what remains of incessant striving.' but reading the poems, I say yes, attained. The heart and mind and soul made visible, audible, present. The things of the world made visible, audible, present.⁶¹⁹

Milosz's poetry also influenced the writing of Heaney, as Magdalena Kay argues in her recent study on this leading twentieth-century Irish poet. Heaney confessed in a letter to Milosz: “The tone and substance of your poetry ploughs a deep furrow in me. During the last eight or nine years, the register of your music as much as the level, wide, unfooled gaze of your vision has been like a sanctuary for me: reliable, comforting but not too

⁶¹⁸ Franaszek, *Milosz*, 667.

⁶¹⁹ Jane Hirshfield's letter to Milosz, 04/08/1995. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 24.

comforting.”⁶²⁰ Derek Walcott, the English-language poet and recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature, in turn acknowledged his debt to the Polish poets in a poem “Polonaise.” Its closing line read: “Zagajewski, Herbert, Milosz.”⁶²¹

While Milosz’s poetry seemed innovative to Heaney and to many American poets, Cavanagh argues that Milosz himself derived much of his poetic craft from reading... postwar English and American poetry! Cavanagh – the leading American literary specialist on Milosz – sees Milosz as a mediator between the tradition he acknowledged himself by reading Anglophone poetry in wartime Warsaw and American poetry from the 1970s and 80’s. Milosz brought to young American poets elements of discursiveness that they did not bother to look for in poetry by their own precursors: Eliot, Auden, Shapiro, Merwin, and Lowell. Yet again, by looking to the past Milosz was rescuing for his readers precious cultural values. The very same discursiveness that Milosz refreshed for the American poets, constituted a revolution in Polish poetry of the twentieth century.⁶²²

During the second phase of Milosz’s reception in the American literary world a more complex image of the poet emerged. A similar process was taking place in Poland, where a new generation of scholars continued critical studies on Milosz’s poetry. To this multi-faceted image of Milosz, emerging on two continents, the critic Leopold Labedz provided an insightful comment: “Milosz is an intellectual poet; also a metaphysical poet and one of passion. Each of these elements inevitably clashes with the others and this becomes the source of a creative tension and of certain problems of his philosophy. Poetry seems to help him clarify his feelings.”⁶²³

⁶²⁰ Seamus Heaney’s letter to Milosz. 10/17/1987. Czeslaw Milosz Papers. B. 24. Magdalena Kay, *In Gratitude for All the Gifts: Seamus Heaney and Eastern Europe* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

⁶²¹ Derek Walcott, “Polonaise,” *New Yorker* 10/09/1989, 52.

⁶²² Cavanagh, *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics*, 248.

⁶²³ Leopold Labedz. “Appreciating Milosz,” *Encounter*; December (1986), 73.

“YOURSELF DISCONSOLATE, YOU COMFORT US WITH YOUR POETRY”⁶²⁴

With the first phase of Milosz’s reception in America taking place mainly in literary and intellectual circles, my research in Milosz’s papers confirmed Carpenter’s thesis of Milosz’s growing popularity in the early 1990s. Letters coming to the poet in this period point to the significance of *Collected Poems*. Milosz’s poetry was not only a joy to the literary critics who were disputing its character in professional periodicals, but to a wider American audience of poetry. On a spring evening in 1989, the American poet and translator Christopher Merrill came to listen to Milosz reading his poetry in Santa Fe. In a letter to Milosz, he recollected watching an audience that night:

I have attended hundreds of such events, Merrill wrote and I can say without hesitation that yours was one of the very best I have heard. What you achieved in the sanctuary was, I believe, at least a partial healing of the "schism between the poet and the great human family" and for that we are all in your debt. As I looked around the church on Sunday, I saw countless people who have little or no connection to the literary world moved by your poems.⁶²⁵

In 1994 an anonymous person wrote to Milosz confessing how significant Milosz’s words had been in her life. "I wanted to let you know," the letter read, "how your voice, your words, become embedded in someone's life... why should you not know how your written words take on new life in other people's lives and speech. Not in their poetry, not in literary reviews and podium talks, but in everyday conversation between neighbors."⁶²⁶ Further commenting on her experience with Milosz’s verses, the person referred to an intimate and dramatic moment: "My father died and ... your words, your poetry, was my

⁶²⁴ Robert Fiszman’s letter to Milosz, 07/17/1986. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 17.

⁶²⁵ Christopher Merrill’s letter to Milosz, 5/17/1989. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 41.

⁶²⁶ Anonymous letter to Milosz, 7/09/1994. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 4.

consolation.”⁶²⁷ That Milosz’s verses could be of help and bring solace at a time of duress was often acknowledged in letters from his American audience.

The poems from Milosz’s 1978 volume *Bells in Winter* kept one of Milosz’s fans, Frank Banton, company at a time when he was “hovering over the edge of breakdown.”⁶²⁸ Similarly to Katherine Mcnamara, whose words opened this chapter, Banton also felt prompted to write a poem whilst reflecting on the verses of *Bells in Winter*. He shared the poem with Milosz. Yet another reader – the poet Carolyn Grassi – wrote to Milosz in 1989 from nearby San Jose, expressing gratitude for words that echoed her own struggles and dreams. She said:

In fact, your poetry means more than ever before - what you express, expresses my own buried longings, loses, hopes (...) so you are a strength for me, even as you too suffer. And reading your work right now is crucial for I am going through a deeply personal experience that requires courage and faith. (...) You companion my own struggles - you help me rejoice in the small things of earth - the ordinary particulars that make life bearable and beloved.⁶²⁹

Grassi, who must have shared some of Milosz’s experience as she moved from Brooklyn to California, emphasized how successful Milosz was in transferring his past pains and losses into verses that universally addressed all those who suffered. “[...] you have been suffering and you have suffered,” Grassi said, “(...) also transforming it into an alley of gold in poetry.”⁶³⁰

An article on Milosz in the March 1995 *The New York Review of Books* inspired Palm Beach resident Margaret B. Hurlll to write about her very special experience when reading Milosz’s poetry. At that time, Hurlll was taking care of her schizophrenic sister

⁶²⁷ Ibidem.

⁶²⁸ Frank Banton’s letter to Milosz, 03/27/1983. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 6.

⁶²⁹ Carolyn Grassi’s letter to Milosz, 9/09/1989. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 23.

⁶³⁰ Carolyn Grassi’s letter to Milosz, 11/13/1988. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 23.

after their elderly mother had committed suicide. The burden that she carried was overwhelming, as she described in a letter to the editor:

I was unable to find words to counter the sorrow, the grief, the mourning, the rage, but Czeslaw Milosz did accomplish all these miracles for me, acting as a buffer between me and my mother's anguish and the dreadful world it created for me. The first time I trusted anyone, the first person I ever trusted was Czeslaw Milosz, in the last chapter, "On Hope" from *The Witness of Poetry*. [...] all other "hope" was false.⁶³¹

In her letter to *The New York Review of Books*, which was later sent to Milosz, Hurll stated that Milosz's poetry did not offer easy solutions but while addressing the presence of evil and pain in the world, it always pointed to a more propitious condition. She said: "The grief remains, whatever anyone says, restoration follows ruin I think and a ruined world remains a mystery, but not an abyss. Milosz has kept ruin from becoming an abyss."⁶³² To a letter received in 1991 from Juliet Meyer, Milosz responded saying that reading it was very precious for him. Describing her struggle with illness, Meyer talked about her quest for hope via reading poetry:

I was struck with an exacerbation of my disability, a very painful neurologic disorder and have been in bed for two and a half weeks. What has helped me to survive this period emotionally has been your poetry in large part. Medical practice is assisting me physically, but this has been the worst attack in over six years and I have been fighting fear as well as pain. Your words and images have seeped into my bones, helping me to retain myself, bringing me peace - and joy and anguish - reminding me that I am still a part of life and will return to it once this period has passed.⁶³³

In their letters American readers often echoed Nathan and Quinn's analysis of Milosz's poetry as one where hope was always gleaming through the dark canvas of life.

⁶³¹ Margaret B. Hurll's letter to NYRB. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 47.

⁶³² Ibidem.

⁶³³ Juliet Meyer's letter to Milosz, 10/07/1991. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 41.

Milosz made a considerable effort to respond to the letters he received, often expressing his astonishment at the influence his poetry had on his readers and joy that the American audience appreciated his writing. It was also via poetry readings, which Milosz had held regularly since the mid-1970s, that his verses left a deep imprint on listeners. The university lecturer of Lithuanian descent Jean Molesky-Poz described her impressions from an October 1995 evening of Milosz's poetry in Berkeley:

As I watched you read under the soft lamp, your stocky hands searching for the appropriate page, your intense eyes scanning for the next selection, I, for a moment, saw and understood my own father. (...) For a brief moment, I saw and understood how dad's cultural background shaped his interior depth and geography. And my heart wept, because resonances of that cultural experience have also imprinted my soul in longing. (...) Your preliminary reading on poetry was an inversion of mysticism and a line you read on your own work: "stand up on your own two feet" sparked another movement and decision. I had been a religious sister in a Franciscan convent but I left after ten years. In reconstructing my life anew I realized more than anything I wanted to write and wrote my first novel. (...) But as you read last night, I realized again the unrelenting need to write - that the Word is in my heart and on my tongue. (...) The flame fanned higher.⁶³⁴

Milosz responded to Jean Molesky-Poz with words of gratitude.

Stephen Nagy from Columbus, Ohio, closely followed Milosz's writing and in his 1991 letter praised Milosz for his striving toward perfection when undertaking new literary challenges. Explaining to Milosz the lasting influence of his poetry, Nagy said: "I tell you in simple fact that when all of us are gone, you will be remembered for much more than your *opera omnia*, your assembled literary works; you will live on because of the evolutionary effect your writings inspired in us."⁶³⁵ Surely, as any writer would have been, Milosz was touched by the tone of Nagy's letter and responded humbly to his

⁶³⁴ Jean Molesky-Poz's letter to Milosz, 10/13/ 1995. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 41.

⁶³⁵ Stephen Nagy's letter to Milosz, 04/15/1991. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 46

devoted reader. The poet wrote: "What I can say is that any writer needs the encouragement of his readers and your *encomium* gives me a few moments of awareness that my work is useful. Usually writers are not secure and I wish to express my gratitude."⁶³⁶ Yet another of his readers, Kenneth Anderson, wrote to Milosz, saying: "I find your poetry a constant source of solace and renewal. There have been times reading your poems that I can't read the words on the page for the tears in my eyes. [...] to tell you how much your work has come to mean to me, how deeply it has touched me and how it has subtly... come to change my life."⁶³⁷

The father of Milosz's student Kelly Herold enthused in a letter about the speech Milosz had delivered at the 1990 graduation ceremony at Berkeley, when the touched Mr. Herold had come to understand his daughter's fascination with Milosz, which found a humoristic reflection in the fact that Kelly had sought out and bought herself a cat that resembled the one that Milosz owed.⁶³⁸ As if he were addressing all the readers for whom his poetry had a special meaning, Milosz responded to Mr. Herold, saying: "As you know, one is always amazed to discover the influence you have on those we have never met."⁶³⁹

In January 1991, responding to a letter from James Bell, Milosz expressed his joy at having a lively contact with the audiences in both his genuine and adopted homelands:

The events of the last couple of years changed much in my habits of solitude. My books are published and widely read in Poland, translated into other languages of Central Europe. I receive letters from American readers of my poetry in translation, which bring me much pleasure and

⁶³⁶ Czeslaw Milosz's letter to Stephen Nagy, 1991. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 46.

⁶³⁷ Kenneth Anderson's letter to Milosz, 8/12/1993. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 4.

⁶³⁸ Mr. Herold's letter to Milosz, Summer 1990. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 24.

⁶³⁹ Czeslaw Milosz's letter to Mr. Herold, 08/09/1990. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 24.

prove I can reach a certain audience in spite of the intermediary of translation.⁶⁴⁰

In his 1985 poem “La Belle Epoqué ” Milosz said:

[...]

I'm consoling you, of course. Consoling myself also.

Not very much consoled. Trees-candelabra

And has there ever been anything that offered protection?

Fatality, nameless and pitiless, could it be averted? O civilized humanity!

*O spells, O amulets.*⁶⁴¹

The intimate and touching stories revealed on the pages of many American readers indicated that they found salvation in Milosz's poetry.

The well-read American correspondents of Milosz referred in their letters to the standard of poetry Milosz had introduced almost thirty years prior in his 1953 book *The Captive Mind*. One of the American poets whom Cavanagh described as having been influenced by Milosz's writing, W.S. Merwin responded directly to Milosz's lines in a 1988 letter. The two poets had recently met and kept correspondence. Merwin confessed:

I've been your debtor ever since I read it, thirty years ago. (...) your book engaged me powerfully from the start for all sorts of reasons, but the passage that electrified me was the one where the author talks of a traditional European childhood and education and then the moment of finding himself lying on the cobbles at a moment of gunfire and asking himself, of all the poems he has read, what he wanted to take with him at such a time. The idea became a kind of criterion, a touchstone. It seemed to me that poetry must aspire to be just that and that which lacked such aspiration was decoration and pasttime. (...) Poetry after all can survive and wake from all sorts of aspirations. But the touchstone worked as a

⁶⁴⁰ Czeslaw Milosz's letter to James Bell, 01/25/1991. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 6.

⁶⁴¹ Czeslaw Milosz, "Belle époque," In: Milosz, *New and Collected Poems*, 473.

touchstone and it clarified certain distinctions that were important for me then and have been ever since.⁶⁴²

The years of implementation of various strategies of self-presentation, combined with the propagation of Polish poetry in general, brought fruit in the enthusiastic reception of Milosz's own poetry, at first by literary critics and then by a broader American audience. Translating his poem in an acquired language gave Milosz the gift of being present on the American literary scene and listened. His exile proved to have a liberating aspect, since it allowed Milosz to have an artistic existence away from the Polish national agenda and placed the reception of his poetry in a new realm. While the ethos of the national poet echoed in the background of Milosz's dialogue with the American audience, it did not affect the tone of reception, allowing readers to reach to a more universal message in Milosz's poetry. In the 1978 poem "The Separate Notebooks" Milosz posed a question:

I did not choose California. It was given to me.

*What can the wet north say to this scorched emptiness?*⁶⁴³

The voice of "the wet north" found an attentive listener, though. This must have brought peace and joy to the poet. Let us see the émigré poet happy.

⁶⁴² W.S. Merwin's letter to Milosz, 09/26/1988. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 42.

⁶⁴³ Czeslaw Milosz, "The Separate Notebooks," In: Milosz, *New and Collected Poems*, 362.

CHAPTER 5

“Fortunate the Nation that has a Poet”:

The Reception of Milosz in Poland in the 1970s and 1980s

Father returns not. Mornings and evenings

I await him in tears, and fret,

The streams are swollen, the wild beasts prowling,

And the woods with robbers beset.”

(...)

Soon they heard the sound of wheels approaching,

And the foremost wagon espied.

Then jumped the children with joy together:

“Our father is coming!” they cried.

(...)

“Start on,” the merchant said to the servants,

“With the children I will follow on;”

But while he spoke the robbers surround them,

A dozen, with sabres drawn.

Adam Mickiewicz, “Father’s Return”⁶⁴⁴

In July 1973, the Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski wrote to Milosz about the situation in Poland, from which Kolakowski had been expelled five years earlier for his dissident attitude and for inspiring the events of March 1968 at the University of Warsaw. Once a believer in socialism with a human face, Kolakowski, like a number of the Polish *intelligentsia*, lost his faith in revisionist projects after the 1968 Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia. From his academic harbor at Oxford, Kolakowski described to Milosz the extent of cultural degradation that had taken place in Poland since the Soviets imposed their power in 1945. Kolakowski stated with grief:

⁶⁴⁴ Adam Mickiewicz, “Father’s Return. A Ballad.” In Paul Soboleski ed., *Poets and Poetry of Poland*, 1881.

I am afraid that you do not realize the scope of the changes that have taken place in Poland, and the catastrophic decline of cultural continuity. It is neither the Poland of the worker, the shopkeeper, the noble, or the intellectual, in the prewar sense of these words. It is the Poland of the cashier and the clerk, the peasant son wearing a beret, a semi-intellectual who has nothing of the sane peasant conservatism about him, or of working class solidarity or the *intelligentsia*'s dreams and snobbery. His nationalism is neither *endek* [National Democratic] nor PPS-ian [PPS-Polish Socialist Party], but new, debased in Soviet style. (...) If this slim thread connecting us with the living tradition of the old *intelligentsia*, either of the noble or Jewish genre, should break, we are lost. We will become Belarusians, we will become a Soviet republic with no resistance at all.⁶⁴⁵

While in his letter Kolakowski referred to the severance of continuity between the past and the future of Polish culture, another serious problem was the gulf between the domestic and the exiled branches of Polish culture, with émigré authors such as Gombrowicz and Milosz placed on the index. This chasm, however, did not stop their works from reaching select groups of Polish readers via intellectual contraband coming to Poland from the West, mainly from the Polish émigré monthly *Kultura*. The émigré writers could then be compared to the father from Mickiewicz's ballad, awaited by his children – readers in Poland – and constantly threatened by persecution on the part of communist “ruffians.”

This chapter will tell the story of how Poles struggled to read Milosz in the 1970s and 1980s, and how their interaction with Milosz's works became an undercurrent of dissident thought and of the emerging social movement of Solidarity. After Milosz's 1951 exile, with his name and works officially erased from Polish literature, only a small group of the *intelligentsia* engaged with his writing. Even though until 1980 Milosz had been a non-person for the majority of Poles, his writing had since the late 1960s gradually won over readers in the small-yet-influential circles of oppositionist *intelligentsia* and

⁶⁴⁵ Leszek Kolakowski to Milosz, 7/03/1973. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, Box 36, f. 535.

beyond. Why would an individual struggling with the day-to-day difficulties of life under the communist regime reach for the poetry of a long-gone author, whose American existence was so distinct from her own? How did it come about that the works of an officially banned poet left an imprint on so many young members of the Polish *intelligentsia*? Finally, what role did Milosz's writing play for the generation of communist-era dissenters and future revolutionaries? This chapter aims to answer the above questions by tracing the dialogue that took place between Milosz and his readers in Poland in the two decades preceding the 1989 revolution. Its purpose is to reveal the way Milosz's Polish readers implemented the mechanisms of the politics of literature in order to satisfy their specific political aims.

The initially very limited opportunity to remain in dialogue with Polish readers increased immensely in 1980, when Milosz won the Nobel Prize in Literature. Once again, the poet had to negotiate with his enthusiastic compatriots who applied a nationalist rhetoric and political interpretations when celebrating this literary event. Although Milosz lived in exile, he remained an important intellectual partner for many Polish intellectuals, with his works read in private and later also in public settings. The reception of Milosz in Poland in the 1970s and 1980s deserves close examination, as it not only provides insight into Milosz's literary career, but also gives an extraordinary view of Polish society on the eve of the fall of the communist regime. It is therefore also the story of an East-Central European nation that looked to poetry for moral guidance, that hoped and fought for freedom, and for which 1980 was a miraculous year of political, religious and literary ecstasy. Reading Milosz was intrinsically linked to the

coming of age of the Polish '68 generation, to the regaining of personal freedom by Poles, and to the final death of a lie, both in literature and in public life.

In this chapter, I argue that to see Milosz's reception in Poland only in the light of his 1980 Nobel Prize is to miss a key element of the emergence of civil society, of the role of underground culture, and of the significance of émigré literature for the young oppositionists who struggled to dispel the communist lies. My aim is therefore to analyze the presence of Milosz's works among Polish readers before the Nobel Prize propelled the poet back into the sphere of politics. The fact that this chapter concerns very recent history made it necessary to limit the use of archival material, much of which is unavailable or in the hands of living people.

The first group of Milosz's Polish audience consisted of a narrow circle of readers, mainly intellectuals, who had known Milosz before 1980. I will designate them as "the dissident *intelligentsia*," in the sense that they were aware of the distorted character of official Polish culture, fought for freedom of speech by circulating émigré publications, and nurtured the underground intellectual world. Their dissidence consisted in building an alternative socio-cultural reality and civil society – what the Czech dissident Vaclav Benda called a "parallel *polis*."⁶⁴⁶ In the period discussed, Milosz remained in dialogue with many people from Polish literary and intellectual circles – literary critics such as Jan Blonski, Aleksander Fiut, and Marek Skwarnicki, writers like Zbigniew Herbert, Jerzy Andrzejewski, Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz, and philosophers such as Andrzej Walicki, to mention but a few. I investigate these dialogues collectively in order to reveal the initially feeble connection that Milosz had with Polish readers, and which over time came to include the young oppositionist *intelligentsia*, to finally spread out to a

⁶⁴⁶ Marci Shore, *The Taste of Ashes: The Afterlife of Totalitarianism in Eastern Europe* (New York: Crown, 2013), 12.

broad Polish audience. This chapter makes a contribution to the intellectual history of the Polish dissident movement by revealing the role played by the young dissident *intelligentsia* – Adam Michnik, Jakub and Wojciech Karpinski, and Barbara Torunczyk – in making sense of Milosz’s writing in the context of their quest for freedom. Their desire for Milosz’s works to be known to a wider audience took a somewhat ironic twist when the poet became a national star upon winning the Nobel Prize.

The second subgroup of Milosz’s Polish audience were the readers who encountered his writing for the first time in the politically charged atmosphere of the year 1980. This audience’s broad sociological profile, from workers to university professors, reflected the shift that took place when a poet of an intimate audience, Milosz, suddenly became the “poet on everybody’s lips.” As one might expect, this audience’s correspondence with Milosz shows that their relation to his writing had a more superficial character compared to the previously mentioned group. My analysis of the reception of Milosz’s writing by this broad Polish readership will unearth just the sort of trap the poet found himself in. For Milosz, the dreamed-of audience was becoming a reality at a high price – his readers enthusiastically commenced the process of making him into the Polish national poet.

THE INVISIBLE ROPE

On cold winter nights in the Polish town of Kielce, Milosz’s friends, the theater directors Halina and Tadeusz Byrski, read Milosz’s “Lullaby” to their students. The children, who in the late 1950s practiced acting in the Byrskis’ studio theater, liked the

poem so much that they would later recite the same verses to their own children.⁶⁴⁷ Years later, Maria Malachowska-Kleiber wrote to Milosz about the significance of “Lullaby” in her life. She said: “I loved ‘Lullaby.’ It became my friend in good and bad times; it helped me go on with my life. So many times I recited it in the dark, in bed – hardships and worries ceased to exist – and I fell asleep calm and happy. For years, ‘Lullaby’ kept me company.”⁶⁴⁸

In the 1950s and ‘60s, Milosz’s poetry, although officially banned, accompanied a select group of other people in Poland as well: a small circle of his friends, a narrow professional group of literary scholars, and a tiny milieu of the oppositionist *intelligentsia*. This small group either had access to old volumes of Milosz’s poetry, or to Milosz’s books published and smuggled into Poland by the staff of *Kultura*. This is why in 1961, the literary scholar Jan Blonski wrote to Milosz about his amazement when he ran into a poster advertising an evening of Milosz’s poetry in Krakow. Sure enough, the censor quickly fixed the mistake and called off the event. “Yet,” Blonski added, “your fans strive to read you, anonymously, with the addition ‘great poet,’ or more than that, or using your name in private conversation.”⁶⁴⁹ Throughout the 1960s and ‘70s, Blonski not only kept up the correspondence with Milosz informing him about the growing number of scholars secretly working on his poetry, but he also wrote several essays on Milosz. In the early 1960s, Blonski explained to Milosz the importance of his writing to the narrow circle of his readers in Poland:

[...] you function as a sort of Myth, the myth of a poet, and it is not because your poems are not known; they are. In Krakow, I was shown, to my astonishment, [your volume] *King Popiel*, which had been copied on a

⁶⁴⁷ Halina and Tadeusz Byrski to Milosz, 10/22/1980. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 10, f. 202.

⁶⁴⁸ Maria Malachowska-Kleiber to Milosz, 8/25/1985. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 40, f. 590.

⁶⁴⁹ Jan Blonski to Milosz, 12/27/1961. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 9, 167.

typewriter from beginning to end. I do not know what other émigré work could merit such distribution. (...) Despite your absence from the group games, comparisons etc., you represent a value for individual reflection. (...) Your presence intervenes in a very personal domain.⁶⁵⁰

Andrzej Busza, who was a Polish writer lecturing in Canada, wrote to Milosz upon his return from a 1967 visit to Poland. In his letter, Busza discussed Milosz's strong presence among the young Polish *intelligentsia*. During Busza's prior visit to Berkeley, Milosz must have complained about his absence from the realm of Polish literature. Busza was therefore very happy to inform Milosz about the esteem in which he was held among Polish readers. In his letter, Busza recalled a stay in Warsaw and Krakow, saying:

Everywhere they asked about you. I had to tell of my visit to Berkeley a couple of times per day. The issue of *Ojczyzna* [Homeland] with your poems sells on the spot. What is most interesting, interest in you and your poetry is not limited to the older and middle generation (party activists included). You are currently the idol of the youngest. I remember, one day I took a walk with a young and very talented philosophy student [in Warsaw]. The whole time we talked about you.⁶⁵¹

The student Busza talked to in Warsaw probably had access to Milosz's poetry through a trusted professor, since Milosz's books were only available at university libraries on condition of obtaining permission from a professor.⁶⁵² Writers and intellectual elites, in turn, circulated among themselves copies of Milosz's books, which had been sent to Poland from Giedroyc's Literary Institute in Paris.

Jerzy Turowicz, yet another of Milosz's friends from before the war, could write to the poet freely from London, where he went on a business trip in 1973. Turowicz was the editor-in-chief of the independent, Krakow-based, Catholic *Universal Weekly*, in which he tried to bring about the loosening of censorship. An ardent admirer of Milosz'

⁶⁵⁰ Jan Blonski to Milosz, 10/30/1962. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 9, f. 167.

⁶⁵¹ Andrzej Busza to Milosz, 7/30/1967. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 10, f. 198.

⁶⁵² Jerzy Andrzejewski to Milosz, 01/17/1967. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 5, f. 119.

poetry, in his 1973 letter Turowicz admitted with grief that efforts to publish a volume of Milosz's poetry seemed a lost cause, and that recently even an article on Milosz's poetry by the young poet Marek Skwarnicki had been held up by the censor.⁶⁵³ Skwarnicki, born in 1930, was one of the people who discovered Milosz's poetry by chance, and saw it as an archeological treasure from an extinct literary world. At some point in the 1950s, thanks to an old, half-blind keeper at the National Library in Warsaw, Skwarnicki got his hands on Milosz's 1945 volume of poetry *Rescue*. In his first letter to Milosz in November 1964, Skwarnicki confessed that he had started writing under the influence of Milosz's poetry.⁶⁵⁴ Skwarnicki wrote to Milosz:

I wanted to add that both I and other friends of your poetry have nothing in common with the countryman, who would like to turn your poetry into a national, moralizing picture. Simply, we are cynical and we have read a lot of poetry. However, when one reads your poetry at night, tipsy, the solemn joy of things beautiful enters the room, and everyone feels slightly better in his heart, even when these [poems are about] very sad things.⁶⁵⁵

In the early 1970s, the Polish poet Artur Miedzyrzecki, who held a temporary lectureship in the USA, related to Milosz the news he had received from his literary colleagues in Poland. Himself enthusiastic about Milosz's poetry and grateful for his support in the USA, Miedzyrzecki discussed Milosz's popularity among the intellectual elites in Poland. "[A friend] Joasia Guze," Miedzyrzecki related, "writes me that she is in Obory [a Polish writers' summer resort], where she is reading your essays and poems, and she is thrilled. As you must know, they read you diligently over there."⁶⁵⁶ While Guze, a translator and art critic, wrote Miedzyrzecki from Obory, two other friends – the literary critic Ryszard Matuszewski and the writer Jaroslaw Rymkiewicz, sent

⁶⁵³ Jerzy Turowicz to Milosz, 10/17/1973. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 61, f. 853.

⁶⁵⁴ Marek Skwarnicki to Milosz, 11/1961. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 68, f. 804.

⁶⁵⁵ Marek Skwarnicki to Milosz, 8/06/1969. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 68, f. 804.

⁶⁵⁶ Artur Miedzyrzecki to Milosz, 7/01/1972. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 43, f. 625.

Miedzyrzecki a letter from their vacation in Mazury, where they were reading Milosz's *Private Obligations* and "smacked their lips with awe."⁶⁵⁷ In 1975, Blonski, who recognized Milosz's doubts about the reasons for his growing popularity, explained:

You seem to think that there must be some kind of misunderstanding in the actuality of your work in Poland and in the respect you are paid here. (...) Therefore, I ask you to appreciate not yourself, but this dull-witted people of the Vistula. It is true that they are hapless, but they exist. (...) And they read you – in reality or potentially. What I mean to say is that they are willing to read you and they grasp you at once.⁶⁵⁸

As the literary circles were reading Milosz's books published by *Kultura*, Milosz emerged as a crucial partner for the Polish literary world, inspiring young poets and literary critics. His poetry was a magic initiation into the poetic world for people such as Blonski or Aleksander Fiut, a student of Blonski's, of whom Blonski wrote to Milosz that "he has gone mad about you."⁶⁵⁹ In 1976, Fiut wrote to Milosz during a scholarship stay in Lille, France. He said:

I fully understand your resentment because of the lack of a wider echo to your poetry... Let me protest however: it may be that your works remain unknown in the West, but in the country, despite the difficulties, we know them and read them. To say even more, you are the tacit patron of the "new wave" of poetry, which is proven by the poems of Baranczak, Krynicki, Zagajewski. I am deeply convinced that an 'official' renaissance of your poetry in the country is yet to come.⁶⁶⁰

As described in many letters from his enthusiasts, due to potential consequences, Milosz's readers usually read his works in private settings; the public sharing of his poetry was an unusual experience—a conspiratorial practice in a country whose authorities dreaded the words of the émigré writer. Circulating Milosz's poetry was important for the readers who remembered Milosz as a rising poet of the 1930s. They

⁶⁵⁷ Artur Miedzyrzecki to Milosz, 9/19/1972. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 43, f. 625.

⁶⁵⁸ Jan Blonski to Milosz, 03/25/1975. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 9, f. 167.

⁶⁵⁹ Jan Blonski to Milosz, 1975. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 9, f. 167.

⁶⁶⁰ Aleksander Fiut to Milosz, 02/12/1976. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 17, f. 303.

would therefore introduce Milosz's poetry to the next generation at more or less clandestine gatherings, as in the case of Skwarnicki.⁶⁶¹ Some took risks, such as the university student Jaromir Jankowski who read Milosz's poetry to his pupils in the 1970s. Since Jankowski was unsure how to present Milosz's works, he resolved to play a recording made at an evening of Milosz's poetry held at the Pallottines' residence in Paris in October 1976 (Artur Miedzyrzecki kept Milosz company there). "This way," Jankowski wrote to Milosz, "you communicated, not even knowing about it, that you are among us."⁶⁶² The experience of clandestine poetry reading, often organized at relatively safe church locations, and often with the actress Halina Micolajska reciting, was a memorable event for those attending. "For the first time I heard your poetry in the catacombs of St. Anne's church in October 1977," Zofia Zarebska, a professor at the Polish Academy of Sciences, wrote to Milosz. Zarebska admitted: "I was astonished by this poetry – so there are still poems that can reach me intellectually. I remember [the poems] 'Plain' and 'The Song of the End of the World.' (...) At that moment, I painfully experienced this split between us and those living abroad, and how much more impoverished we were without them."⁶⁶³ As many readers confessed, Milosz's poetry had for years accompanied them at late night meetings, at which they shared with close friends the guilty pleasure of reading forbidden literature.⁶⁶⁴

Once, in a poem, Milosz compared his writing of poetry for nonexistent readers to climbing an invisible rope—a seemingly pointless activity that in fact helped him survive the pains of a life in exile. It also turned out to be significant for the small audience in

⁶⁶¹ In an interview, Tomasz Fialkowski told me that he kept Milosz's poetry in the back of his bookshelf. An interview with Tomasz Fialkowski, Krakow, May 2011.

⁶⁶² Jaromir Jankowski to Milosz, 12/16/1980. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 29, f. 459.

⁶⁶³ Halina Micolajska to Milosz, 3/10/1978. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 41, f. 600; Zofia Zarebska to Milosz, 1/14/1981. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 70, f. 969.

⁶⁶⁴ Malgorzata Kidybinska to Milosz, 12/10/1980. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 33, f. 503.

Poland, who opened Milosz's books seeking hope, beauty, and truth. For many of Milosz's Polish readers, as archival material shows, it often had a rescuing power.⁶⁶⁵ Such was the case of Norbert Wojciechowski. In 1984, Wojciechowski wrote to Milosz from his exile in the Netherlands, discussing the political persecution he had suffered as a dissident leader in Poland in the early 1980s. Having witnessed the police suppression of workers' marches upon the imposition of martial law in December 1981, Wojciechowski had to flee his apartment in pajamas, finally finding shelter at the bishops' residence. In the Polish town of Lublin, Wojciechowski continued his oppositionist engagement by publishing Milosz's works in the underground. In his letter to Milosz, he confessed: "I was so happy when in December 1981 I heard your voice on *Voice of America* radio, and when you mentioned a letter from Lublin, informing you about the publication of your *Psalms*. It was a tenuous thread which at that moment connected me personally to the free world..."⁶⁶⁶

THE ÉMIGRÉ POET, THE CENSOR, AND THE UNDERGROUND PUBLISHER

For Milosz and other East-Central European émigré intellectuals, the defense of freedom and human rights remained an important issue, and they therefore used their moral capital to protest communist persecution in their homelands. From his California haven, Milosz closely followed political and cultural developments in Poland, of which he learned from letters sent by his friends and readers, and he occasionally had the chance to talk to a visitor from the home country. Milosz highly valued his intellectual independence, and having had the experience of serving the communist government and

⁶⁶⁵ letters: Marek Buras to Milosz, 11/09/80. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 7, f. 143.

⁶⁶⁶ Norbert Wojciechowski to Milosz, 2/14/1984. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 69, f. 953.

the Congress for Cultural Freedom, he was very cautious not to engage in political affairs. At the same time, he had a strong predisposition to play the role of a public intellectual figure and was responsive to current world problems. From time to time, the poet would employ his intellectual and moral authority in political actions aimed at the democratization of East-Central Europe. One example was Milosz's signature of the 1976 dispatch expressing support for the Polish opposition activist Edward Lipinski. The letter sent by a number of California scholars of Polish descent to Warsaw, read: "The undersigned lecturers and academic employees of California universities would like to pass to the honorable Mr. Lipinski words of solidarity, as well as deep appreciation for all the people fighting in defense of human and citizen rights in Poland, and for the democratization of the country."⁶⁶⁷ That same year, along with the philosopher Leszek Kolakowski and the historian Robert Conquest, Milosz signed an international appeal in support of Polish workers.⁶⁶⁸ A few months later, leading American intellectuals addressed the Polish authorities demanding the release of recently arrested oppositionists. Milosz was among those who signed the letter.⁶⁶⁹

These actions were a consequence of a shift in the political atmosphere that took place in 1975, when the authorities of six East-Central European communist states at the Helsinki conference signed a ten-point declaration with one point on respecting human rights. This provided a universal language of human rights for those seeking freedom and respect for dignity in the countries subjugated by the Soviet Union. A new, powerful

⁶⁶⁷ Depesza do Edwarda Lipinskiego, 02/23/1976. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 38, f. 562. Andrzej Brzeski, Witold Sworakowski, Wiktor Sukiennicki, and Alfred Tarski signed the letter.

⁶⁶⁸ *Biuletyn Informacyjny KOR: Aktualnosci zycia publicznego*, 1976-1979, AO V /478 nr 10, 1977. The Archives of Opposition. Karta, Warsaw.

⁶⁶⁹ *Biuletyn Informacyjny KOR: Aktualnosci zycia publicznego*, 1976-1979, AO V /478 nr 12, 1977. The Archives of Opposition. Karta, Warsaw. Among those who signed were: Edward Albee, Josef Brodzki, Jerzy Kosinski, Robert Penn Warren, Mary MacCarthy, Arthur Miller, Kurt Vonnegut, Noam Chomski, Jacobson, Gleb Struve, Tarski, Lipset, Leszek Kolakowski.

discourse emerged in the Soviet bloc. The Polish dissident leader Adam Michnik emphasized the rapid spread of this new language when he discussed the role of the Catholic Church in the oppositionist movement of the mid-1970s. “[In the Church],” Michnik wrote, “Jeremiads against the ‘godless one’ have given way to documents quoting the principles of the Declaration of Human Rights; in pastoral letters, Polish bishops have been defending the right to truth and standing up for human freedom and dignity.”⁶⁷⁰

While the Catholic Church had an intrinsic link to opposition efforts towards democratization, in 1976 yet another powerful union of intellectuals and workers emerged – the Workers’ Defense Committee [Komitet Obrony Robotnikow, abbrev. KOR]. Having learned a dramatic lesson from the workers’ strikes in December 1970, by the mid-1970s Polish intellectuals came to understand that it was only by giving support to the workers’ struggle that they could find understanding for their own, more lofty political postulates. The establishment of KOR was a turning point for the Polish dissident movement, as it created a brotherhood-in-arms between workers and intellectuals, which in the future proved essential to the success of Solidarity. KOR was instrumental for the establishment of underground publishing, a clandestine studies program, as well as a range of other activities, all of them self-financed.⁶⁷¹ By expanding the unofficial public sphere, KOR instigated the reconstitution of civil society. Slowly, with cooperation between intellectuals and workers, with an underground press and support for the dissident movement from the Catholic Church, a new order was coming into being.

⁶⁷⁰ Adam Michnik, “A New Evolutionism” 1976.

⁶⁷¹ Barbara J. Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe: Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings* (Budapest: Central European Univ. Press, 2003), 38.

While Milosz once compared his situation of being a Polish poet in California to a fish thrown ashore, in the mid-1970s his readers in communist Poland were taking lessons in what the poet Stanislaw Baranczak called “breathing under water.”⁶⁷² By that time, the circle of Milosz’s audience had extended from intimidated individual readers in the 1950s, to groups reading his poetry as an element of the underground intellectual life of the late 1960s, to finally reach a broader audience through the underground publishing of the 1970s. How did one get hold of the works of the banned poet? There were three sources from which readers could obtain the works of Milosz and other émigré authors: first, scarce copies of prewar or early postwar publications; second, books and magazines from *Kultura* smuggled into Poland; and third, starting in the mid-1970s, books published in the underground. As reading Milosz had a political dimension, each of these sources posed a risk to readers, with the scope of potential punishment changing over the years according to the cultural policy of the People’s Republic of Poland.⁶⁷³ The extent of Milosz’s presence among Polish readers paralleled the evolution of the regime, with regular crises and the ensuing curtailment of cultural rights, but it also reflected the authorities’ hostile yet inconsistent policy towards émigré literature.

That literature could come at a high price was a lesson learned by five young men who were caught in 1968 smuggling *Kultura* publications, including Milosz’s books, through the Tatra Mountains, and then put on a show-trial. The so-called *Taternicy*: Maciej Kozłowski, Andrzej Mroz, Jakub Karpinski, Maciej Włodek and Jan Krzysztof Kelus received sentences of two-to-three-and-a-half years in prison, and were only

⁶⁷² Stanislaw Barańczak, *Breathing Under Water and Other East European Essays* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990).

⁶⁷³ Wojciech Karpinski had access to his uncle’s library, where he found prewar issues of the periodical *Skamander* with Milosz’s poems. Wojciech Karpiński, *Twarze* (Warszawa: Zeszyty Literackie, 2012), 145.

released upon a 1971 amnesty. The trial echoed widely in Poland, but it also got the *Kultura* staff involved in a discussion about their responsibility for the event and about the limits of risk to which they could expose young oppositionists.⁶⁷⁴ With the *Taternicy* trial as an extreme example of repression against freedom of speech, as exemplified by émigré literature, reading Miłosz, especially his political writings, such as *The Captive Mind*, always posed a risk to readers. It was only during the brief period of relative liberalization that followed the October 1956 events in Poland that a couple of Miłosz's works were printed in the official press. This short-lived peace settlement with Miłosz and other émigré writers lasted only twelve months. After that, repressions were reintroduced. The next two decades were marked by censorship, the confiscation of illegal literature, and propaganda slandering the émigré writers. As Adam Michnik wrote in his *Letters from Prison*: "Customs officials confiscated copies of the Paris *Kultura* from travelers' suitcases; police squads, when they searched apartments, took away books by émigré writers: Miłosz and Gombrowicz, Herling and Mieroszewski, Wierzyński and Hlasko."⁶⁷⁵ Even though in 1972 the cultural authorities, after long deliberations, allowed the preparation of an entry on Miłosz for a new encyclopedia published by the Polish Science Publishing House, Miłosz's books were to remain on the index.⁶⁷⁶

Since 1951 Miłosz's contact with Polish institutions had been limited to publishing houses. These of course operated according to the official political line, but during times of cultural liberalization the editors tried to reach out to Miłosz. In 1971,

⁶⁷⁴ See i.e. Jerzy Giedroyc, Czesław Miłosz, and Marek Kornat ed., *Listy 1973-2000* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2012).

⁶⁷⁵ Adam Michnik, "Dlaczego nie emigrujesz," In: Adam Michnik, *Letters from Prison and Other Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 18.

⁶⁷⁶ Miłosz's friend and former teacher Irena Sławińska was asked to prepare two entries: "Miłosz" and "Rescue" for the new encyclopedia. Irena Sławińska's letter to Miłosz, 11/30/1972. Czesław Miłosz Papers, box 58, f. 806.

twenty years after his flight from Poland, Milosz asked Artur Miedzyrzecki for advice on how to proceed with the veiled offers for the publication of his works that had come from Ryszard Matuszewski, a literary director at the major Polish publishing house *Czytelnik*. Matuszewski had once been friends with Milosz, but after the poet's exile their relationship became more complicated, since they took opposite stances on the role of literature in Poland. In 1971, Matuszewski suggested that *Czytelnik* could publish Milosz's works. Asking Milosz to keep the offer secret, Matuszewski justified the authorities' decision, saying: "Already twenty age-groups of young Poles have come of age, for whom you still remain – as a poet – almost a mythical figure. (...) The people who have the power to pave the way to Poland for your poems have finally decided that they are obliged to do so. (...) Consider that it is probably the first such a *casus* since the founding of the People's Republic of Poland."⁶⁷⁷ Eventually, Milosz's worries that he would ruin his image of an independent writer if he agreed to publish in Poland proved unjustified, as none of the mysterious offers from *Czytelnik* came to fruition.⁶⁷⁸ Even though the rationale behind initiatives to publish Milosz was unclear and twisted, the matter itself posed a very obvious question to the poet: was it a proper thing to get rid of one lie in Polish literature by reaching out to Polish readers at the price of collaborating with the cultural authorities and making compromises as to the selection of works to be published? Had Matuszewski's offer actually materialized, the choice would not have been simple for Milosz, since he had for decades been longing for a Polish audience.

⁶⁷⁷ Ryszard Matuszewski to Milosz, 9/14/1974. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 42, f. 614.

⁶⁷⁸ Letters from Ryszard Matuszewski. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 42, f. 614. Artur Miedzyrzecki to Milosz, 10/04/1971 and 12/01/1971. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 43, f. 627. On 02/26/1972, Miedzyrzecki wrote to Milosz: "From the letters I have received from Warsaw I gather that there is much ado about your correspondence with Matuszewski. I assume it will all end up with founding a monument in the center of Warsaw, commemorating Matuszewski. But it would be better if they really publish your poetry."

Over time, as the Cold War *détente* brought about a gradual liberalization of the regime in Poland, the authorities became less stringent with censorship, and the censor would occasionally skip over mention of Milosz's name in the press. As a result, the situation around the émigré poet became somewhat schizophrenic. Milosz's colleague from Warsaw, Andrzej Finkstein, was perplexed by the inconsistencies in cultural policy, and discussed this in his 1973 letter to Milosz. Finkstein wrote:

I do not know whether you read the Warsaw press, where I have recently - and it was not the case before! - been coming across your name more often. On one occasion, it was quoted in an interview with professor Weintraub, then in a couple of articles. Seemingly, the most normal thing under the sun - yet what is really normal there [in Poland]?⁶⁷⁹

While in the decades following 1951 Milosz generally could not be published in communist Poland, opposition activists in the publishing world took every opportunity to push the limits of censorship. One such exception to this ban was the inclusion of Milosz's poems in a 1974 poetry anthology published by the Polish Publishing Institute.⁶⁸⁰ The exchange of letters between Milosz and Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, who was at that time the secretary general of the Polish PEN Club, showed Milosz's discontent about the publication of twenty of his poems without permission, and in a selection that presented him as a national bard. Milosz asked Bartoszewski to defend his rights. Bartoszewski responded politely, pointing out to Milosz the significance of this volume. He said: "I am glad to inform you that the publication, for the first time in a long while, of a large part of your works in the anthology (...) met with great interest on the

⁶⁷⁹ Andrzej Finkstein to Milosz, 09/27/1973. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 16, f. 294.

⁶⁸⁰ Stanislaw Grochowiak, *Poezja Polska. Antologia* (PIW, 1974).

part of readers. We were really happy to have the opportunity to make your poems available. Our circles took it as an all in all positive precedent.”⁶⁸¹

As the war between banned literature and the censor continued, a breakthrough came with the 1976 emergence of the already mentioned Workers’ Defense Committee, which started to reach out to Poles through a rapidly growing underground publishing industry. The underground press disseminated reprints of émigré literature as well as domestic oppositionist materials, all of them printed in secret printing shops and aimed at inspiring readers to a quest for freedom and the democratization of Poland. The leading underground publishing enterprise was Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza [Independent Publishing Press, abbrev. NOWA], set up by Mirosław Chojecki, with hundreds of people involved. NOWA took the books published by *Kultura* as a stencil for their editions. Because of his underground activity, Chojecki was arrested a number of times, beaten, and eventually put in prison in 1980.⁶⁸² The authorities were right to be concerned with the spread of subversive content, as by 1979 NOWA and other underground presses were producing over one million volumes of periodicals, brochures and books each month!⁶⁸³

In the late 1970s, the presence of Miłosz’s and other émigré literature became a complex matter – it was at once officially banned, sometimes allowed by the censor, and widely available in the underground. True schizophrenia! For the authorities, it was impossible to completely control the underground press, yet it was too dangerous to allow these activities to flourish. In 1977, the underground *KOR Bulletin* stated that on March

⁶⁸¹ Władysław Bartoszewski, 7/19/1974. Miłosz and Bartoszewski exchanged several letters on the matter. Miłosz 5/31/1974; Bartoszewski 7/19/1974. Czesław Miłosz Papers, box 49, f. 704.

⁶⁸² *Biuletyn Informacyjny KOR. Aktualności życia publicznego*, 1980 AO V 478, nr 37/ 1980, p. 10. The Archives of Opposition. Karta, Warsaw.

⁶⁸³ Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence*.

16th raids had taken place at the homes of “Eighth Day Theater” actors, and the police had seized KOR documents along with books by Gombrowicz, Milosz, Solzhenitsyn, and Orwell.⁶⁸⁴ A few weeks later, the *KOR Bulletin* informed its readers about the so-called “prohibited works” – books by Milosz, Gombrowicz and other émigré writers, which upon printing were labeled “on reserve” and shelved aside in the back of libraries.⁶⁸⁵ In April 1978, a note was published on the seeming liberalization of cultural policy in an issue of the underground magazine *Zapis* [Record], next to Stanislaw Baranczak’s essay on Milosz. In a recent *Znak* [A Sign] publication the censor had left in Milosz’s name, and as a result his translations of parts of the Bible had come out under his name! It was a thing unheard of in the Polish publishing industry in decades.⁶⁸⁶ A couple of weeks earlier, on January 2nd 1978, Professor Blonski had organized a formal evening of Milosz’s poetry on Krupnicza Street in Krakow, and the audience could barely fit in the room. On the other hand, within weeks of the *Znak* publication, the security police raided the apartment of Jakub Karpinski, where they confiscated Gombrowicz’s works and books by Milosz: *Treatise on Morals, Native Realm, A Man Among the Scorpions, Views from San Francisco Bay* and *The City without a Name*. The raid on the apartment of Karpinski, who had been sentenced in the *Taternicy* trial a decade earlier, was nothing

⁶⁸⁴ *Biuletyn Informacyjny KOR: aktualnosci zycia publicznego*, 1976-1979, AO V /478; nr 9/1977. The Archives of Opposition. Karta, Warsaw.

⁶⁸⁵ *Biuletyn Informacyjny KOR: aktualnosci zycia publicznego*, 1976-1979, AO V /478, nr 16/1977. At that time, a volume of Milosz’s poetry was ready to be printed, with an official approval pending, at one of the publishing houses. Tomasz Burek, “Refleksje po zjeździe literatów,” *ZAPIS* 7 (1978). The Archives of Opposition. Karta, Warsaw.

⁶⁸⁶ *Zapis* nr 11/1977. *Zapis* had a rubric enlisting censor’s intervention in the press and books. In the October 1978 issue of *Zapis*, the note read that recently a piece of Milosz’s translation of the *Book of Wisdom*, which was to be published by *The Universal Weekly*, was withheld by the censor. At the same time, Milosz’s name was erased by the censor from the publications of *Wież* Publishing House. “Działalność cenzora,” *Zapis* 10 (1978), 149. The Archives of Opposition. Karta, Warsaw.

Zapis: Poetry, prose, essays, columns was a literary periodical published in second circulation since January 1977. The title was derived from the term “record” – a guideline describing what content could not be published. The periodical was aimed to publish those texts with the “record” status. Among the editorial staff were: Jerzy Andrzejewski, Stanislaw Baranczak, Jacek Bocheński, Kazimierz Brandys, Tomasz Burek, Marek Nowakowski, Barbara Toruńczyk and Wiktor Woroszyński.

unusual, as similar events took place in the homes of those who discussed literature and history in a spirit of freedom.⁶⁸⁷ The above events were examples of a two-track cultural policy of the communist authorities, but they also reflected the government's ineptitude in curtailing freedom of speech.

In the years 1975-1980, the so-called "second circulation" gave Polish readers access to almost all works by Miłosz, and the poet completely dethroned other émigré writers in terms of his presence in underground publishing, with several editions of some of his books published.⁶⁸⁸ Already the first 1977 issue of *Puls* [Pulse], the only underground literary magazine next to *Zapis*, included a text on Miłosz.⁶⁸⁹ After 1980, NOWA would be joined in printing Miłosz's books by various publishing enterprises connected to Solidarity.⁶⁹⁰ With such active underground publishing from the mid-1970s onward, Miłosz's books were available to anyone willing to make an effort to find them; nonetheless, it would be an overstatement to say that these works reached an audience beyond a relatively small circle of intellectuals and those among the *intelligentsia* with an interest in literature. This, however, proved crucial. As Michnik described it in his *Letters from Prison*, before 1975 the *quasi*-underground intellectual life had a wide significance as the distribution of books, seminars, and copies of illegal literature brought the revival of independent ideas one step closer. This laid foundations for future programs of social resistance and for the creation of an independent political life in Poland.⁶⁹¹ The journalists who talked to the leading Polish dissidents in the early 1980s, discussing,

⁶⁸⁷ See: Stanisław Barańczak, "Summa Czesława Miłosza," *Zapis*, 6/1978. The Archives of Opposition. Karta, Warsaw.

⁶⁸⁸ Justyna Błażejowska, *Papierowa Rewolucja: Z Dziejów Drugiego Obiegu Wydawniczego W Polsce 1976-1989/1990*. (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej--Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2010).

(Miłosz: 100 units, the next author was Józef Mackiewicz with 66 units).

⁶⁸⁹ http://www.encyklopedia-solidarnosci.pl/wiki/index.php?title=R01063_Puls_Łódź; accessed February 10th 2013.

⁶⁹⁰ Agnieszka Kosińska, Jacek Błach, and Kamil Kasperk. *Czesław Miłosz: Bibliografia Druków Zwartych* (Kraków: Krakowskie Tow. Edukacyjne, 2009).

⁶⁹¹ Michnik, *Letters from Prison*, 48.

among other things, the role of the underground press, concluded their findings as follows:

Although people have to be reminded to boycott the official press, they do not have to be encouraged to read the underground press. It has its faithful readers not only among Solidarity members and sympathizers, but also within the Party apparatus, the army, and the police. It is difficult to calculate the total print run of all independent publications, and, in addition, each copy is read by many people who frequently type many more copies. It is estimated that ONE MILLION PEOPLE READ THE UNDERGROUND PRESS. Although the underground press is a form of mass struggle - in the sense that it has enormous impact - only a small number of people are involved in writing and editing.⁶⁹²

From the intellectual catacombs, where Milosz's poetry was also read, the ideas that contributed to bringing the communist regime to an end spread over time.

Since the mid-1970s the question of Milosz's absence from Polish literature had been discussed not only in opposition underground circles, but increasingly in public. Certainly, mentioning Milosz's name in 1979 did not take anyone to prison, yet it took daring to confront the authorities and publicly ask about the banned poet. In November 1979, at the Polish Writers' Union meeting in Radziejowice, the unruly writer Jacek Wozniakowski asked the minister of culture, who was present at the meeting, why the government had not kept its promise to loosen the ban on the publication of Milosz's works. Later, in the midst of critiques alluding to the cultural pauperization of the country, one writer called Milosz a great poet and wished him the Nobel Prize. The audience responded with loud applause.⁶⁹³ These were no longer the same writers who had slandered Milosz after his 1951 flight to the West, even though many faces remained the same. One could say that it was decades too late for the Polish writers to appreciate

⁶⁹² Maciej, Łopiński, Marcin Moskit, and Mariusz Wilk, *Konspira: Solidarity Underground* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 106.

⁶⁹³ *Biuletyn Informacyjny KOR: aktualnosci zycia publicznego*, 1976-1979, AO V /478, nr 34/1979, 17. The Archives of Opposition. Karta, Warsaw.

Milosz and to express moral indignation at the regime. Perhaps, it was also too late to repair their own image, even in their own eyes.

As the émigré literary figures were slowly coming out of the shadow, their works circulating in the underground, the young Polish *intelligentsia* developed a strong interest in Milosz's writing. Malgorzata Czerminska, a Polish literature student at the University of Gdansk, recalled helping professor Maria Janion to prepare a seminar on Milosz in the fall of 1980. A few months later, Czerminska wrote to the poet, saying: "You must know, that thanks to the independent press, for the past few years people have read you in Poland, and read with zeal. Most importantly, young people have read your works."⁶⁹⁴ That Milosz had a special place in the hearts of the young Polish *intelligentsia* was also seen by visitors from the West. Samuel Fiszman, a professor and translator residing in the USA, visited Poland in April 1980, and later wrote to Milosz about his impressions. "Poland can be cited as the most remarkable example of the great role played by literature in the life of a nation," Fiszman wrote to Milosz, "when my wife and I visited [Poland] exactly a year ago, we met with students, and your works were cited repeatedly... I do not think there are many writers whose name is pronounced with such elation as your name was during those meetings."⁶⁹⁵ An analysis of Milosz's Polish readership reveals the composition of the oppositionist *intelligentsia*: those who had for years struggled to keep track of émigré literature, young dissidents who had read Milosz's works by the time they mutinied in March 1968, or those who tried to outsmart the regime by smuggling, publishing and circulating the banned literature in the 1970s.

⁶⁹⁴ Malgorzata Czerminska to Milosz, 02/15/1981. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 12, f. 214.

⁶⁹⁵ Samuel Fiszman to Milosz, 04/24/1981. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 17, f. 302.

Who were these people “devouring” émigré literature and why was Milosz’s poetry in particular dear to them?

FATHER AND SONS

In a photograph taken in Warsaw in 1967, five young, smiling people stroll down the alleys of Lazienki Park: Seweryn Blumsztajn, Grazyna Kuron, Jacek Kuron, Adam Michnik, and Barbara Torunczyk. The five friends studied at the University of Warsaw, fell in love or had already set up families, and heatedly debated the nature of the communist system. In March 1968, their world collapsed, and within days of the student demonstration at the University of Warsaw they went through an accelerated process of political maturation. They had to pay a high price for their involvement in student anti-government protests: they were expelled from the university, with no chance of employment, but most importantly, they lost whatever illusions they still had about the communist system. As one of the 1968 activists Irena Grudzinska-Gross said, for them, after March, the idea of a revision of Marxism was dead, and disillusionment with their parents’ generation was overwhelming.⁶⁹⁶ The sons turned against the fathers.

The 1968 events in Poland revealed not only that the dissident sons were utterly disappointed with their fathers – the builders of communism – but also that the young *intelligentsia* was looking to the émigré intellectuals for moral guidance, feeling themselves more the progeny of Milosz, Gombrowicz, and Giedroyc than of their own compromised parents. For these young people Milosz, a dissident in exile, was a symbol

⁶⁹⁶ An interview with Irena Grudzinska-Gross, Princeton, March 2012. More on the genealogy of the Polish generation of ’68 in Barbara Torunczyk’s essay: *Opowieść o pokoleniu kontestatorów 1968. Kim byliśmy, kim jesteśmy, skąd i dokąd zdążamy*, http://zeszytyliterackie.pl/varia/B_Torunczyk/Wstep.html; accessed March 15th 2013.

of free speech and opposition to the communist system. A free word smuggled into Poland from the intellectual émigré circles provided Michnik or Torunczyk with a fresh perspective on Poland, its history and culture. Raised in communist schools, this young *intelligentsia* searched for the undistorted history of Poland, for the beauty of the Polish language, for serious reflection on the moral costs of socialism in its Polish version. Of this generational experience, Wojciech Karpinski, Jakub's brother, wrote:

Then March 1968 came. It was a shock for me, as for all of my generation. Not in the sense that I lost my illusions as to the nature of the communist system, since I had never had any. It [the year 1968] created a kind of generational solidarity, it scared with the official lie, the party- and police-administered anti-Semitic campaign; but it also gave an opportunity to get to know the taste of freedom and community. A whole generation of students shouted together in public: "The press lies!" It gave a beginning to more honest discussions, which had been unthinkable before, to seeking a language that would allow for capturing something of reality, seeking roots, intellectual lineage, searching for the people who had already struggled with similar problems.⁶⁹⁷

In search of answers, the dissident *intelligentsia* did indeed turn toward those who had once encountered similar questions – émigré writers from the *Kultura* circle: Jozef Czapski, Witold Gombrowicz, Gustaw Herling-Grudzinski, Konstanty Jelenski, Czeslaw Milosz, Jerzy Stempowski, and Aleksander Wat. For the young Polish *intelligentsia* of the late 1960s and '70s, *Kultura* played a role similar to that of *tolstye zurnali* for the Russian generation of Turgenevian "sons" in the 1860s. Torunczyk described the importance of this émigré monthly published in a Parisian suburb thus:

For the people of my generation *Kultura* has existed ever since we can remember, and from the beginning it functioned as a national institution, an inherent element of our intellectual life. Thanks to *Kultura* we have acquainted ourselves with the prewar tradition. *Kultura* has also played the role of a link to the liberal tradition; it has familiarized us with the paramount Polish artistic and intellectual heritage.⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹⁷ Karpinski, *Twarze*, 47.

⁶⁹⁸ Barbara Toruńczyk, *Rozmowy W Maisons-Laffitte, 1981* (Warszawa: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich, 2006), 43.

My research has brought rich evidence of the special significance of Milosz among the *Kultura* writers, for the young dissidents of the 1960 and '70s. Obviously, in the late 1960s, only a select group of youth, often the daughters and sons of the upper echelon party members, could have access to émigré literary publications or to *Kultura*, which, ironically, was brought home by their somewhat confused parents. Over time, with the evolution of underground intellectual life and publishing, a larger number of young people, especially students, could engage with émigré literature. The impact of émigré literature was best visible in the fact that the student leaders of March 1968 knew Milosz's works, and emphasized that reading him had been an exercise in regaining personal freedom. For the Polish Generation of '68, Milosz was a semi-paternal figure. First, he was a compass in their search for a way out of communism; second, he spoke the language of freedom without resorting to a nationalist rhetoric.⁶⁹⁹ Although the dissident *intelligentsia* became a group of similarly-minded people, their intellectual adventures with Milosz's writing will be discussed separately, also in order to convey the solitary nature of reading the banned émigré poet.

In a 1980 letter from Warsaw, the young literary historian Piotr Kloczowski pointed out to Milosz the impact that the intellectuals and writers of Milosz's generation had had on the next generation of Polish *intelligentsia*, to which Kloczowski belonged. Picturing Milosz's place on the intellectual map of Poland, Kloczowski listed influential writers and cultural figures who had started their careers and already contributed to Polish culture before World War II, saying:

Kronski, Milosz, Ossowski, Wyka in Krzeszowice, Micinski in Grenoble, Giedroyc, Czapski, Herling in [the army], Ksawery Pruszyński, Stempowski alone in Bern, Vincenz..., the first volume of *The Universal*

⁶⁹⁹ Adam Michnik, *W Poszukiwaniu Utraconego Sensu* (Warszawa: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich, 2007), 255.

Weekly. [...] Why, this was the intellectual and moral base for any real achievements after 1944. [...] Without this base, these people, there would be no Kolakowski, Jerzy Jedlicki, Kijowski, Blonski, Herbert; and then Adam [Michnik], Wojtek [Karpinski], Marcin [Krol]... From this perspective, Milosz's departure for instance was a decision, a fact, ever so significant for all of Polish culture.⁷⁰⁰

Although Mannheim's theory of generations is not fully applicable to the above mentioned cohorts, with the first group born circa 1910, the second 1930, and the third 1945, it suggests a helpful interpretational framework. According to Mannheim's theory, the socio-historical environment, especially historic events that involve people in their youth, have a decisive influence on their lives. On the basis of shared historic experience, a social generation is formed, which in turn gives rise to events that shape future generations. Historical events accelerated the coming of age of each of these groups, marking them as "the generation of." For Milosz's generation, the troublesome interwar period and the Second World War were crucial experiences – then, in 1945, at the age of thirty, they had to decide for or against communism. World War II had also left its mark on the generation of Zbigniew Herbert and Leszek Kolakowski, born in 1924 and 1927 respectively. Finally, Adam Michnik (b. 1946) and Wojciech Karpinski (b. 1943) experienced the post-October political liberalization, but came of age as the leaders of the 1968 anti-government and anti-communist student rebellion. In terms of generational belonging and intellectual formation, Kloczowski was part of the generation of Michnik and Karpinski. In a 1988 letter to the adored poet, Kloczowski confessed: "All that you have written from the experience of your life (...) has such depth, such spiritual power, that for 'us', the late grandsons, it becomes a generous gift, a challenge and an obligation,

⁷⁰⁰ Piotr Kloczowski to Milosz, 16/01/1980. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 36, f. 532.

regardless of the plane on which it is achieved.”⁷⁰¹ As Kloczowski admitted in an interview, he remained under the spell of Milosz’s writing and had the taste of a free spiritual life thanks to the Parisian *Kultura*.⁷⁰² Later in his life, as an editor and the director of the Literature and Polish Studies Institute in Warsaw, Kloczowski made an enormous contribution to the introduction of émigré literature and culture to post-1989 Poland.

“Wojtek,” whom Kloczowski heartily mentioned in his letter, was Wojciech Karpinski – a writer and scholar, who already in 1965 had confessed to Milosz that for his generation Milosz’s works had had a liberating quality. At one point of his abundant correspondence with Milosz, Karpinski discussed his intellectual lineage in the context of émigré literature. He said: “Whether you like it or not – I was to a serious extent raised on these books, often fiercely debating with them. (...) As a student, I used to go to the National Library, where I asked for the most banned items; at last, they got angry, and politely threw me out.”⁷⁰³ In 1965, Karpinski was lucky to have the rare and precious opportunity to travel to Paris, where he not only immersed himself in books at the *Kultura* House, but also had a chance to discuss intellectual and political matters with the émigré authors he admired. In a letter sent during his stay at *Kultura*, Karpinski described to Milosz what his writing meant to him:

Rescue came. (...) You created a new, special page in Polish poetry, (...) and showed a truer path towards the liberation of one’s mind, the path of thoughts freely expressing themselves in a new form of poetics. The true ‘revolutions’ in literature (...) are based on (...) creating a language that expresses a liberating thought, (...) which allows for ‘including in culture

⁷⁰¹ Piotr Kloczowski to Milosz, 3/18/1988. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 36, f. 532.

⁷⁰² An interview with Piotr Kloczowski, Warsaw, September 2010.

⁷⁰³ Wojciech Karpinski to Milosz, 04/21/1978. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 35, f. 519.

the broadest range of feelings, experiences and reflections, the most genuine freedom.⁷⁰⁴

In his letter, written at the Parisian haven, Karpinski made mention of cultural suppression and deprivation under the communist regime, to which the émigré literature, such as Milosz's works, offered an alternative. At *Kultura*, for the first time in his life, Karpinski could read books freely and speak openly, without the risk of surveillance and persecution. As he later recalled, on his return to Warsaw this part of his spiritual life went back into hiding.⁷⁰⁵

A decade later, in 1977, the experience of secret intellectual adventures with *Kultura* books and writers compelled Karpinski to co-found the underground magazine *Zapis* – the first (for decades) uncensored literary periodical that was loosely connected to the Workers' Defense Committee. In 1978, asking Milosz to write for this periodical, Karpinski explained the rationale behind *Zapis*. In a letter sent from New Haven, Karpinski said: "Strange processes are taking place in Poland, society is slowly regaining its subjectivity. Even though these are limited developments, (...) yet we should foster them. One of the essential methods of proceeding is by *faits accompli*: your further presence in domestic publications will be such *fait accompli*."⁷⁰⁶ The process described by Karpinski would soon give way to a more open and free society, and to the emergence of the Solidarity social movement. Here Karpinski's experience, similarly to that of his *intelligentsia* friends, eluded a clear division between the categories of literature and politics, since the two spheres were intertwined in the process of the democratization of Poland. Karpinski continued his dialogue with Milosz into the 1980s, and in a series of

⁷⁰⁴ Wojciech Karpinski to Milosz, 10/19/1965. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 35, f. 519.

⁷⁰⁵ Karpinski, *Twarze*, 46.

⁷⁰⁶ Wojciech Karpinski to Milosz, 4/21/78. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 35, f. 519.

books he discussed the significance of the writers from the *Kultura* circle for the intellectual and political maturing of his generation. One of Karpinski's books had a symbolic title: *The Ruffianly Books* [Książki zbojeckie]. Indeed, the communist regime, which in the opening of this chapter was symbolically presented as the robbers, was constantly undermined by yet another group of "ruffians" – the émigré literature coming to Poland through secret channels.

In 1973, the writer and literary critic Andrzej Kijowski learned that he was the lucky recipient of a scholarship to the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa, which came with a priceless gift: twelve months of freedom from having to steer his intellectual life while under constant pressure from the communist regime. It was Milosz who had recommended Kijowski. Since the late 1960s, Milosz had remained in contact with members of the Polish *intelligentsia*, and inspired their search for personal and political freedom by recommending them for scholarships in the West.⁷⁰⁷ Kijowski, who was fifteen years older than Karpinski and Michnik, shared with them the conviction that their quest for spiritual and political freedom was closely linked to reading émigré literature, with Milosz playing a crucial role in this process. Kijowski was an actor of the March 1968 events, as he authored the 1968 Polish writers' resolution against censorship after the play *Dziady* [Forefathers' Eve] had been withdrawn from the stage. In a 1971 letter, Kijowski confessed to Milosz: "Your decision to exile yourself, and then to write *The Captive Mind*, throughout the years have been kind of an archetype for me, an ideal situation, a liberation ceremonial, a ritual challenge, a dance and a song that cheered me

⁷⁰⁷ Among others, Milosz recommended the following writers to the International Writing Program in Iowa: Karpowicz, Artur Miedzyrzecki, Leszek Szaruga.

on to combat.”⁷⁰⁸ Two years later, during his stay in Iowa, Kijowski explained to Milosz the significance of his writing to Polish readers:

So you also ask yourself this question: what is today most needed and important for Poland? I thought that you, of all people, are completely free from this concern, [...] and I admired you for it. It is we who chase after you, curious about what you will do, not you after us; and it is you who have always constituted this dreamed-of *mainstream*. [...] You carry this wild, supernatural power, which allowed you to remain an unshakable reference point for everything that people think and envision in Poland, even though you are away in the world. [...] Perhaps nothing is more needed by Poland than exactly the type of spiritual independence that you have preserved, and this kind of a firm position on Polish issues as only you and Gombrowicz have been able to display.⁷⁰⁹

Since Kijowski had worked for multiple literary magazines and was familiar with cultural issues, he could explain to Milosz the spiritual impoverishment and intellectual emptiness brought upon Polish culture in the postwar decades. “Here,” Kijowski complained, “it is war between Catholics and Marxists, and that’s it.”⁷¹⁰ Fed up with the situation, Kijowski praised Milosz for his efforts to move Polish culture away from dealing with national and communist issues towards discussing universal problems. Yet he did not hesitate to attack Milosz for ridiculing the Polish inclination to treat poetry and history as the only means of overcoming the country’s intellectual stagnation. Kijowski explained: “You wrote me previously that the Polish temper is either poetic or historic; yes, it is, because poetry and history are the only windows through which a Pole can stick his head out of this stuffy hovel – our People’s Republic of Poland.”⁷¹¹ Upon his return from the United States, Kijowski continued to inform Milosz about his oppositionist activity as a journalist and a

⁷⁰⁸ Andrzej Kijowski to Milosz, 11/19/1971. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 35, f. 525.

⁷⁰⁹ Andrzej Kijowski to Milosz, 2/23/1973. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 35, f. 525.

⁷¹⁰ Andrzej Kijowski to Milosz, 02/23/1973. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 35, f. 525.

⁷¹¹ Andrzej Kijowski to Milosz, 02/23/1973. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 35, f. 525.

supporter of clandestine seminars where an uncensored version of Polish history and literature was taught.

Barbara Torunczyk, the young woman wearing fancy white tights in the photo taken in Lazienki in 1967, could hardly expect that within the next few months her oppositionist activity would put her in a direct confrontation with the Polish communist regime. Since the early 1960s, the sociology student Torunczyk had been contributing her knowledge at meetings of critical-thinking youth rallied around the Klub Poszukiwaczy Sprzeczności [The Club of Contradictions Seekers].⁷¹² This group of people of leftists, often daughters and sons of party officials, spawned the activists who organized the student protests of March 1968. Along with her friends: Seweryn Blumsztajn, Jacek Kuron, Jan Lityński, Adam Michnik, and Karol Modzelewski, Torunczyk was arrested in March, expelled from the University of Warsaw, and sentenced to two years in prison.

Torunczyk such described her experience:

When we were released from prison, our milieu fell apart: the majority left, we stayed; but there were no real political, or even everyday life perspectives for us. (...) In 1970 we were hopeless. The *intelligentsia* was destroyed to such a degree that we – and there were only a few of us, five to ten people – could not do a thing. (...) We were treated as if we had been plague-stricken. (...) We were outside the academia environment, since we had been expelled from the University of Warsaw and had been blacklisted. Michnik worked in a factory, I was a waitress, Blumsztajn worked in a cooperative for the blind, Lityński did something similar; Kuron, Modzelewski, and Jakub Karpinski had still been in prison.⁷¹³

All that, however, did not curb Torunczyk's oppositionist involvement. Since the mid-1970s, with Michnik and Kuron, Torunczyk supported the families of politically victimized workers at the Workers' Defense Committee. She was also active in

⁷¹² The Club of Contradictions Seekers was an informal discussion club formed from the members of the Warsaw section of the Socialist Youth Association. It was founded in 1962 by Adam Michnik, and remained associated with the Crooked Circle Club. Among the members were: Jan Lityński, Jan Gross, Jan Kofman, Andrzej Titkow, Marek Borowski.

⁷¹³ Toruńczyk, *Rozmowy W Maisons-Laffitte*, 138.

underground journalism, publishing *Zapis* together with Wojciech Karpinski, and *Res Publica* with Marcin Król. In the early 1980s, Torunczyk left to Paris, where she set up the monthly *Zeszyty Literackie* in order to publish both domestic and émigré authors whose works were banned in East-Central Europe. It was only then that Torunczyk commenced her correspondence with Milosz.

In her letter to Milosz, speaking about the experience she shared with her fellow dissidents, Torunczyk described the formative role of *Kultura*:

I think that this determination was the taste of freedom. (...) Our consciousness was shaped by October [1956] – we were its direct heirs: we were raised by post-October literature, by the sense of the system's lability, the dance of an uninhibited street mob, demonstrations. We could throw yet another lasso that would bind us to the prewar tradition thanks to Giedroyc – in this sense, we were created by *Kultura* and its authors.⁷¹⁴

By publishing *Zeszyty Literackie* in Paris, together with Wojciech Karpinski, by now also an émigré, and with moral support from Milosz and Jelenski, Torunczyk continued the tradition of *Kultura*. Herself a member of the generation whose actions had been inspired by the free word coming from exile, Torunczyk took after Giedroyc in the belief that the *Zeszyty* should preserve and propagate the cultural heritage of East-Central Europe, as well as build connections between the intellectual circles from that region. In a 1982 application to the Soros Foundation for funding for *Zeszyty Literackie*, Torunczyk referred to the role that literary texts had once played in building free society and inspiring dissident thought in Poland:

Needles to say, the most 'disinterested' expression of ideas in the present political context has political implications. In fact, (...) the Polish intellectual opposition of the last decade owes its remarkable achievements to its decision to act as if it no longer functioned in a totalitarian country, but in an open, free society. We fear that the reduction of opposition to immediate tactical problems of political nature (...) may

⁷¹⁴ Barbara Torunczyk to Milosz, 01/26/1988. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 61, f. 849.

in the long term considerably impoverish Polish culture. [We think] that disinterested discussion is a necessary ingredient of political opposition - an ingredient that can only be supplied by the Poles in the West.⁷¹⁵

The pattern in Polish history came full circle, and yet another generation of the émigré Polish *intelligentsia* strived to inspire readers in the captive country. Torunczyk, and the staff of *Zeszyty Literackie*, would have probably sided with Andrzej Kijowski's opinion on the role of émigré activists, expressed in his 1973 letter to Milosz: "A hole has been smashed in Poland; we ought to blow as much air there as possible, otherwise people there will suffocate."⁷¹⁶

Milosz's poetry and essays accompanied many young members of the *intelligentsia* on their path towards political opposition, dissidence and accompanying persecution. One of them was Adam Michnik, the leader of the Polish dissident movement since the late 1960s. Wojciech Karpinski recalled that in the early days of his friendship with Michnik, in the 1970s, Michnik surprised him by reciting verses by Milosz, which Karpinski did not know, and which Michnik knew from émigré editions.⁷¹⁷ Later, Michnik commented on the significance of Milosz's works for the Polish dissidents, saying: "For thirty years Milosz's books circulated in illicit copies and underground émigré editions (...) Milosz became a symbol of Poland's dissenting *intelligentsia*."⁷¹⁸ Persecuted for his oppositionist activity, Michnik turned to Milosz's works also during his 1980s term in prison. Reading Milosz's published correspondence, Michnik found inspiration to start writing about his own experience of dissidence - in

⁷¹⁵ Barbara Torunczyk, Application to the Soros Foundation, 10/28/1982. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 61, f. 849.

⁷¹⁶ Andrzej Kijowski to Milosz, 2/23/1973. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 35, f. 525.

⁷¹⁷ Wojciech Karpinski to Milosz, 03/20/85. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 35, f. 519.

⁷¹⁸ Michnik, *Letters from Prison*, 28.

1984, he completed a book entitled *Letters from Prison*. Michnik's two friends, Karpinski and Torunczyk, asked Milosz to write the foreword to this book. Milosz agreed.⁷¹⁹

From the spirit of *Kultura*, including Milosz's writing, rose the oppositionist *intelligentsia*, political dissidents, and the future intellectual leaders of Poland. Many of those who founded the underground magazines, and who were active in the Workers' Defense Committee, would later take the path of Solidarity, and then, after 1989, would shape Polish cultural and intellectual life. While continuing their involvement with words as writers, magazine editors, publishers, or public intellectuals, they could now freely enjoy the writing of Milosz and other formerly banned authors. The surroundings changed, but their belief in the power of words did not. Some of them would perhaps subscribe to the motto of Karpinski's volume *The Ruffianly Books*. Is it a surprise that the motto came from their favorite poet? The verses read:

*I imagine the earth when I am no more:
Nothing happens, no loss, it's still a strange pageant,
Women's dresses, dewy lilacs, a song in the valley.
Yet the books will be there on the shelves, well born,
Derived from people, but also from radiance, heights.*⁷²⁰

With the above analysis of the role of Milosz's works for the underground literary scene, I want to emphasize the influence Milosz had on the dissident *intelligentsia*, and to show how this narrow audience gradually built Milosz's intellectual profile from scratch. While not many people had the luxury of reading Milosz's works, and there was little room for free exchange with the poet, dialogue with him was certainly taking place in the

⁷¹⁹ Wojciech Karpinski to Milosz, 03/20/1985, Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 35, f. 519. Barbara Torunczyk to Milosz, 05/01/1985. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 61, f. 849.

⁷²⁰ Czeslaw Milosz, "And Yet the Books," In: Czeslaw Milosz, *New and Collected Poems 1931-2001* (New York: Ecco, 2001), 468.

Polish underground intellectual world. Whether this tiny audience considered Milosz a great Polish poet, or an intellectual illuminating the paths of their minds, his presence was valued. For many Polish readers who read Milosz's writing in the 1960s and '70s, he was a fellow traveler in their private histories of freedom. The impact may not have been widespread, but it was lasting. The literary critic Tomasz Burek wrote in the underground magazine *Zapis*:

Certainly, the new *Books of the Polish Nation and Polish Pilgrimage* are smuggled through the cordons just as they once were. In the country, they are read from cover to cover, copied and passed from hand to hand; nonetheless, their reach remains incommensurately narrow, limited and select. (...) When will *The Native Land, My Century, Another World* [the émigré writers' books] find their place in the libraries... in the next hundred years, perhaps...⁷²¹

It soon turned out that Burek was wrong.

“THAT MORNING, PEOPLE LINED UP FOR BREAD AND FOR MIŁOŚZ”⁷²²

Around noon on October 9th, 1980, electrifying, yet unofficial, news spread through Warsaw - Czesław Miłosz had won the Nobel Prize in Literature. “The news came from editorial offices that had access to Western teletypes. For a few hours, the official Polish media remained silent. On the streets people fell into each other's arms, madness took over the office of the Polish Writers Association, and vodka was pouring in the houses of those who loved Miłosz. Two foreign journalists were rushing from one bookstore to another in search – how naïve of them – of Miłosz's books.”⁷²³ In their confusion, these two journalists were accompanied by millions of Poles who were shocked to learn that the world had recognized the best Polish poet – one they had never

⁷²¹ Burek, “Refleksje po zjeździe literatów.”

⁷²² Marek Szynkarczyn's letter to Miłosz, 3/06/1981. Czesław Miłosz Papers, b. 56, f. 780.

⁷²³ Renata Gorczyńska's letter to Miłosz, 10/09/1980. Czesław Miłosz Papers, b. 21, f. 353.

heard of. Some people knew that in the past thirty years Milosz had only had one book published in Poland, three references in poetry anthologies, and just recently some of his Bible translations had come out in magazines. Was that what one got the Nobel Prize for?! In order to explain the event to Poles the cultural authorities asked the literary critic Jerzy Lisowski to speak on national television that night. A friend from Warsaw, Jacek Swiecicki related this TV program to Milosz, saying:

Lisowski stated that the reason the works of the recent Nobel Prize winner had not been popularized were the essential ideological differences that had emerged between the poet and his homeland (...). Having understood the above explanation all too well, the Polish TV viewer fell asleep peacefully with the joyful thought that yet another countryman had succeeded somewhere 'out there in the world.' How great his surprise must have been when three days later (...) on the same TV channel he saw a program in which Zdzislaw Najder, Waclaw Sadkowski and Adam Wazyk unanimously stated that the permanent ban on publishing Milosz was something reprehensible, and that all of Milosz' works should at once be inculcated to the Polish people. The confusion caused in our media by the decision of the Swedish Academy of Sciences can only be compared to the events of October 16th two years earlier [election of the Polish Pope].⁷²⁴

Meanwhile the hearsay was that Milosz was a poet who wrote Polish poetry in American exile, and who had left Poland in the 1950s in an act of protest against the communist government. This information instantly proved more than enough for Poles to figure out who this newly discovered poet was – he was the Polish national poet! The streets reverberated with Milosz's name in all declinations. One of Milosz's readers, for lack of better words, expressed this crazy enthusiasm using the words from a song by ABBA: "There is something in the air this night, and the sky is so bright..." he wrote to Milosz.⁷²⁵ In the following months frenzy took over Poland; extremely crowded poetic evenings ended at dusk, students used their vacation funds to print Milosz's poetry,

⁷²⁴ Jacek Swiecicki's letter to Milosz, 10/19/1980. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 59, f. 829.

⁷²⁵ Zbigniew Malyszko's letter to Milosz, 01/29/1981. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 40, f. 590.

people named their children after the poet, and there was even a chef who wanted to dedicate a book to Milosz.⁷²⁶

Was all of this really about poetry? The leading Polish literary critic Jan Blonski provided an insightful answer to this question in his letter to Milosz. In December 1980, Blonski wrote to Milosz from Poland, a country whose citizens had constantly suffered from material deprivation under the communist regime. Blonski said, “Naturally, you must know that the queues for your works are longer than for any food. (...) You function as something halfway between the Pope and Lech Walesa, although hardly anyone understands your works. People even honestly admit that it is tough.”⁷²⁷ However, the difficulties involved in acquiring and grasping Milosz’s poetry did not arrest national excitement. I reveal its scope by investigating letters from Poland, which were delivered to Milosz’s California home in sacks. Let me quote just one example. In December 1980, Mr. Dabrowa wrote to Milosz saying: “We Poles are proud that our Nation has delivered such a Great Man as you. (...) People like you (...) remind the world that there is in Europe a nation which is capable of great and noble acts.”⁷²⁸ From early on, a strong nationalist overtone was prevalent in the discussion of Milosz’s Nobel Prize. In their grappling with the new literary celebrity and his poetic work, Poles almost instinctively resorted to the cultural reservoir of Romanticism, emphasizing the messianic vision of the Polish nation and the role of the poet as a national leader.

The Romantic trend present in the reception of Milosz’s work in Poland was only reinforced by recent developments in the country. “This year abounded in various

⁷²⁶ Ryszard’s [no last name] to Milosz, 10/16/1980. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 13. Edward Rzeznikowski’s letter to Milosz, 12/16/1983. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 52, f. 740.

⁷²⁷ Jan Blonski’s letter to Milosz, 12/15/1980. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 9, f. 168.

⁷²⁸ Klemens Dabrowa’s letter to Milosz, 12/22/1980. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 14, f. 251.

events,” Mrs. Stulginska wrote in November 1980 to her relative in the USA, “The worst is that we had almost no summer, it was chilly and rainy. The beets have not grown either, and things are bad with the sugar supply. But it is all nothing compared to the fact that once more a Pole has stood out. (...) They say that he is the new Mickiewicz.”⁷²⁹ Poles started to see the past couple of months as an *annus mirabilis*, since it brought the June 1979 visit of the recently appointed pope John Paul II to his homeland, the August 1980 outbreak of the Solidarity movement and, finally, Milosz’s Nobel Prize. There was a widespread conviction about the deeply symbolic if not mystical character of this constellation of historical events. The words of the Romantic poet, Adam Mickiewicz, were on everyone’s lips: “O Year! Who then had witnessed you in our country!”⁷³⁰

National excitement about the awarding of the Nobel Prize to Milosz revealed the strength of the Romantic tradition, but it also made it clear that many Poles yearned for hope and social solidarity, wanted to take pride in their nation, and reject the communist state. Milosz’s literary prize paved the way for yet another, after Solidarity, eruption of civic spirit, with appeals for respecting human rights and open critique of the communist regime. In the second half of 1980, many Poles would agree with Vaclav Havel’s statement that “living a lie” was not an option any more. By 1980, *détente* had transformed both Polish political and cultural life as well as relations between citizens. The events of 1980 proved that Poles were not the same terrified and alienated crowd that Milosz had met during his 1949 visit to Poland. One of Milosz’s readers, Maria Bucholc, wrote to him about the unusual atmosphere among the people waiting in line to purchase the first official volume of Milosz’s poetry in decades:

⁷²⁹ Donia Stulginska’s letter to Milosz, 11/24/1980. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 55, f. 775.

⁷³⁰ Adam Mickiewicz, and Kenneth R. Mackenzie trans. *Pan Tadeusz* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1992).

The bookstore opened at 10 a.m.; I rushed from the other side of Krakow shortly before 6 a.m., when it was still dark. (...) I was fortieth in the queue. The first person had formed the line at 4.30 a.m., and was calmly knitting a sweater in the light of a street lamp. But everyone was smiling; no one had ever seen this kind of queue standing for food. Some people read newspapers, others were finishing their breakfast, three young priests recited the breviary, others chatted... The excitement rose. How many copies would there be? How many of us would be lucky? (...) The crowd was quite a sensation, and people would stop their cars to ask what had happened. ... Just before 10 a.m. a cordon was formed, and one person shouted the names out loud. You should have seen those [people] walking out the bookstore; gleeful mouths, smiling eyes, their noses stuck in the preface. (...) Unfortunately, many left with nothing. I am not an expert... I will only say thank you so much.⁷³¹

Similar scenes took place in Warsaw, Bydgoszcz and other Polish towns, where thousands of people put their names on waiting lists for the newly published volumes of Milosz's poetry. If unlucky after hours spent in line, some of them would turn to the black market, willing to spend on Milosz's volume as much as 700 zlotys, which equaled one-eighth of the average monthly wage in Poland.⁷³²

Was this the same phenomenon as the one described by Michnik during the 1979 papal visit to Poland? Back then, Michnik noted: "Something strange has happened. The very same people who were frustrated and aggressive while waiting in line to do their daily grocery shopping were transformed into a cheerful and jubilant community, and became citizens full of dignity. They rediscovered this dignity within themselves, and with it, their sense of personhood, self-determination, and power."⁷³³ This atmosphere resonated in Poland perhaps from the day of the Pope's election in October 1978, until the imposition of martial law in December 1981. On the streets, where Poles greeted the new head of the Catholic Church, and a year later shared volumes of previously banned

⁷³¹ Maria Bucholc's letter to Milosz, 11/24/1980. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 7, f. 143.

⁷³² Ibidem.

⁷³³ Adam Michnik, and Irena Grudzińska-Gross, *In Search of Lost Meaning: The New Eastern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 27.

poetry, the lethargic crowd was shedding off its skin and civil society was emerging. Leaning on the pillars of religion and poetry, a sense of national solidarity boosted.

In December 1980, a few weeks after the announcement of the Nobel Prize for Milosz, in the Gdansk Shipyard, Solidarity started work on a monument to commemorate three shipyard workers killed by the army in the 1970 anti-governmental demonstrations. December 1970, yet another of the “Polish months,” brought protests of workers, angered by the rise of food prices just before Christmas. As a result of military interventions on the Baltic coast forty one people were killed, 1165 injured, and 3161 arrested. The long-awaited monument erected ten years later in Gdansk consisted of three crosses, each capped with an anchor – the symbol of hope in Polish iconography. Asked to choose one of his poems to be engraved on the monument, Milosz instead proposed the following line from “Psalm 29”: “The Lord gives strength to his people.” However, Solidarity activists decided that the monument would also feature Milosz’s poem written in 1949 in Washington, entitled, “You who wronged.” The poem read:

*You who wronged a simple man
Bursting into laughter at the crime,
And kept a pack of fools around you
To mix good and evil, to blur the line,*

*Though everyone bowed down before you,
Saying virtue and wisdom lit your way,
Striking gold medals in your honor,
Glad to have survived another day,*

*Do not feel safe. The poet remembers.
You can kill one, but another is born.*

The words are written down, the deed, the date.

*And you'd have done better with a winter dawn,
A rope, and a branch bowed beneath your weight.*⁷³⁴

As the writer Stefan Chwin rightly notices in his study on Milosz's connections to Gdansk, the last two verses of the poem were excluded, and for good reason, it was yet another illustration of the Solidarity ethos of non-violent opposition. Since the documentation of the Gdansk Statue Erection Committee was lost to the Secret Service during martial law, the details of the decision to place Milosz's words on the monument remain unclear. "I thought, perhaps somewhat naïvely, that Milosz wrote this poem prophetically for us. Then I realized that the 'injustice' described in this poem has a universal character," said Zygmunt Manderla, the member of the Committee who had come up with the idea of engraving Milosz's words on the statue.⁷³⁵ While Manderla had read Milosz's books before 1980, Milosz became known to hundreds of Gdansk shipyard workers at poetry recitals during the high point of Solidarity in August 1980.⁷³⁶

On December 16th, the morning of the inauguration of the statue, the Solidarity activist Roman Skawinski stood at the entrance to the Gdansk Shipyard, and noted:

Three mighty crosses overlook a waste, scorched land. On each of them an anchor is crucified. (...) For us, the cross is not only a religious symbol of faith, but also a symbol of national martyrdom. (...) Our greatest social and national hopes have become linked to the [Baltic] coast today, to the leading, social and political role of the shipyard workers. (...) A nation that resurrects its hopes, even though (...) it has been going the Way of Cross for almost two centuries – such a nation never really expires.⁷³⁷

⁷³⁴ Czeslaw Milosz, "You who wronged," In: Milosz, *New and Collected Poems*, 50.

⁷³⁵ "Do not feel safe. The poet remembers": An interview with Zygmunt Manderla," In: Krystyna Chwin, Stefan Chwin, and Czeslaw Milosz, *Milosz: Gdańsk i Okolice: Relacje, Dokumenty, Głosy* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Tytuł 2012), 130.

⁷³⁶ *Solidarnosc Stocznia Gdanska: Strajkowy Biuletyn Informacyjny*, AO V/ 375,,08/30/1980, p. 1. The Archives of Opposition. Karta, Warsaw.

⁷³⁷ Roman Skawinski, *Czas Peerelu. Dziennik*. The Archives of Opposition. Karta, Warsaw, 140d.

A few hours later, at 5 p.m., after two hours of waiting in a tightly-packed crowd, Skawinski observed the ceremony. He wrote:

A genuine Polish mystery is taking place in front of me. Suffering, determination, death and a monument at the site of martyrdom, speeches and *requiem*. Today the authorities have assumed the pose of a lamb. The workers, once fired at, are now walking in glory. (...) One gets the impression as if the words of prayer were born among the monument's crosses and rose towards the sky.⁷³⁸

The actor who moderated the ceremony commented on Milosz's symbolic presence among the crowds at the Gdansk Shipyard in the following way: "Master, you have united émigrés with the nation!"⁷³⁹

Putting Milosz's words on the Gdansk monument clearly suggested merging Milosz's image with two spheres of the Polish sacrum: Catholicism and the struggle for independence. A young Polish poet, Danuta Majczyna, best expressed this tendency when she wrote to Milosz: "Whether you want it or not, you are a sort of 'Polish saint.'"⁷⁴⁰ In the weeks following the announcement of the Nobel Prize, Poles started to worship Milosz as a part of the national trinity, next to John Paul II and Lech Walesa. Some people asked whether Solidarity had not played a role in the Swedish Academy's decision. At a time when everything in Poland was politicized, the Nobel Prize brought Milosz not only literary honors, but ironically, once again made him vulnerable to political affairs and interpretations.

⁷³⁸ Skawinski, *Czas Peerelu*.

⁷³⁹ Bogdan Deresiewicz's letter to Milosz, 01/19/1981. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, b. 14.

⁷⁴⁰ Danuta Majczyna's letter to Milosz, 12/13/1980. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 40, f. 590.

“ON THE PURRING BREAST OF THE NATION...”⁷⁴¹

“Usually the Nobel Prize opened doors to the world for its laureate. In the case of Milosz, the prize opened the door to his own homeland,” one of Milosz’ relatives stated.⁷⁴² Since the communist authorities could no longer ignore the venerated poet, they invited Milosz to Poland. The atmosphere in Poland in the months following the August 1980 outbreak of Solidarity was electrified with political postulates, publishing activity and high expectations as to the future of the country. This mad excitement was also reflected in the atmosphere preceding Milosz’s June 1981 visit, of which Andrzej Kijowski wrote to Milosz in May 1981, saying:

A week ago, for the first time since September 1st, 1945, we celebrated the 3rd of May [Constitution Day]. Yesterday, the press informed the readers that on the anniversary of Marshal Pilsudski’s death a group of legionaries had placed flowers at his tomb ‘as always’; the funeral of Sikorski is being prepared. Peasants in their peasant coats, with sacred paintings and old banners in their hands are standing in front of the Supreme Court, waiting for Rural Solidarity to be registered. And on top of that, you are coming. Everything has given way at once, almost too quickly and too trivially; it had seemed this would only come with doomsday, with the heavenly cavalry descending from the sky. Thus, people ask themselves if this is all true, if (...) this is not just a movie?⁷⁴³

This blend of political, literary, and religious nationalism was not only an element of the spiritual life of the nation. On the contrary, it apparently had explosive potential in the realm of politics too, since Soviet officials from Moscow paid a visit to Warsaw in order to verify the security measures taken by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As a

⁷⁴¹ Jan Goslicki’s letter to Milosz, 01/27/1969. Czeslaw Milosz Papers box 22, f. 368.

⁷⁴² Grazyna Strumillo-Milosz’s words (Milosz’s sister-in-law), In: Bogusław Kopka, Grzegorz Majchrzak, and Grzegorz Musidlak. *Operacja “Poeta.” Służba Bezpieczeństwa Na Tropach Czesława Miłozza* (Lublin: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2007), 11.

⁷⁴³ Andrzej Kijowski’s letter to Milosz, 5/11/1981. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 35, f. 525.

result, a special Security Service group was delegated to oversee Milosz's visit in an operation code-named "Poet."⁷⁴⁴

Milosz's June 1981 visit to Poland was a mixture of a rock star tour and a pilgrimage, with three symbolic stops: a *honoris causa* ceremony at the Catholic University of Lublin, a meeting with Walesa and shipyard workers in Gdansk, and intimate discussions with the Warsaw oppositionist *intelligentsia*. The chancellor of the Catholic University of Lublin [Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski, abbrev. KUL] addressed Milosz in the following words: "[Milosz's visit] is first of all a symbol of the unity in diversity of national heritage, a symbol of faithfulness to historical memory and to values that cannot be discredited. (...) It is a visible sign of the moral dimension of history."⁷⁴⁵ Solidarity activists from Lublin, working in cooperation with the KUL authorities, organized the very first meeting between Milosz and Lech Walesa. "Genuine leader! Let me assure you that I greatly adore you," in these words Milosz initiated conversation with Walesa. The thirty-eight-year-old shipyard worker who was now the leader of the almost ten million-strong Solidarity movement, responded:

I started to adore you even earlier. I studied a bit on your formulas. It is I who owe you more... All of us do. Everything has gradually come together in such a way that today it is hard to calculate who has contributed how much, so that today we have this kind of situation, and not another. (...) You know, I once even had your poetry confiscated.⁷⁴⁶

It seemed that if the third member of the new Polish triad, the Pope, had been there, the walls of Lublin university would not have withstood this explosive potential, and would have crumbled. From the Catholic University of Lublin Milosz was picked up by the shipyard workers, who thought that driving the poet to Gdansk was safer than putting him

⁷⁴⁴ Kopka, Majchrzak, Musidlak. *Operacja "Poeta,"* 63.

⁷⁴⁵ The speech of the Chancellor of the Catholic Lublin University. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 14.

⁷⁴⁶ Chwin, Chwin, Milosz, *Milosz: Gdańsk I Okolice*, 145.

on a government plane. Shedding his previous doubts about getting involved in politics, Milosz left for Gdansk, the spot all Polish hopes were focused on.

On June 16th, 1981, Milosz saw the words he had written thirty years earlier emanating from the most important Polish monument. He later talked to shipyard workers who proudly carried under their arm a volume of his poetry, printed by them in the record time of three weeks. Whether they read Milosz's works was another question, but at that moment, poetry and the figure of Milosz were but another means of building a sense of national solidarity. For the shipyard workers, Milosz's poetry had an additional, supra-literary value; or perhaps, it had political value only. In Lublin, Milosz had mentioned the Workers' Defense Committee and stated that cooperation between workers and intellectuals was an important thing.⁷⁴⁷ It was therefore natural that upon bidding farewell to the workers in Gdansk he would return to Warsaw for more talks with the young oppositionist *intelligentsia*. They were the ones who had for years remained in secret dialogue with his "ruffianly books."

A picture taken a few days later in Warsaw shows young Michnik seated at Milosz's feet, staring at the poet as if enchanted, with other young people listening to Milosz in awe. The tiny apartment is packed. This time, however, the young people did not meet to discuss Milosz's book, but to have a discussion *with the poet*. The young crowd consisted of people involved in underground intellectual life, who knew Milosz's works, and valued him as a poet and leading intellectual. Even if he was not their favorite poet or if they disagreed with the critique expressed in his prose works, they all understood that a poet and writer of such intellectual stature was a rare and precious gift. This young *intelligentsia* had for years been secretly devouring the works of Milosz and

⁷⁴⁷ Chwin, Chwin, Milosz, *Milosz: Gdańsk I Okolice*, 145.

other émigré writers; now, they could pay him tribute on the front page of *Zapis* magazine, stating:

Milosz's works – smuggled from the West in spite of the vigilance of customs officers, recited in private apartments, copied by hand or on duplicators, preserved or lost forever during police inspections – they have their honorary place in Polish hearts and minds, a place awarded to the greatest and most needed writing – such writing as gets through high walls and barbed wire, and brings brightness and rescue to an individual, a nation, humanity in a time of annihilation and unrest.⁷⁴⁸

That day the young people talked to Milosz. They were elated. For them it was, in a way, the return of the father.

So there they were: the workers of the Lenin Shipyard publishing the émigré poet, the atheist *intelligentsia* going to church to listen to poetry, and the Catholic University, organizing a meeting of the leading Polish intellectual with the working-class leader of the anti-communist opposition. Together they formed a powerful circle, with the Catholic Church, the oppositionist *intelligentsia*, and the workers inspiring one another, and at the same time ignoring the obvious divisions. Milosz's visit became a part of this circle, represented by the byword taken from St. Paul's *First Letter to the Corinthians*: "Belief, hope and love," symbolizing John Paul II, Lech Walesa, and Milosz respectively. The catch was that "love" was replaced with "Milosz," since the Polish word for love is "milosc," almost a homonym to Milosz's name.⁷⁴⁹ So the byword read: "Belief, hope and Milosz." Within this framework, the festivities involved in Milosz's visit to Poland allowed thousands of Poles to live a moment of dignity and pride, providing yet another dimension of "solidarity."

⁷⁴⁸ *Zapis* 16 (1980): 1. The Archives of Opposition. Karta, Warsaw.

⁷⁴⁹ The journalist Andrzej Drawicz coined this motto.

This magic circle, however, proved dangerous to Milosz... When the broad audience constructed its image of Milosz, they referred to Romantic nationalist discourse, since it strengthened their sense of solidarity against the communist government. However, what was a reinforcement to them, proved lethal for Milosz. To Milosz, the significance of his visit consisted in the fact that after thirty years of absence from official Polish culture, he was able to meet his Polish readers. But rather than a literary event, his visit was doomed to become a highly politicized affair, steeped in nationalist rhetoric. What could Milosz do when facing people who felt free the very moment they saw the exiled poet returning to a country where he had moral dominance over the regime? Now, thirty years after his decision to abandon the domestic literary scene, Milosz would again arrive at the question: be Polish or remain faithful to his poetic *credo*? As we learned earlier, already in the 1940s the poet dreaded that Poles would, symbolically speaking, devour him and his poetry in a patriotic surge. Now in 1981, the confinement of the national poet's robe became even more real. Milosz explained his stance in a January 1981 letter to Giedroyc, the editor-in-chief of *Kultura*:

I really do not fit the role the propagator of Polish nationalism, and those who write to me (...) can't wrap their minds around the fact that someone could be anything other than a Pole and Catholic. This wretched nation, totally and doubly duped, by the nationalist-communist school and by the opposition toward this school at home and in the Church, but also of the nationalist sort. (...) [This nation] is controlled by wild nationalism and messianism. (...) I have reached the turning point in the sense that it can't be like this anymore. You can't create the illusion of a 'united Nation' etc., whereas clearly stated attitudes are the basis of any real democracy.⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁵⁰ Czesław Miłosz's letter to Jerzy Giedroyc, 01/15/1981. Giedroyc, Miłosz, Kornat, *Listy v. 3*.

Giedroyc responded by suggesting that Milosz tell his readers that the role of a poet was to be the conscience of the nation at best, and that, unfortunately, often forced the poet to speak the truth home.⁷⁵¹

During his visit, Milosz did not hesitate to mutiny against the role of what he called “an animal completely domesticated by national ideology.”⁷⁵² Within minutes of landing at Warsaw airport, speaking amid a sea of people and flowers, Milosz affirmed the private character of his visit. In the next days, he struggled to turn his audience’s attention to the non-political value of his poetry, and to set himself free from nationalist mythology. Milosz’s close friends noticed this, as did those sober observers who understood the poet’s anxiety not to be made into someone he was not. Referring to his attitude, the literary critic Elzbieta Morawiec thanked Milosz for “a lesson of humility and Gombrowicz-like irony toward one’s monumental, publicly crowned status. (...) for beautiful, proud resistance to attempts to pigeon-hole you as a Catholic poet, for obstinate faithfulness to yourself.”⁷⁵³ A Security Service agent commenting on one of Milosz’s meetings, said: “The digressions that Milosz made occasionally during his poetry reading (...) give him the air of an old, experienced poet, who gladly welcomes the opportunity of presenting his poems in Polish (...), but he does not feel appointed to play the role of a ‘national poet,’ or a politician. Therefore, he has no desire to speak about public business.”⁷⁵⁴ Fully aware of the potentially explosive value of his words, Milosz strived to remain cautious and reserved in the national frenzy. As the poet later recalled he was nauseated at the mad excitement of people gathered at his author meeting at the Stodola

⁷⁵¹ Jerzy Giedroyc’s letter to Czeslaw Milosz, 01/27/1981. Giedroyc, Milosz, Kornat, *Listy* v.3.

⁷⁵² Czeslaw Milosz’s letter to Jerzy Giedroyc, 01/15/1981. Giedroyc, Milosz, Kornat, *Listy* v.3.

⁷⁵³ Elzbieta Morawiec’s letter to Milosz, 6/14/1981. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 45, f. 648.

⁷⁵⁴ Kopka, Majchrzak, Musidlak, *Operacja "Poeta,"* 101.

Student Club in Warsaw. He knew this kind of excitement – it reminded him of the days before the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising... In a letter to a friend, Milosz asked in a dramatic tone: “And who am I to lead people on the barricades?!”⁷⁵⁵

The atmosphere accompanying Milosz’s 1981 visit to Poland almost calls for the words of his poem to be revoked:

*Fortunate the nation that has a poet,
And in its toil does not pace in silence*
[my translation]⁷⁵⁶

The reverse, as Milosz experienced first-hand in 1981, was not necessarily true. When the shipyard workers honored Milosz with a volume of his poetry entitled *The People Will Give Strength to Their Poet*, fresh from the press, they did not realize that for Milosz the situation was much more complex. Obviously, Milosz was elated to talk to his loyal readers, meet old friends and see the well-known landscape, but the visit to Poland also opened a Pandora’s box. He was constantly reminded that he was Polish, that he was fortunate as a poet to belong to the Polish nation. Some people even expressed indignation at the fact that Milosz emphasized his Lithuanian background, and distanced himself from the role of a leader of the Polish people.⁷⁵⁷ Celebrating the poet’s visit with the use of religious symbols and national mythology, the broad audience was “making” Milosz Polish. Polish in the sense in which they understood it – a Catholic Pole. As I noted in Chapter 3, all of this went against Milosz’s complicated sense of national

⁷⁵⁵ Czeslaw Milosz’s letter to Jerzy Giedroyc, 01/15/1981. Giedroyc, Milosz, Kornat, *Listy* v.3.

⁷⁵⁶ Czeslaw Milosz, “Do Tadeusza Rozewicza, poety.” The poem was first printed in 1950 in Poland in the periodical *Zeszyty Wroclawskie*, then, upon Milosz’s 1951 exile in *Kultura*.

⁷⁵⁷ Irena Pielinska’s letter to Milosz, 12/12/1980. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 48, f. 595.

belonging, his dislike of narrow Polish nationalism, and of demonstrations of nationalist attitudes in general.

While it was clear that after his 1980 success, the broad Polish audience strived to use Milosz as a tool for satisfying their national and political goals, the issue of the reception of his works by this audience was much more complicated. The archival material analyzed for the purpose of this chapter allows one to argue that Milosz's broad Polish audience was an illusion, and that outside of the political context Milosz remained mostly a poet of a small and sophisticated audience. At the same time, hundreds of people wrote to Milosz, expressing their gratitude for words of wisdom, providing a taste of freedom, for being the world-renowned poet of the Polish language.

Similarly to Voltaire's 1778 return to Paris or Ivan Turgenev's 1879 return to Moscow, Milosz's return to Poland was an extraordinary affair. Milosz's visit made the political divide between excited society and confused authorities even more visible; the *ad-hoc* reception of Milosz's poetry, even if superficial, unleashed fury among Polish readers. Who had the right to forbid people to read this great poet for the past thirty years? The extent of the deprivation caused by the ban on Milosz's writing became clear within hours after the prize had been officially announced. A crew from national television had to knock on Andrzej Milosz's, (Czeslaw's brother's) door, and only there, bumping into excited fans and with the phone constantly ringing in the background, could they film all the titles of Milosz's books.⁷⁵⁸ In the light of the recent Nobel Prize award, many asked: were Poles fools never to have heard of Milosz, or were the authorities foolish to have censored poetry whose value had been recognized by the committee of the world's most prestigious literary prize? Among the hundreds of letters Milosz received

⁷⁵⁸ Andrzej Milosz's letter to Milosz, 10/16/1980. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 44, f. 638.

from Poland since October 1980, many expressed the frustration, fury, and sadness of people who had been deprived of the chance to read Milosz and other émigré literature. “Is this solely my fault?,” Edward Rzeznikowski, a young worker and poet, asked rhetorically.⁷⁵⁹ Two high-school students from Lodz asked Milosz a question which hovered in the air: “Don’t you hold a grudge against us? You probably do. For so many years we did not care for you and suddenly... Boom! A bomb was dropped – the Nobel Prize, a sensation!”⁷⁶⁰ No wonder then, that by celebrating Milosz’s success Poles were also settling accounts with the government. The triumph of Polish literature was, as the organizers of an exhibition dedicated to Milosz put it, “a compensation for years of enslavement and making fools out of people.”⁷⁶¹ In a way then, the “ruffianly books” had achieved victory over the ruffians.

One would be wrong, however, to assume that Milosz’s case made the authorities renounce censorship of émigré authors, the honored poet included. On the contrary. They did invite Milosz to Poland and publish some of his poetry, excluding *The Captive Mind* or the other prose pieces, of course, since they had no other choice. Yet Milosz’s success was a triumph of Polish émigré literature and of underground publishing, both of which the authorities had been combating for years. For them, Milosz’s Nobel Prize was a bitter pill to swallow. The incident, however, had to be somehow accommodated in public life, which led to curious situations, such as the one described by *Zapis*:

Columnists, critics and reviewers who write about [Jerzy] Andrzejewski or [Stanislaw] Baranczak in periodicals make the strangest stylistic evasions as not to reveal where they have read these ‘second circulation’ works. (...) And it would be completely unacceptable to ‘reveal’ the well-known fact that Milosz’s books, for example, were and still are being published

⁷⁵⁹ Edward Rzeznikowski’s letter to Milosz, 12/16/1983. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 52, f. 740.

⁷⁶⁰ Monika Konwerska, Bozena Ilnicka’s letter to Milosz, no date. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 28, f. 442.

⁷⁶¹ Zofia Trojanowiczowa’s letter to Milosz, 11/14/1980. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 60, f. 839.

by the Paris Literary Institute as part of the *Kultura* Library. The books were shown on television with name of the publisher covered.⁷⁶²

Just weeks after the official publication of Milosz's poetry volume, 1500 issues of the magazine *Puls*, where Milosz had his text published, were confiscated. A reprint of Milosz's 1959 essay "A Letter to the Polish Communists" posed too much of a challenge to the regime to let the literary laureate get away with it.⁷⁶³ Censorship, requisitioning and publishing limitations were still in place. The cultural détente was illusionary, or schizophrenic, at best.

In 1981, Milosz's works reached a very wide Polish audience; however, the December 1981 introduction of martial law put an end to a period of cultural détente. The hopes involved in the miraculous year 1981 were crushed, and opposition activists persecuted, with a hundred killed and thousands put in internment camps as political prisoners. On March 25th, 1982, Michnik noted at the internment camp in Bialoleka:

You know how profound the feeling of loneliness can be. You think that you are powerless against the police-army machine that was mobilized on that December night. You still don't know what will happen. You still don't know that people will begin to recover from the shock, that underground papers will appear, that Zbyszek B. will lead his Solidarity region from the underground. [...] You still don't know that the generals' vehicle is sinking in the sand, its wheels spinning in place, that the avalanche of repression and calumnies is missing its aim. But you do know, as you stand alone, handcuffed, with your eyes filled with tear gas, in front of policemen who are shaking their guns at you – you can see it clearly in the dark and starless night, thanks to your favorite poet – that the course of the avalanche depends on the stones over which it rolls. [cz m]. And you want to be the stone that will reverse the course of events.⁷⁶⁴

In these words Michnik referred to the *Treatise on Morals*, a poem published by Milosz in Poland in 1948. Paradoxically, while readers in the 1940s had taken Milosz's words as

⁷⁶² *Zapis* 18 (1981): 139. The Archives of Opposition. Karta, Warsaw.

⁷⁶³ *Zapis* 18 (1981): 139-142. The Archives of Opposition. Karta, Warsaw.

⁷⁶⁴ Adam Michnik, "Why You Are Not Signing?: A Letter from Bialoleka Internment Camp, 1982," In: Michnik, *Letters from Prison*, 15.

an appeal to build socialism through active engagement in the system, Michnik employed the same words as a credo for his dissident activity.⁷⁶⁵ When musing in his prison cell about the means of reforming or even deconstructing the communist regime, the thirty-year old dissident was accompanied by the following words:

*Yet you are not that volitionless,
and even if you were like a field stone,
an avalanche changes its course,
depending on what stones it rolls.
And, as someone else used to say,
you can, so affect the avalanche course,
mitigate its wildness, cruelty,
it also requires bravery.*⁷⁶⁶

[My translation]

Starting in 1982, in order to combat the impact of underground intellectual life, the authorities carried on seizing books by Milosz, Zbigniew Herbert, Leszek Kolakowski, Witold Gombrowicz, Kazimierz Brandys, Tadeusz Konwicki and other émigré writers.⁷⁶⁷ However, martial law did not put an end to the exchange between the oppositionist *intelligentsia* and émigré writers. After the festival of freedom and reading in 1980-1981, the “ruffianly books” went back underground. The books were reprinted in the underground, albeit with great difficulties and at an extreme risk. In Torun, for example, those Solidarity activists who had not been arrested tried to save and secure the property of Solidarity from being confiscated. At the Institute of Physics, the aspirant Andrzej Bielski hid the stencils used for printing Milosz’s *Captive Mind* and Konwicki’s

⁷⁶⁵ Barbara Torunczyk confirmed such understanding of the poem in an interview. Karolina Waligora, “An interview with Barbara Torunczyk,” In Barbara Toruńczyk, *Żywe Cienie* (Warszawa: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich, 2012).

⁷⁶⁶ Czesław Miłosz, “Treatise on Morals.”

⁷⁶⁷ Michnik, *Letters from Prison*, 98.

Small Apocalypse.⁷⁶⁸ Some of the banned books were available on the black market, sold next to flowers and potatoes in places such as the popular Hala Mirowska market in Warsaw; others passed between people as reading for a night or two.⁷⁶⁹ The conflict between free speech, as epitomized by dissident and émigré writing, and the regime had gone on for decades, with phases of liberalization and curtailment of rights, and during the last decade with the two phenomena occurring almost simultaneously. Wojciech Karpinski noted about the year 1982: “At that time, letters from Poland came in an envelope with a ‘censored’ stamp, but Czeslaw Milosz’s face was on the post stamp – a legacy of the Solidarity months, and one example of the schizophrenia of that time.”⁷⁷⁰

Milosz’s dialogue with his Polish readers continued in a less spectacular form, but still reflected the intellectual role ascribed to him and the impact of his poetry. In the years after 1981, Milosz would receive numerous letters from his Polish readers, speaking of the significance of his writing for those craving freedom in the communist country. In February 1983, the Solidarity activist Slawomir Kapusta wrote to Milosz from California. Kapusta had been imprisoned during martial law, and left Poland on the wave of Solidarity emigration. In his letter, Kapusta referred to the recent events, saying:

Sitting on the prison bunk we read, Mister Czeslaw, your beautiful poems. One piece in particular had deeply touched my soul; it was “You who wronged.” Once, a fellow-prisoner recited or rather shouted out this poem somewhere in an adjacent ward, dogs were barking, searchlights wandered through the window pane, as he yelled “Bursting into laughter at the crime.” We all listened holding our breath; at last, he could not help himself and finished weeping, “Do not feel safe.” (...) Your poems allowed me to survive a tough period in the internment camp. I still remember reading the *Psalms* in your translation. These were, ironically, my precious moments.⁷⁷¹

⁷⁶⁸ Marek Kowalski, *Najtrudniejszy egzamin*, (Toruń, 2001), 114.

⁷⁶⁹ Stanislaw Bortkowski’s letter to Milosz, 10/07/1991. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 7.

⁷⁷⁰ Karpiński, *Twarze*, 172.

⁷⁷¹ Slawomir Kapusta’s letter to Milosz, 02/17/1983. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 33, f. 500.

Similarly to Kapusta, also for Grzegorz Musidlak, Milosz's poetry proved salutary while he was imprisoned for his oppositionist activity. Musidlak had written his high school dissertation on Milosz, and in 1981, at the meeting with Solidarity at the Catholic University of Lublin he had handed a copy of it to Milosz. Five months later, Musidlak was arrested and sentenced for his previous involvement in the Workers' Defense Committee. "In prison," Musidlak wrote to Milosz, "I read [your] *World: Naïve Poems, Treatise on Morals, The Land of Ulro*. Did it help us at all? – today, six years later, I think that yes, it did help us."⁷⁷² When asked about what he did in hiding, one Solidarity leader answered: "I read more."⁷⁷³

The eminence of Milosz's works in the world of Solidarity came at a price, of course. When apologizing to Milosz for the violation of his authorship rights, the underground publisher Andrzej Piatek confessed: "[...] my deed was determined only by the desire to diffuse your works and *to accelerate the means of Solidarity* [my emphasis]."⁷⁷⁴ The Solidarity activist Joanna Szczesna, who had been imprisoned during martial law, wrote to Milosz in 1985 from Paris, commenting on his popularity in the Solidarity press during and after the breakthrough year of 1980. Szczesna said that since 1980 the underground Solidarity press had been continuously publishing Milosz's poetry. The Solidarity magazine *Mazowsze Weekly*, for example, published the names of regime collaborators in a section that derived its title from Milosz's poem: "The words are written down, the deed, the date." Concluding her letter, Szczesna added: "Whether you

⁷⁷² Grzegorz Musidlak's letter to Milosz, 1987. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 41. Yet another person wrote to Milosz about Musidlak reading Milosz's poetry during his prison sentence. It was Mark Klus, who met Musidlak during his trip to Poland in the early 1980s. Mark Klus' letter to Milosz, 11/30/1983. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 36, f. 533.

⁷⁷³ Łopiński, Moskit, and Wilk, *Konspira*, 151.

⁷⁷⁴ Andrzej Piatek's letter to Milosz, 12/13/1980. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 48, f. 695.

want it or not, you are treated as a patriotic poet, a national poet who announces hope in times of despair.”⁷⁷⁵

What role did Milosz’s writing play in this “new embodiment of the age-old struggle of truth and lies, of liberty and coercion, of dignity and degradation,” as Michnik called the oppositionist movement in Poland?⁷⁷⁶ What could the dissidents and Solidarity activists take from Milosz? My analysis has shown Milosz’s interaction with his Polish audience, from his circle of friends, to intellectual and literary milieus, to the emerging young dissident *intelligentsia*, and finally, a broad spectrum of readers, Solidarity included—but let me once again give voice to Milosz’s readers. On October 9th, 1980, the members of Solidarity at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan made an announcement, in which they emphasized the common values they shared with Milosz. The statement read: “Milosz states that all of humankind needs to return to values such as: truth, self-determination, hope, human solidarity.”⁷⁷⁷ One of the dissident leaders, Wladyslaw Frasyniuk, was interviewed while in hiding after the 1981 imposition of martial law. In his comments, Frasyniuk echoed Milosz’s appeal for regaining freedom without resorting to Western, money-driven capitalism or nationalism – a postulate Milosz had presented in his 1953 book *The Captive Mind*. Frasyniuk, who must have read Milosz’s book, said:

Our society is trying to construct a new political model without rigid divisions along party lines. It doesn't want any hand-me-downs from the West. People are afraid of all political colors - brown, red, even pink. But they're also afraid of something else. Even the USA, where there are few socialists and even fewer Communists and fascists, doesn't appeal to us as a model. Here, freedom is restricted by the police; there - by the power of

⁷⁷⁵ Joanna Szczesna’s letter to Milosz, 10/14/1985. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 60.

⁷⁷⁶ Michnik, *Letters from Prison*, 40.

⁷⁷⁷ “Solidarnosc” - *Narodziny Ruchu*, A 12.25.2, “Oswiadczenie NSZZ Solidarnosc przy UAM w związku z przyznaniem Czeslawowi Miloszowi Nagrody Nobla,” Poznan, 9/10/1980. The Archives of Opposition. Karta, Warsaw.

money. (...) So, I repeat, we are building something for which we don't have a name, a new consciousness, a concern for the values of truth, freedom, equality, and justice - and, of course, independence, but of a kind different from nationalism.⁷⁷⁸

In his 1985 "Letter from the Gdansk Prison," Michnik referred to Milosz, saying: "In 1942 Czeslaw Milosz wrote: 'In an historical moment when nothing depends on man, everything depends on him – this paradoxical truth is revealed today with particular force.' And also today..."⁷⁷⁹

Where such elusive matters as moral and intellectual incentives that push one to defend human dignity and fight for political freedoms are concerned, it is hard to pin down causes and effects. While it is not my aim to establish Milosz's poetry as crucial in terms of nurturing societal protest in the 1970s and 80s, I nonetheless argue that his poetry did play a significant role for the dissident *intelligentsia*, who were the future actors of the 1989 revolution. As in the case of the previously discussed audiences, the Polish audience turned Milosz's words into a weapon in the political battle they were fighting. Milosz's words gave an incentive: to Michnik, the Karpinskis, Torunczyk to start establishing personal freedom; to the underground publishers, to reach out to people and to construct a *parallel polis*; to the Solidarity activists, to accept political challenges. For others, Milosz's poetry was poetry, and that was sufficient. As Skwarnicki noted: "Over time, it has become irrelevant that we always get to know your poetry furtively, in some weird circumstances: in the basement of the National Library, abroad, or smuggled through the border in a coat pocket etc. Their inner language has become more significant."⁷⁸⁰ Although Skwarnicki spoke for a small number of people, his words

⁷⁷⁸ Łopiński, Moskit, Wilk, *Konspira*, 137.

⁷⁷⁹ Michnik, *Letters from Prison*, 99.

⁷⁸⁰ Marek Skwarnicki's letter to Milosz, 6/24/1974. Czeslaw Milosz Papers, box 58, f. 804.

symbolized not so much the triumph of émigré literature as the triumph of literature over the political context. As for Milosz, in 1980 and 1981, he had to choose. Although he craved contact with his readers, Milosz knew that to be Polish meant for him to play the role of a national hero and for his poetry to serve political ends. Was this the reason why poetry again took precedence over his nationality? Milosz was now at peace choosing poetry, since in the past decades he had learned that he could remain a poet away from Poland. His genuine homeland was the Polish language, and that was also the dwelling place of his poetry.

CONCLUSIONS:

What is an Author?

In his famous 1967 essay “The Death of the Author”, the postmodernist thinker Roland Barthes challenged the role of an author as master of the meaning encoded in a text, and called for more freedom to be granted to the reader. Two years later, Michel Foucault presented a similar critique of authorship in his text “What is an Author?”⁷⁸¹. Both Barthes and Foucault called for “examining more closely the history of the formation of a certain conception of the relationship between text or work or oeuvre and the historical agent, the historical subject, the individual who is allegedly responsible for the production of such works, the author.”⁷⁸² The two philosophers had shifted attention away from the author, denying his authority to inscribe a definitive meaning in the text, and onto the reader as the one who decodes the meaning. Arguing for radical textuality, and for a text operating without an author, Barthes said: “We know that a text does not consist of a line of words, releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God), but is a space of many dimensions, in which are wedded and contested various kinds of writing, no one of which is original: the text is a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture.”⁷⁸³

In *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida*, Sean Burke emphasizes that even though postmodernist theories call for a removal of the author, there is no theory of literature or text that does not imply

⁷⁸¹ Roland Barthes. “The Death of the Author,” in: Irwin, William ed. *The Death and Resurrection of the Author?*, Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2002; pp.3-9; Michel Foucault. “What is an Author?” in: Irwin; pp.9-23.

⁷⁸² Andrew Bennett. *The Author*. London: New York, 2005; p.28.

⁷⁸³ Barthes, p. 6.

a certain stance toward the author.⁷⁸⁴ Burke explains the significance of the postmodernist critique of authorship, saying: “The death of the author might be said to fulfill much the same function in our days as did the death of God for late nineteenth-century thought. Both deaths attest to a departure of belief in authority, presence, intention, omniscience and creativity.”⁷⁸⁵ In his work, Burke takes a critical stance toward what he calls the blindness of the three postmodernist philosophers, especially toward Barthes’ postulate of textual anti-intentionalism. Yet another scholar, Andrew Bennett, points to the problems emerging from Barthes’ critique. In his study *The Author: The New Critical Idiom*, Bennett suggests that while the title of Barthes’ essay stood for the poststructuralist project which assumed “a radical skepticism towards the integrity of a subject’s thoughts, meanings and intentions,” the academic weakness of Barthes’ text spoke to the weakness of the poststructuralist project itself.⁷⁸⁶ While Barthes’ and Foucault’s position on authorship has been questioned by those scholars who believe in strong authorial presence in a text, they nonetheless remain key contributions to the discussion of the relationship between author, reader and text.

In my dissertation, I suggest that the process that takes place between the writer and his audience is more complicated. Postmodernist theories that take away agency from the author, placing emphasis on reception, do not describe it in sufficient detail. Rather than treating the author’s words as free-floating text that can be freely interpreted by an audience, and whose meaning is relevant, I show that the author remains an active participant of the interpretative process. The interpretation concerns not only a particular

⁷⁸⁴ Seán Burke. *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998; p.9.

⁷⁸⁵ Burke, p. 22.

⁷⁸⁶ Bennett, p. 10.

piece, but his whole oeuvre, as well as the author himself. On the example of Milosz's case, I argue that an intellectual's identity is constructed in a dialectical process. The dialogues that Milosz had with his audiences were reciprocally productive – it was against the voices of his readers that Milosz first dramatically searched for, and later strengthened, his artistic self.

The process in which Milosz's identity was dialectically constructed over time involved five different groups of audience, which have already been discussed. First, since Milosz wanted to write poetry free of political pressure, in the late 1940s he distanced himself from the audience who wanted him to become the leading poet of socialist realism. This situation compelled Milosz to escape People's Poland, which, as he later admitted, had probably saved him as a poet. Then, having gone through the turmoil of defining his Cold War allegiances in 1950s France, Milosz realized that he was not cut out to be a political writer, and sought a haven in "the garden of poetry." His audience within the circle of the CCF played a key role in Milosz's redefinition of his intellectual role. In the 1960s, the poet sought relief from the pains of exile on the Californian coast by constructing his own poetic world - a project for which he found support only among his close friends from *Kultura*. By insisting that Milosz compose verses, this tiny audience reinvigorated his role as a poet and an ambassador of Polish literature in the United States. The dialogue Milosz engaged in with his American readers after 1973 reinforced his position as a poet whose words found an attentive audience beyond the realm of his national community. Finally, in the 1980s, in response to an enthusiastic reception among his Polish audience, fueled by a political agenda, Milosz rejected the role of the Polish national poet. Eluding the nationalist rhetoric applied to his

writing by his compatriots, Milosz not only reinforced his poetic credo, but also redefined the role of the leading Polish poet.

In the case of Milosz, his center of gravity, a certain moral ballast, allowed him to adhere to the core of his artistic and intellectual self in various phases of his reception. Milosz's force of integrity had been confronted and tested throughout decades of his dialogue with a transnational audience, who often insisted on remaking Milosz's intellectual image. Therefore, using Milosz's case as an example, I claim that the author is slightly altered in the interaction with his audience, but there is a center to him that remains unchanged. With Milosz's case in mind, I propose this as a model that can hopefully be used for a discussion of how the identity of other intellectuals and creative individuals developed.

Tracing Milosz's dialogue with his transnational audiences proved that while a number of Milosz's texts functioned as statements of his intellectual policy, a complete picture of how he exercised his intellectual responsibilities is only to be seen through an analysis of Milosz's response to his readers' critiques and praises. The letters sent to Milosz from six continents brought to light not only his audiences' desire to express gratitude or dissatisfaction with his particular literary pieces, but also their belief that they could actively shape Milosz's intellectual responsibilities. Moreover, they revealed varying conceptions of the role of an intellectual as understood by the East-Central European writer and as defined by his readers both in the East and West.

The fact that Milosz had the fortune of composing poetry in a country where poetry was held on a pedestal had both reinforcing and limiting effects for the poet. Milosz was certainly not capable of assuaging the Romantic heritage encapsulated in

Polish national discourse, nor he could distance himself completely from the role of national poet. His works were vulnerable to the politics of literature, and his Polish readers took from it the meaning they found indispensable at any given historical moment. Ironically, some of Milosz's Polish readers turned his poetry into an ideological weapon of nationalism in the struggle against another ideology – communism. When Milosz was leaving Poland in 1945, he could not know that the question: *What is a poetry that does not save?*, would reverberate in a meaningful way throughout his life as a poet. It was not only that poetry could save the poet or its readers, but that poetry itself could be rescued, as Milosz learned, when in 1981 in Warsaw he was shown a volume of his wartime poetry pierced through by a bullet.

With his writing splashed out between the realms of aesthetic and ethic, Milosz always remained concerned about what it really meant to write poetry in the tragic twentieth century. He said: “Poetry, after all, is embedded in the humanist tradition and is defenseless in the midst of an all-pervading savagery. The very act of writing a poem is an act of faith; yet if screams of the tortured are audible in the poet's room, is not his activity an offense to human suffering?⁷⁸⁷” Yet, he never lost faith in its power. In 1998, Milosz composed the poem “On Poetry, on the Occasion of Many Telephone Calls after Zbigniew Herbert's Death,” which read:

*It should not exist,
considering conception,
gestation and delivery,
quick growth,
decay and death.
What is all that to it?*

⁷⁸⁷ Czeslaw Milosz. *The History of Polish Literature*. New York: Macmillan, 1969; p. 458.

*It cannot inhabit
the chambers of the heart,
the meanness of the liver,
the sententiousness of the kidneys,
or the brain, with its dependence on the grace of oxygen.*

It cannot exist, and yet it exists.

*He, who served it,
is changed into a thing,
delivered to decomposition
into salts and phosphates,
sinks
into the home of chaos*

*In the morning telephones ring.
Straw hats, sleek nylon, linens
tried in front of mirrors
before a day at the beach.
Vanity and lust
as always, self-centered.*

*Liberated from the phantoms of psychoses,
from the screams of perishing tissue,
from the agony of the impaled one,*

*It wanders through the world,
Forever, clear.⁷⁸⁸*

⁷⁸⁸ Czeslaw Milosz, "On Poetry, upon the Occasion of Many Telephone Calls after Zbigniew Herbert's Death," in Czeslaw Milosz. *New and Collected Poems 1931-2001*. New York: Ecco, 2001; p. 724.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Czeslaw Milosz Papers, The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven.

Joseph Brodsky Papers, Beinecke.

Witold Gombrowicz Archive, Beinecke.

Renata Gorczynski Papers Relating to Czeslaw Milosz, Beinecke.

Olga Scherer-Virski Papers, Beinecke.

Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature, Warsaw.

Archives of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw.

Archives of the Opposition at the Karta Center, Warsaw.

Czartoryski's Library and Archives, Krakow.

Jerzy Borejsza Archives, Warsaw.

Jerzy Turowicz Archives, Goszyce/Krakow.

Milosz Institute: Library and Archives, Krakow.

National Library Archives, Warsaw.

Pogranicze Archives, Sejny.

The Archives of Polish Emigration, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Torun.

The Archives of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, University of Chicago.

The Archives of *Kultura* and the Literary Institute in Maisons-Laffitte/Paris.

The Institute for the Documentation and Studies on Polish Literature, Warsaw.

The Institute of National Remembrance, Warsaw.

PRIMARY SOURCES:

Published collections of Milosz's letters:

Andrzejewski, Jerzy, Czeslaw Milosz, and Barbara Riss. *Listy 1944-1981*. 2011.

Giedroyc, Jerzy, Juliusz Mieroszewski, and Krzysztof Pomian. *Listy 1949-1956*.

Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1999.

- Giedroyc, Jerzy, Czesław Miłosz, Marek Kornat. *Jerzy Giedroyc, Czesław Miłosz: Listy*. Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2011.
- Herbert, Zbigniew, Czesław Miłosz, Katarzyna Herbertowa, Marek Skwarnicki, and Barbara Toruńczyk. *Korespondencja: z faksymiliami listów i wierszy, fotografiami oraz aneksem zawierającym nieznaną wypowiedź Herberta o Miłoszu i Miłosza o Herbercie, a także komentarze Katarzyny Herbertowej i Marka Skwarnickiego oraz wiersze obu Poetów*. Warszawa: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich, 2006.
- Merton, Thomas, Czesław Miłosz, and Robert Faggen. *Striving Towards Being: The Letters of Thomas Merton and Czesław Miłosz*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997.
- Miłosz, Czesław, *Zaraz po wojnie. Korespondencja z pisarzami, 1945-50*. Znak, Kraków, 2007.
- Miłosz, Czesław, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Barbara Toruńczyk, and Robert Papiński. *Portret Podwójny: Wykonany z Listów, Wierszy, Zapisków Intymnych, Wywiadów i Publikacji*. Warszawa: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich, 2011.
- Miłosz, Czesław, Barbara Toruńczyk, and Konstanty A. Jeleński. *Korespondencja*. Warszawa: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich, 2011.
- Miłosz, Czesław, Aleksander Wat, Ed. Alina Kowalczykova. *Korespondencja*. Czytelnik, Warszawa, 2005.
- Miłosz, Czesław, Ola Watowa, Aleksander Wat, Barbara Toruńczyk, Jan Zieliński, and Mikołaj Nowak-Rogoziński. *Czesław Miłosz, Ola Watowa: Listy O Tym, Co Najważniejsze*. Warszawa: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich, 2009.

Literary works by Miłosz:

- Miłosz, Czesław, and Madeline G. Levine. *A Year of the Hunter*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994.
- Miłosz, Czesław. and Lillian Vallee. *Bells in Winter*. New York: Ecco Press, 1978.
- Miłosz, Czesław. *Człowiek wśród skorpionów, studium o Stanisławie Brzozowskim*. Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1962.

- Milosz, Czeslaw. *Gdzie wschodzi słońce i kedy zapada*. Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1974.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. *Gucio zaczarowany*. Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1965.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. *Król Popiel: i inne wiersze*. Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1962
- Milosz, Czeslaw. *Miasto bez imienia; poezje*. Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1969.
- Milosz, Czeslaw, and Madeline G. Levine. *Milosz's Abc's*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. *Native Realm: a Search for Self-Definition*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. *New and Collected Poems 1931-2001*. New York: Ecco, 2001.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. *Nieobjęta ziemia*. Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1984.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. *Noty o wygnaniu: tekst przemowienia podczas sesji literackiej 'Byc poeta?', Lomza, 16 czerwca 1981 r.* Lomza, 2006.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. *Ocalenie*. Warszawa: Spółdzielnia Wydawn. Czytelnik, 1945.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. *Prywatne obowiązki*. Paryż: Instytut literacki, 1980.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. *Selected Poems*. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. *The Captive Mind*. New York: Vintage International, 1990.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. *The Issa Valley*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1981.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. *The Land of Ulro*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1984.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. *The Seizure of Power*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1982.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. *The Separate Notebooks*. The Ecco Press, 1984.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. *The Witness of Poetry*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983.
- Milosz, Czeslaw, Renata Gorczynski, and Piotr Kłoczowski. *Trzy zimy*. Londyn: Aneks, 1987.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. *Visions from San Francisco Bay*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1982.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. *Wielkie pokuszenie; Bieliński i jednorożec*. Toruń: Archiwum Emigracji, 2002.

Other works by Milosz:

Milosz, Czeslaw. *Postwar Polish Poetry: An Anthology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.

Milosz, Czeslaw. *The History of Polish Literature*. New York: Macmillan, 1969.

Press articles by Milosz:

Milosz, Czeslaw. "A Poet's Reply," *The New York Review of Books* 07/21/1988, 42.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Co smiem myslec." *Kultura* 7 (1960): 13-34.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Diariusz paryski." *Kultura* 3 (1960): 3-27.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Do Antoniego Slonimskiego." *Kultura* 12 (1951): 80-88.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Drodzy Rodacy." *Zeszyty Historyczne* 149.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Dwustronne porachunki." *Kultura* 6 (1964): 7-34.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Gombrowiczowi." *Kultura* 10 (1953): 11-14.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Lettre a Picasso." *Preuves* 6 (1956): 13-20.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "List do Gombrowicza." *Kultura* 11 (1952): 119-124.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "List do redakcji." *Kultura* 6 (1955): 157.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "List do redakcji (O stosunku pisarzy emigracyjnych do wydarzen w kraju)." *Kultura* 12 (1968): 141-142.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "List do polskich komunistow." *Kultura* 11 (1959): 97-100.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "List pol-prywatny o poezji." *Tworczość* 10 (1946): 112-21.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Looking for a Center: on Poetry of Central Europe." *Cross Currents* 1 (1982).

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Nie." *Kultura* 5 (1951): 3-13.

Milosz, Czeslaw, "Notes on Exile." *Books Abroad* 50 (Spring 1976): 57-79.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Odpowiedz." *Kultura* 7 (1951): 103-105.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "On Central European Attitudes." *Cross Currents* 5 (1986).

Milosz, Czeslaw. "O stanie polskiej poezji." *Kuznica* 3 (1950): 3.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Poezja i dialektyka." *Kultura* 6 (1951): 32-39.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Poland: Voices of Disillusion." *Problems of Communism* 3 (1956): 24-

30.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Powiklania jednej porazki." *Kultura* 4 (1963): 23-38.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Prywatne obowiązki wobec literatury polskiej." *Kultura* 10 (1969): 3-28.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Przemowienie na bankiecie po reczeniu Nagrody Nobla." *Kultura* 1 (1981): 5-14.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Refleksje o srodowisku zamknietych." *Kultura* 11 (1955): 21-33.

Milosz, Czeslaw [signed M.K.]. "Sartre-Camus." *Kultura* 1 (1953): 115-17.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Smierc Kassandra." *Odrodzenie* 21 (1945): 7.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Uwagi do Gombrowicza." *Kultura* 12 (1962): 122-25.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Zoologiczne uwagi o festiwalu." *Kultura* 7 (1952): 24-28.

Poems cited:

Milosz, Czeslaw. "A Nation." *New and Collected Poems 1931-2001*. New York: Ecco, 2001, 79.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "And Yet the Books." *New and Collected Poems 1931-2001*. New York: Ecco, 2001, 468.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Belle époque." *New and Collected Poems, 1931-2001*, 473.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Calling to Order." *New and Collected Poems, 1931-2001*, 271.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Do Tadeusza Rozewicza." *Zeszyty Wroclawskie* 1 (1950): 64-69.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Encounter." *New and Collected Poems, 1931-2001*, 27.

Milosz, Czeslaw. „Kresy.” *Miasto bez imienia: poezje*. Paryz: Instytut Literacki, 1969, 55.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Po ziemi naszej." *Poezje*. Paryz: Instytut Literacki, 1981, v. 2., 87.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "The Separate Notebooks." *New and Collected Poems, 1931-2001*, 362.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Toast; poemat satyryczny." *Odrodzenie* 16 (1949): 3-5.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "To Robinson Jeffers." *New and Collected Poems, 1931-2001*. New York: Ecco, 2001, 252.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Traktat moralny." *Tworczość* 4 (1948): 5-16.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "You Who Wronged." *New and Collected Poems 1931-2001*. New York: Ecco, 2001, 103.

Interviews with Milosz:

Milosz, Czeslaw, Renata Gorczynski, Aleksander Fiut, Richard Lourie. *Conversations with Czeslaw Milosz*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987.

Milosz, Czeslaw, and Aleksander Fiut. *Czeslawa Milosza autoportret przekorny*. Kraków: Wydawn. Literackie, 1988.

Milosz, Czeslaw, and Cynthia L. Haven. *Czeslaw Milosz: Conversations*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006.

Milosz, Czeslaw, *Rozmowy polskie 1979-1998*. Kraków: Wydawn. Literackie, 2006.

Milosz, Czeslaw. *Rozmowy polskie 1999-2004*. Kraków: Wydawn. Literackie, 2011.

OTHER PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES:

Alvarez, Al. "East is East." *The New York Review of Books*, 11/11/1965.

Alvarez, Al. "Witness." *The New York Review of Books*, 06/02/1988.

Arendt, Hannah. "The Ex-communists." *Commonweal*, 03/20/1953.

Arendt Hannah. A Note on *The Captive Mind*, *New Republic*, 06/22/1953.

Arendt, Hannah, Karl Jaspers, Lotte Kohler, and Hans Saner. *Hannah Arendt/Karl Jaspers Correspondence, 1926-1969*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992.

Ash Garton, Timothy. *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*. New Haven, 1999.

Ash Garton, Timothy. *The Uses of Adversity: Essays on the Fate of Central Europe*. New York, 2001.

Bajer, Magdalena. *Blizny Po Ukaszaniu*. Warszawa: Biblioteka "Wiezi," 2005.

Bakula, Leszek. "Słowo z ubocza." *Kuznica* 6 (1950).

Barańczak, Stanisław. *Breathing Under Water and Other East European Essays*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." In *The Death and Resurrection of the Author?*, edited by William Irwin, 3-9. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2002.

Benda, Julien, and Richard Aldington. *The Treason of the Intellectuals*. New York: W.

- Morrow & Company, 1928.
- Bennett, Andrew. *The Author*. London: New York, 2005.
- Bernhard, Michael H. *The Origins of Democratization in Poland: Workers, Intellectuals, and Oppositional Politics, 1976-1980*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.
- Bikont, Anna, and Joanna Szczesna. *Lawina i Kamienie: Pisarze wobec Komunizmu*. Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 2006.
- Błazejowska, Justyna. *Papierowa Rewolucja: Z Dziejów Drugiego Obiegu Wydawniczego w Polsce 1976-1989/1990*. Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej--Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2010.
- Błędowska, Magdalena. *Milosz: Przewodnik Krytyki Politycznej*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2011.
- Bończa-Tomaszewski, Nikodem. *Źródła narodowości: powstanie i rozwój polskiej świadomości w II połowie XIX i na początku XX wieku*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2006.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. "The corporatism of the universal: The role of intellectuals in the modern world." *Telos* 81 (1989): 99-110.
- Bregman, Aleksander. "Sprawa Milosza." *Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Zolnierza* 191 (1951): 2-3.
- Brennan, Timothy. *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now*. Harvard, 1997.
- Brodsky, Joseph. *Less than One: Selected Essays*. New York, 1986.
- Brodsky, Joseph. "Why Kundera is wrong about Dostoevsky." *Cross Currents*.
- Brym, Robert J. *Intellectuals and Politics*. Boston: George Allen and Unwin, 1980.
- Buckley, William. "A Conversation with Mary McCarthy, 1971." In McCarthy, Mary, and Carol W. Gelderman. *Conversations with Mary McCarthy*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991.
- Burke, Seán. *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998.
- Burnell, Joel. *Poetry, Providence, and Patriotism: Polish Messianism in Dialogue with*

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. Pickwick Publications, 2009.
- Carpenter, Bogdana. "The Gift Returned." In: *Living in Translation: Polish Writers in America*, edited by Halina Stephan, 45-76. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003.
- Cavanagh, Clare. *Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics: Russia, Poland, and the West*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Cesarani, David. *Arthur Koestler: The Homeless Mind*. New York: Free Press, 1999.
- Chiaromonte, Nicola. "Intellectuals under the 'System': The Captive Mind." *Partisan Review* 20 (1953): 697-702.
- Chmielowiec, Michal. "Powitanie poety." *Zycie* (London) 29 (1951): 4.
- Chruślińska, Iza, and Zofia Hertz. *Była Raz Kultura: Rozmowy Z Zofia Hertz*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2003.
- Chwin, Krystyna, Stefan Chwin, and Czesław Miłosz. *Miłosz: Gdańsk i Okolice: Relacje, Dokumenty, Głosy*. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Tytuł, 2012.
- Clancy, William P. "The Fatal Payment." *Commonweal* 13 (1953): 328-29.
- Clifford, James. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Harvard, 1997.
- Coleman, Peter. *The Liberal Conspiracy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Postwar Europe*. New York: Free Press, 1989.
- Cronies-Pope, Marcel, and John Neubauer. *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Amsterdam: J. Benjamins Pub, 2004.
- Crossman, R H. S, and Arthur Koestler. *The God That Failed*. New York: Harper, 1950.
- Czapski, Jozef. "Dwie prowokacje." *Kultura* 12 (1972): 3-8.
- Davie, Donald. *Czesław Miłosz and the Insufficiency of Lyric*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986.
- Davies, Norman. *The Heart of Europe*. Oxford, 1980.
- Des Pres, Terrence. "Czesław Miłosz: The Poetry of Aftermath." *Nation* 12/30/1978.
- Deutsch, Babette. In "Krytycy amerykańscy o 'Antologii' Miłosza." *Kultura* 7 (1965).
- Drewnowski, Tadeusz. *Literatura polska 1944-1989. Próba scalenia*. Kraków 2004.
- Eile, Stanislaw. *Literature and Nationalism in Partitioned Poland, 1795-1918*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, in association with

- School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, 2000.
- Eisler, Jerzy. *Zarys Dziejów Politycznych Polski: 1944-1989*. Warszawa: Polska Oficyna Wydawn. BGW, 1992.
- Eisler, Jerzy. *Polski Rok 1968*. Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej - Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni Przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2006.
- Esbenhade, Richard S. "Remembering to Forget: Memory, History, National Identity in Postwar East-Central Europe." *Representations* 49 (1995): 72-96.
- Faggen, Robert. "The Captive Mind." *Partisan Review* 66 (1999): 49-70.
- Falk, Barbara J. *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe: Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003.
- Fialkowski, Tomasz. "Czesław Miłosz-Tomasz Venclova, Powroty do Litwy" http://www.culture.pl/baza-literatura-pelna-tresc/eo_event_asset_publisher/eAN5/content/czeslaw-milosz-tomasz-venclova-powroty-do-litwy. Accessed June 2012.
- Filkins, Peter. "The Poetry and Anti-Poetry of Czesław Miłosz." *The Iowa Review* Spring-Summer (1989): 189-199.
- Foucault, Michael. "What is an Author?" In *The Death and Resurrection of the Author?*, edited by William Irwin, 9-23. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2002.
- Foucault, Michael. "The Intellectuals and Power." *Telos* 16 (1973): 103-9.
- Franaszek, Andrzej. *Miłosz: Biografia*. Kraków: Wydawn. Znak, 2011.
- Friszke, Andrzej, Rafał Habielski, Paweł Machcewicz. *Druga Wielka Emigracja, 1945-1990*. Warszawa: Biblioteka Wiezi, 1999.
- Galassi, Jonathan. "The Horses of Fantasy and Reality." *The New York Times Book Review*, 03/11/1979, 25.
- Galczyński, Konstanty Ildefons. "Poemat dla zdrajcy." *Nowa Kultura* 3 (1952): 4-5.
- Garlicki, Andrzej. *Stalinizm*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1993.
- Gasyna, George. "The Dual Exile of Czesław Miłosz." *Russian Literature* 52 (2002): 355-377.
- Gawin, Dariusz. "Filozofia apostazji – rzecz o stosunku Czesława Miłosza do Polaków." *Teologia Polityczna* 1 (2003–2004).

- Geertz, Clifford. *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. 1983.
- Gellner, Ernest. "La trahison de la trahison des clerics." In: *The Political Responsibility of Intellectuals*, edited by Ian Maclean, Alan Montefiore. New York, 1990.
- Geremek, Bronislaw. *The Common Roots of Europe*, Cambridge, 1996.
- Glad, John (ed.). *Literature in Exile*. London: Duke University Press, 1990.
- Glondys, Olga. "Kongres Wolnosci Kultury I wolnosc Czeslaw Milosza: refleksja o zaangażowaniu i drodze do Prawdy w dobie Zimnej Wojny." Unpublished.
- Gombrowicz, Witold. "Fragmenty z dziennika." *Kultura* 9 (1954): 45-57.
- Gombrowicz, Witold. "Fragment z dziennika." *Kultura* 10 (1962): 26-30.
- Gombrowicz, Witold. "Przeciwko poetom." *Kultura* 10 (1951): 3-11.
- Gombrowicz, Witold. "Przeklete zdrobnienie znowu dalo się mi we znaki (Obroncom poezji w odpowiedzi)." *Kultura* 7-8 (1952).
- Gombrowicz, Witold. *Trans-Atlantyk; Ślub*. Paryz: Instytut Literacki, 1953.
- Gouldner, Alvin W. "Prologue to a theory of revolutionary intellectuals." *Telos* 26 (1975): 3-36.
- Gouldner, Alvin W. *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class*, vol. 2. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Gramsci, Antonio, and Joseph A. Buttigieg. *Prison Notebooks*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.
- Grochowiak, Stanislaw, and Maciejewski. *Poezja Polska: Antologia*. Warszawa: PIW, 1974.
- Grudzińska-Gross, Irena. *Czesław Miłosz and Joseph Brodsky: Fellowship of Poets*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Grydzewski, Mieczyslaw. "La grande tentation." *Wiadomosci* 34 (1951).
- Habielski, Rafał. *Polski Londyn*. Wrocław: Wydawn. Dolnoślaskie, 2000.
- Hass, Robert. "Reading Milosz." *Ironwood* 18 (1981): 141-160.
- Haven, Cynthia. "Bay Area finally recognizes Milosz."
<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2006/03/26/RVG97HPMCQ1.DTL>. Accessed May 2012.
- Havel, Vaclav. *Disturbing the Peace: A Conversation with Karel Hvizdala*. New York,

- 1991.
- Hawkesworth, Celia. *Literature and Politics in Eastern Europe: Selected Papers from the Fourth World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies*. Harrogate, 1990.
- Hazareesingh, Sudhir. *Intellectuals and the French Communist Party: Disillusion and Decline*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.
- Herbert, Zbigniew, Czesław Miłosz, and Peter D. Scott. *Selected Poems*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968.
- Herling-Grudzinski, Gustaw. "Komentarz tłumacza." *Kultura* 3 (1959): 17-20.
- Hertz, Zygmunt. *Listy do Czesława Miłosza: 1952-1979*. Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1992.
- Horodynski, Dominik. "Gdzie ocalenie? Do Czesława Miłosza list otwarty." *Dzis i Jutro* 8 (1946): 1-2.
- Hosking, Geoffrey, and G F. Cushing. *Perspectives on Literature and Society in Eastern and Western Europe*. Basingstoke: Macmillan with the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, 1989.
- Isaac, Jeffrey C. *Arendt, Camus, and Modern Rebellion*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.
- Iwaszkiewicz, Jarosław. *Dzienniki 1911-1955*. Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2007.
- Iwaszkiewicz, Jarosław. "Jestem i buduję razem z wami." *Nowa Kultura* 45 (1951).
- Jacoby, Russell. *Picture Imperfect Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Jarosiński, Z. *Nadwiślański socrealizm*. Warszawa, 1999.
- Janion, Maria. *Goraczka Romantyczna*. Krakow: Universitas, 2000.
- Janion, Maria, and Maria Zmigrodzka. *Romantyzm i historia*. Gdańsk: Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, 2001.
- Jaruzelski, Jerzy. *Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz 1896-1966, Wilno-Londyn-Warszawa*. Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1987.
- Jasper, James M. *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography, and Creativity in Social Movements*. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Jaspers, Karl. "Endurance and Miracle." *Saturday Review* 36 (1953).
- Jaspers, Karl. "O książce Miłosza." *Kultura* 6 (1953): 118-129.
- Jaspers, Karl. *The Question of German Guilt*. New York: Capricorn Books, 1961.

- Jauss, Hans R, Timothy Bahti, and Man P. De. *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982.
- Jauss, Hans Robert Jauss. "The Identity of the Poetic Text in the Changing Horizon of Understanding." In *Identity of the Literary Text*, edited by Mario J. Valdes and Owen Miller, 146-174. Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1985.
- Jelenski, Konstanty. "Poeta i Historia." *Kultura* 1 (1954): 179-185.
- Jelenski, Konstanty. "Poeta i przyroda." *Kultura* 11 (1968): 3-22.
- Jelenski, Konstanty. "Pojedynek na cytaty." *Kultura* 4 (1976): 139-140.
- Jelenski, Konstanty. "Milesz et Gombrowicz." *La Discordance* 1 (1978): 14-16.
- Jelenski, Konstanty. "O 'Ziemii Ulro' po dwóch latach." *Kultura* 6 (1979): 15-31.
- J.S., "Szalenstwo i kariera." *Dziennik Polski I Dziennik Zolnierza*, 05/21/1951, 3.
- Judt, Tony. *Past imperfect: French intellectuals, 1944-1956*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Kałuza, Anna, and Grzegorz Jankowicz. *Rodzinną Europą: Pieć Minut Później*. Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art, 2011.
- Kantorosinski, Zbigniew. *The Independent Press in Poland, 1976-1990: Holdings in the European and Prints and Photographs Divisions, Library of Congress*. Washington [D.C.]: Library of Congress, 1991.
- Kaplan, Caren. *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*. Durham, 1996.
- Karabel, Jerome. "Toward a Theory of Intellectuals and Politics." *Theory and Society* 25 (1996): 208-221.
- Karpinski, Jakub [Pseud. Marek Tarniewski]. *Krótkie spięcie: marzec 1968*. Warszawa: Myśl, 1988.
- Karpinski, Wojciech. "The Exile as Writer: A Conversation About Sorrow and Joy." In *Literature in Exile*, edited by John Glad. Durham: Duke University Press, 1990.
- Karpinski, Wojciech. "Słowo niepodległe." *Kultura* 9 (1972).
- Karpinski, Wojciech. *Twarze*. Warszawa: Zeszyty Literackie, 2012.
- Karwowska, Bożena. "Czesław Milesz's Self-Presentation in English-Speaking Countries." *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 3-4 (1998): 273-295.
- Kay, Magdalena. *In Gratitude for All the Gifts: Seamus Heaney and Eastern Europe*.

- Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.
- Kearney, M. "The Local and the Global: the Anthropology of Globalization and Transnationalism." *Annual Anthropological Review* (1995).
- Kiernan, Frances. *Seeing Mary Plain: A Life of Mary McCarthy*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2000.
- Kisielewski, Stefan. [pseud. Tomasz Stalinski]. *Cienie w Pieczarze*. Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1971.
- Kolakowski, Leszek. "Intellectuals Against Intellect." *Daedalus* Winter (1972).
- Kolakowski, Leszek. *Marxism and Beyond: On Historical Understanding and Individual Responsibility*. London: Paladin, 1971.
- Kolakowski, Leszek. "Tezy o nadziei." *Kultura* 6 (1971): 3-21.
- Kopka, Bogusław, Grzegorz Majchrzak, and Grzegorz Musidlak. *Operacja "Poeta": Szusza Bezpieczeństwa Na Tropach Czesława Milosza*. Lublin: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2007.
- Kosińska, Agnieszka, Jacek Błach, and Kamil Kasperek. *Czesław Milosz: Bibliografia Druków Zwartych*. Kraków: Krakowskie Tow. Edukacyjne, 2009.
- Kott, Jan. "O katastrofizmie." *Odrodzenie* 18 (1945): 8.
- Krasucki, Eryk. *Miedzynarodowy Komunista: Jerzy Borejsza, Biografia Polityczna*. Warszawa: Wydawn. Nauk. PWN, 2009.
- Labeledz, Leopold. "Appreciating Milosz." *Encounter* December 1986, 73.
- Labov, Jessie. *Reinventing Central Europe: Cross-Currents and the Émigré Writer in the 1980s*. Thesis (Ph. D.)--New York University, Graduate School of Arts and Science, 2004.
- Lagos-Pope, Maria-Ines ed., *Exile in Literature*. Bucknell University Press, 1988.
- Laignel-Lavastine, Alexandra. *Esprits d'Europe: autour de Czesław Milosz, Jan Patočka, István Bibó*. Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2005.
- Lasota, Grzegorz. "Falszywy obraz." *Kuznica* 6 (1950).
- Lipset, Seymour M. *Political Man: The Social Base of Politics*. Garden City, N.J.: Anchor Books, 1963.
- Lipset, Seymour and Richard B. Dobson. "The intellectual as critic and rebel: With special reference to the United States and the Soviet Union." *Daedalus* 103

- (1972): 137-198.
- Łoch, Eugenia, and Jan Adamowski. *Miedzy literatura a historia: z tradycji idei niepodległościowych w literaturze polskiej XIX i XX w.* Lublin: Wydawn. Lubelskie, 1986.
- Łopiński, Maciej, Marcin Moskit, and Mariusz Wilk. *Konspira: Solidarity Underground.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
- MacDonald, Dwight. "In the Land of Diamat." *New Yorker* 11/07/1953, 157.
- Malia, Martin. "What Is the Intelligentsia?" In *The Russian Intelligentsia*, edited by Richard Pipes. New York, 1961.
- Mandalian, Andrzej [pseud. Kowalski]. "Towarzyszowi z Bezpieczeństwa." In Bohdan Urbankowski. *Czerwona msza albo uśmiech Stalina.* Warszawa, 1995.
- Mandalian, Andrzej. "Śpiewam pieśń o walce klasowej." In: Bohdan Urbankowski. *Czerwona msza albo uśmiech Stalina.* Warszawa, 1995.
- Mannheim, Karl. *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949.
- Matejka, Ladislaw. "Introduction to the Electronic Version of *Cross Currents*." <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/crossc/intro.html>. Accessed November 2012.
- Matuszewski, Ryszard. "Sprawa poezji współczesnej." *Kuznica* 5 (1950).
- Mickiewicz, Adam. *Pan Tadeusz.* Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1995 (1834).
- Mickiewicz, Adam. "Father's Return. A Ballad." In *Poets and Poetry of Poland*, edited by Paul Soboleski. 1881.
- Michajłow, Adam. *Literary Galicia: From Post-War to Post-Modern: a Local Guide to the Global Imagination.* Krakow: Oficyna Literacka, 1991.
- Michels, Robert. "Intellectuals." In *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 8. edited by R. A. Seligman. New York: Macmillan, 1937.
- Michnik, Adam. "A New Evolutionism." 1976.
- Michnik, Adam. *Letters from Prison and Other Essays.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.
- Michnik, Adam. *W Poszukiwaniu Utraconego Sensu.* Warszawa: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich, 2007.
- Michnik, Adam, and Irena Grudzińska-Gross. *In Search of Lost Meaning: The New*

- Eastern Europe*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.
- Mieroszewski, Juliusz [pseud. Londynczyk]. "List z wyspy." *Kultura* 7 (1951): 95-102.
- Miller, Stephen. "Writer's Choice." *Partisan Review* 2 (1977): 318.
- Mills, C. Wright. *Power, Politics, and People: The Collected Essays of C. Wright Mills*, ed. Irving Louis Horowitz. New York: Oxford University Press, 1963.
- Molnar, Thomas. *The Decline of the Intellectual*. Cleveland, 1961.
- Montefiore, Alan. "The Political Responsibility of Intellectuals." In *The Political Responsibility of Intellectuals*, edited by Ian Maclean, Alan Montefiore. New York, 1990.
- Możejko, Edward. *Realizm socjalistyczny. Teoria. Rozwój. Upadek*. Kraków, 2001.
- Murray, Michelle. *The National Observer* February 9 (1974): 25.
- Nahirny, Vladimir C. *The Russian Intelligentsia: From Torment to Silence*. New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1983.
- Nathan, Leonard, and Arthur Quinn. *The Poet's Work: An Introduction to Czesław Miłosz*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991.
- Nilsson, Nils Ake. *Czesław Miłosz: a Stockholm conference, September 9-11, 1999*. 1992.
- Orwell, George. "Writers and Leviathan." In *The Intellectuals: A Controversial Portrait*, edited by George B. de Huszar. Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1960.
- Osa, Maryjane, *Solidarity and contention: networks of Polish opposition*. University of Minnesota Press, 2003.
- "Oswiadczenie pisarzy emigracyjnych w związku z pozostaniem Czesława Miłosza za granica." *Kultura* 12 (1951): 3.
- Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii, D.N. *Literaturno-kriticheskie raboty v dvukh tomakh*. Moskva, 1989.
- Ouditt, Sharon ed., *Displaced Persons: Conditions of Exile in European Culture*. Ashgate, 2002.
- Owczarek, B. "Realizm socjalistyczny", In *Słownik literatury XX wieku*, edited by Alina Brodzka and al.. Wrocław, 1995.
- Paczkowski, Andrzej, and Jane Cave. *The Spring Will Be Ours: Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom*. University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University

- Press, 2003.
- Paczkowski, Andrzej. *Pół Wieku Dziejów Polski: 1939-1989*. Warszawa: Wydawn. Naukowe PWN, 1995.
- Paczkowski, Andrzej. "Młoz '51." *Krytyka* 13 (1983).
- Padraic, Kenney. *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989*. Princeton, 2002.
- Parkes, Henry. "The Intelligent Devil." *New Republic* 25 (1953): 18.
- Pasierski, Emil. *Młoz I Putrament: Żywoty Równoległe*. Warszawa: Wydawn. W.A.B, 2011.
- Piasecki, Sergiusz. "Były попутчик Młoz." *Wiadomości* 44 (1951): 3.
- Porter, Brian. *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth Century Poland*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Preger, Janina. "O doświadczeniu poetyckim." *Kuznica* 6 (1950).
- Prokop, Jan. *Universum polskie: literatura, wyobrażenia zbiorowa, mity polityczne*. Kraków: Universitas, 1993.
- Putrament, Jerzy. *Dwa Łyki Ameryki*. Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1956.
- Putrament, Jerzy. *Pół Wieku: Literaci*. Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1970.
- Pyszny, Joanna. *Boje na Łamach: Pisarze i Literatura w Prasie Polskiej Lat Pięćdziesiątych XX Wieku: Szkice*. Wrocław: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2002.
- Pytasz, Marek, *Kilka opowieści o niektórych dolegliwościach bycia poety emigracyjnym i inne historie*. Gnome, 2000.
- Ramazani, Johan. "A Transnational Poetics." *American Literary History* (2006): 332-359.
- Read, Christopher. *Culture and Power in Revolutionary Russia: The Intelligentsia and the Transition from Tsarism to Communism*. New York, 1990.
- Robinson, Mark. *Altogether Elsewhere: Writers on Exile*. Faber and Faber, 1994.
- Rupnik, Jacques. *The Other Europe*. New York, 1989.
- Said, Edward. *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*. New York, 1994.
- Said, Edward. *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. Cambridge, 2000.
- Schenker, Alexander. "Historia zielonego tomu." *Zeszyty Literackie*, 2011.

- Schöpflin, George and Nancy Wood. *In Search of Central Europe*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1989.
- Scott-Smith, Giles. *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA and Post-War American Hegemony*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Sebestyen, Victor. *Revolution 1989: The Fall of the Soviet Empire*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2009.
- Segel, Harold B. *The Columbia Literary History of Eastern Europe Since 1945*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.
- Seidel, Michael. *Exile and the Narrative Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.
- Shils, Edward. "The Intellectuals and the Powers: Some Perspectives for Comparative Analysis." In *The Intellectuals and the Powers and Other Essays*, 3-22. Chicago, 1972.
- Shils, Edward. "The End of Ideology." *Encounter* 26 (1955): 52-58.
- Shore, Marci. *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life and Death in Marxism, 1918-1968*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.
- Shore, Marci. *The Taste of Ashes: The Afterlife of Totalitarianism in Eastern Europe*. New York: Crown, 2013.
- Siedlecka, Joanna. *Kryptonim liryka." Bezpieka Wobec Literatów*. Warszawa: Wydawn. Prószyński i S-ka, 2008.
- Sierakowski, Sławomir. "Litwo, ojczyzna Twoja: An interview with Tomas Venclova." In *Przewodnik po Miłoszu*, edited by Błędowska, Magdalena. 212-234. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2011.
- Silone, Ignazio. "On the Place of Intellect and the Pretensions of the Intellectual." In *The Intellectuals: A Controversial Portrait*, edited by George B. de Huszar. Glencoe, Ill. 1960.
- Sinyavsky, Andrei. *The Russian Intelligentsia*. Translated by L. Visson. New York, 1997.
- Skilling, H G. *Samizdat and an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989.
- Słonimski, Antoni. "Odprawa." *Trybuna Ludu* 11/04/1951.
- Snyder, Timothy. *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus,*

- 1569-1999. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Snyder, Timothy. *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*. New York: Basic Books, 2010.
- Spender, Stephen. "The Predatory Jailer." *New Republic* 25 (1953): 18-19.
- Stawar, Andrzej. *O Brzozowskim: I Inne Szkice*. Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1961.
- Steiner, George. *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman*. New York: Atheneum, 1967.
- Stephan, Halina. *Living in translation: Polish writers in America*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003.
- Stern, J P. *The Heart of Europe: Essays on Literature and Ideology*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1992.
- Subbotko, Donata. "Czeslaw Milosz, czyli wiazka odruchow. Wywiad z Andrzejem Franaszkiem" [An interview with Andrzej Franaszek]
http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,9551126,Czeslaw_Milosz__czyli_wiazka_odruchow__cz__3.html (02/28/2012). Accessed May 2012.
- Sumner, Gregory D. *Dwight Macdonald and the Politics Circle: The Challenge of Cosmopolitan Democracy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996.
- Supruniuk, Mirosław. "Introduction." In: Milosz, Czesław. *Wielkie Pokuszenie: Bieliński I Jednorozec*. Torun: Archiwum Emigracji, 2002.
- Supruniuk, Mirosław. "Czeslaw Milosz I Kongres Wolnosci Kultury." *Archiwum Emigracji. Studia-Szkice-Dokumenty* 1 (1998): 95-102.
- Supruniuk, Mirosław. "Zagadki Czeslaw Milosza: Rok 1951-wstep do opisu." *Kresy* 2 (2003).
- Szelenyi, Ivan. "The intelligentsia in the class structure of state-socialist societies." *American Journal of Sociology* 88 (1982): 287-326.
- Szelenyi, Ivan. "The prospects and limits of the East European new class project: An Auto-critical reflection on The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power." *Politics and Society* 15 (1986): 103-144.
- Szelenyi, Ivan and George Konrad. *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power: A Sociological Study of the Role of the Intelligentsia in Socialism*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979.

- Szporluk, Roman. "Defining Central Europe." *Cross Currents* (1982): 30-38.
- Szucs, Jenő. *The Three Historical Regions of Europe: An Outline*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1983.
- Thompson, Ewa M. "The Writer in Exile: the Good Years." *The Slavic and East European Journal* 33 (1989): 499-515.
- Tighe, Carl. *The Politics of Literature: Poland 1945-1989*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999.
- Tomasik, Wojciech. *Słowo o socrealizmie*. Bydgoszcz, 1991.
- Torunczyk, Barbara. *Rozmowy w Maisons-Laffitte, 1981*. Paryż: Zeszyty Literackie, 2006.
- Torunczyk, Barbara. "Nota do listów Jeleńskiego." In Miłosz, Czesław, Barbara Toruńczyk, and Konstanty A. Jeleński. *Korespondencja*. Warszawa: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich, 2011.
- Torunczyk, Barbara. *Zywe Cienie*. Warszawa: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich, 2012.
- Torunczyk, Barbara. *Opowieść o pokoleniu kontestatorów 1968. Kim byliśmy, kim jesteśmy, skąd i dokąd zdążamy*, http://zeszytyliterackie.pl/varia/B_Torunczyk/Wstep.html. Accessed March 2013.
- Trznadel, Jacek. *Hańba Domowa: Rozmowy Z Pisarzami*. Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1986.
- Venclova, Tomas, Diana Senechal, and Czesław Miłosz. *Winter Dialogue: Poems*. Evanston, Ill: Hydra Books, 1997.
- Venclova, Tomas, Czesław Miłosz. *Vilnius: A Personal History*. Riverdale-on-Hudson, N.Y: Sheep Meadow Press, 2009.
- Venclova, Tomas, Czesław Miłosz, Barbara Toruńczyk, and Mikołaj Nowak-Rogoziński. *Powroty Do Litwy*. Warszawa: Zeszyty Literackie, 2011.
- Vendler, Helen. *The Music of What Happens. Poems, Poets, Critics*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Vendler, Helen. "Tireless Messenger." *The New York Review of Books* 08/13/1992, 44.
- Vertovec, Stephen ed. *Conceiving cosmopolitanism: theory, context, and practice*. Oxford, 2002.
- Volynska-Bogert, Rimma, and Wojciech Zalewski. *Czesław Miłosz, an International Bibliography, 1930-1980*. Ann Arbor: Dept. of Slavic Languages and Literatures,

- University of Michigan, 1983.
- Waggoner, Walter. "Denying Visas to Non-communist Specialists." *New York Times* 12/09/1951.
- Walicki, Andrzej. *Zniewolony Umysł Po Latach*. Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1993.
- Walicki, Andrzej. *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism: The Case of Poland*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982.
- Walicki, Andrzej. *Spotkania z Miłoszem*. Aneks, 1985.
- Wat, Aleksander, and Richard Lourie (trans). *My Century: The Odyssey of a Polish Intellectual*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.
- Ważyk, Adam. "Piosenka o Coca-Cola." In Bohdan Urbankowski. *Czerwona msza albo uśmiech Stalina*. Warszawa, 1995.
- Ważyk, Adam. "Widokówka z miasta socjalistycznego." In Bohdan Urbankowski. *Czerwona msza albo uśmiech Stalina*. Warszawa, 1995.
- Wazyk, Adam. "O właściwe stanowisko." *Kuznica* 10 (1950).
- Winch, Peter. *The Political Responsibility of Intellectuals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Wolff, Larry. *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1994.
- World Literature Today* 3, 1978.
- Wraga, Ryszard. "Nie ma zadnej sprawy Miłosza." *Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza* 8 (1952): 2.
- Wreszin, Michael. *A Rebel in Defense of Tradition: The Life and Politics of Dwight Macdonald*. New York: Basic Books, 1994.
- Wyka, Kazimierz. "Ogrody lunatyczne i ogrody pasterskie." *Twórczość* 5 (1946): 135-47.
- Zaremba, Zygmunt. "Wobec nowego uchodźcy." *Kultura* 7 (1951): 89-95.
- Zawada, Andrzej. *Miłosz*. Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1996.
- Ziolkowska, Anna. "Wankowicz i Miłosz w świetle korespondencji." *Twórczość* 10 (1981): 92-105.
- Zuzowski, Robert. *Political Dissent and Opposition in Poland: The Workers' Defense Committee "KOR"*. Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1992.

