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**Czesław Miłosz's American Experience in  
*Światło dzienne (Daylight)*<sup>1</sup>**

Polityka jest naszym przeznaczeniem, cyklonem, w którego sercu  
 tkwimy ciągle, choćbyśmy się chronili w łupinkach poezji.  
 [Politics is our fate, a cyclone, in the heart of which we are  
 perpetually stranded, even if we take cover in the shells of poetry.]  
 (Aleksander Wat, *Mój wiek [My Century]*)

*Światło dzienne (Daylight)* is one of the least analysed poetry collections by Czesław Miłosz. The poet himself did not comment on it very keenly, and in a conversation with Renata Gorczyńska he stated that it is “not a volume that is well planned, it is quite random”. He said:

I don't feel much affection for the whole volume, I write it off. The book's structure is chaotic, because of my difficult personal situation and the pressure of the political atmosphere, which had been alienating me from poetry for a number of years<sup>2</sup>.

The collection was selectively analysed. Obviously, most attention was paid to the supplementary and lengthy *Traktat moralny (Treatise on Morals)*<sup>3</sup>, *Toast*

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<sup>2</sup> R. Gorczyńska (E. Czarnecka), *Podróżny świata. Rozmowy z Czesławem Miłoszem. Komentarze (Traveller of the World. Conversations with Czesław Miłosz. Commentaries)*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Cracow 1992, p. 83. In this article I use the following abbreviations of Czesław Miłosz's works: *Podróżny świata (Traveller of the World)* – PŚ; *Wiersze. Tom 1 (Poems. Vol. 1)*, Znak, Cracow 2001 – W I; *Wiersze. Tom 2 (Poems. Vol. 2)*, Znak, Cracow 2002 – W II; *Rodzinna Europa (Native Realm)*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Cracow 2001 – RE; *Kontynenty (Continents)*, Instytut Literacki, Paris 1958 and Znak, Cracow 1999 – K; *Zaraz po wojnie. Korespondencja z pisarzami 1945–1950 (Right After the War. Letters to Writers 1945–1950)*, Znak, Cracow 2007 – ZPW along with a page number in brackets.

<sup>3</sup> The most prominent analyses of *Traktat moralny (Treatise on Morals)* are written by K.A. Jeleński, J.M. Rymkiewicz, A. Tchórzewski, Z. Łapiński, A. Fiut, S. Balbus, A. Franaszek,

(*Toast*)<sup>4</sup>, and the poems which earned Miłosz the reputation of a political poet<sup>5</sup>, however, there has not been any general examination of the collection.

*Świat. (Poema naiwne) (The World)* was added to the first edition of the volume, which gave the collection a contrapuntal or – using a word which was then an important term for the poet – a dialectical character. Miłosz claimed that he added this series to the new collection because *Ocalenie (Rescue)* was not widely available (PŚ, 83). He must have also surely understood the crucial polemical composition of the poems from the World War II period and of those written just after the Nazi occupation. Following Jan Błoński's advice, it is worth reading *Świat. (Poema naiwne) (The World)* and *Głosy biednych ludzi (Voices of Poor People)* as a unity of opposites<sup>6</sup>; it is also advisable to follow Miłosz and connect the poems from *Ocalenie (Rescue)* with the ones from *Światło dzienne (Daylight)*.

The collection from 1953 was difficult to compose, with its metaphorical title, and non-homogeneous content, mood, genre and metrics<sup>7</sup>. Its poetic elements consist of a dialogue which has a variable tonality of feelings and which is held among different interlocutors, as well as of a monologue which is directed at a specific subject. The dialogue sometimes takes a form of a conversation between fictional characters, as in the poem *Dwaj w Rzymie (Two in Rome)*. It can also be a dialogue between anonymous rescuees from the war, like in *Piosenka o porcelanie (Song on Porcelain)*. However, Miłosz more often uses the monologue which is addressed to a close person – to Tadeusz Kroński, Tadeusz Różewicz, or his mother. These poems fulfil the requirements of the traditional poetic letters, and, at the same time, as Helen Vendler states, they are monologues to invisible listeners, in which the recipient is created according to the speaker's wish<sup>8</sup>. It does not mean that these poetic conversations are of a superficial character. Sometimes the accumulation of understatements and allusions, which are difficult to decipher, makes some of the utterances in the poems clear only to those to whom they were dedicated. Marian Stala wrote about *Dziecię Europy (Child of Europe)* that:

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Ł. Tischner, H. Markiewicz. It is worth recalling Miłosz's words from *Życie w USA (Living in the USA)*, which agree with the famous couplet from *Traktat moralny (Treatise on Morals)*: "Human life is governed by the avalanche rule. The aberration of the centre is slowly created, and, believe me, one day it will express itself by means of some kind of madness, incomprehensible for people from beyond and who are not subject to the central infection" (J.M. Nowak [C. Miłosz], *Życie w USA (Living in the USA)*, "Odrodzenie" 1947, No. 31).

<sup>4</sup> *Toast (Toast)* was analysed, among other scholars, by S. Balbus, T. Burek, A. Fiut, Z. Łapiński.

<sup>5</sup> See Z. Łapiński, *Między polityką a metafizyką. O poezji Czesława Miłosza*, in: *Poznanie Miłosza 2. Część pierwsza 1980–1998*, ed. A. Fiut, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Cracow 2000, p. 26; A. Werner, *Myśliwy Miłosz i ekologia kultury*, in: idem, *Krew i atrament*, PWN, Warsaw 1997, p. 75.

<sup>6</sup> See J. Błoński, *Miłosz jak świat*, Znak, Cracow 1998, pp. 94–95.

<sup>7</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 103.

<sup>8</sup> See H. Vendler, *Invisible Listeners. Lyric Intimacy in Herbert, Whitman, and Ashbery*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2005.

it is one of Miłosz's texts which exist not as a clear utterance of "I" but as a created "human situation" which is loaded with a peculiarly understood irony. What is created thus is not the confession of the "I" (which can be directly compared with the author's "I") but an image of a different "I", located in a specific situation and having at its disposal a certain cognitive horizon, which identifies its own place in the world. This form, although not new, can hide within itself different cognitive beliefs. For example, there could be a belief that ideas exist only as an element of personal experience, and that is why pondering upon one of them requires presenting it (thinking about it) as a human voice and situation. Or there could be a belief that one can find out about the truth or untruth of an experience only when they look at it from a distance...<sup>9</sup>

These remarks refer also to other poems from *Światło dzienne* (Daylight). Apart from many authorities, the subject of the collection has many adversaries. The lyrical "I" reconstructs their arguments and viewpoints in order to face them. These can be iconic, anonymous characters who are important because of their functions, as in the following poems: *Portret z połowy XX wieku* (Mid-Twentieth-Century Portrait), *Do polityka* (To a Politician), *Który skrzywdziłeś* (You Who Wronged), *Nie ma wzroku* (No Sight) or people who are hidden in the mysterious pamphlets like *Zoile* (Zoiluses) or *Faust warszawski* (Warsaw Faust). The collection from 1953 is very crowded, and, at the same time, strongly dramatised according to the Miłosz's contemporaneous preferences, who in *List pół-prywatny o poezji* (A Semi-Private Letter Concerning Poetry) appreciated the ironic "ability of an author to adopt other people's skin, and, when they write in the first person, their ability to talk not as themselves but as the person whom they have created"<sup>10</sup>. The lyrical "I" of *Światło dzienne* (Daylight) is an orator and his speeches stem from the belief that in some urgent situations one must speak, irrespective of the beliefs concerning the aims of poetry. Jan Błoński was particularly sensitive to this feature of Miłosz's poems, as he claimed that speech which is "inwrought... inwrought especially with rhetorical utterances"<sup>11</sup> is characteristic for this period of the poet's work.

An attempt to restrain the variety is visible in the composition of the volume. It is opened with a traditional invocation *Do Jonathana Swifta* (To Jonathan Swift), and closed with a poem in which the poet delays performing the task to which his inner premonitory voice hastens. The poems in this collection are connected by its detached roles, the ironic "I"<sup>12</sup>, which gives one's voice to many

<sup>9</sup> M. Stala, *Poza ziemią Ulro*, in: idem, *Chwile pewności. 20 szkiców o poezji i krytyce*, Znak, Cracow 1991, pp. 92–93.

<sup>10</sup> C. Miłosz, *List pół-prywatny o poezji*, „Twórczość” 1946, No. 5, in: idem, *Kontynenty*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Cracow 1999, p. 81.

<sup>11</sup> J. Błoński, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>12</sup> See M. Zaleski, *Zamiast. O twórczości Czesława Miłosza*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Cracow 2005, pp. 99–101.

characters or borrows it from them. On a deeper level the volume is ruled by the dialectical method of thinking, which is used by this persona when involved in numerous discussions and when they incorporate new roles. What are these roles?

When the current political and historical dimension is taken into consideration, the poet, who encompasses the history of Europe, Asia and America, makes a judgement. The world stands as a court room and he sometimes becomes a prosecutor (*Naród* [A Nation], *Siegfried i Erika* [Siegfried and Erika]<sup>13</sup>, *Trzy chóry z nienapisanego dramatu „Hiroshima”* [Three Choruses from the Never-Written Drama “Hiroshima”], *Który skrzywdziłeś* [You Who Wronged], *Przypomnienie* [A Reminder], *W praojcach swoich pogrzebani* [Buried in Their Forefathers]), sometimes a counsel (*Piosenka o końcu świata* [A Song on the End of the World], *Myśl o Azji* [Thinking of Asia], *Na śmierć Tadeusza Borowskiego* [On the Death of Tadeusz Borowski]), but usually he is the judge, who associates opposite viewpoints and suggests moral judgements. It is not the first time that Miłosz shows his tendency to make judgements about himself and the world. In these hearings, we may find the poet’s numerous attempts at detaching himself from his personal viewpoints as well as some instances of their apparent discredit – Zdzisław Łapiński points that the speaking person in *Traktat moralny* (*Treatise on Morals*) is also a political player<sup>14</sup>, who sometimes takes their own judgement as in inverted commas in order to thoroughly process the statements and theses of their opponents.

The role of the judge is connected with the roles of a student and a teacher (in *Dziecię Europy* [Child of Europe] and *Traktat moralny* [Treatise on Morals]). It gives a strong sense of didacticism, at the same time using the patterns of Enlightenment poetry<sup>15</sup>. It is easy to submit to this impression; it is easy to consider it an aura that enfolds the whole collection. If this didacticism is not tiresome, it is only thanks to the poems with a different tonality, for example *Do Tadeusza Różewicza, poety* (*To Tadeusz Różewicz, Poet*), in which the sender of the letter is shown as morally suffering, only seemingly having the advantage of knowledge and intuition. Although, after many years Miłosz said that in *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*) he had appeared in a not exactly authorized position of the one who knew better, this impression referred to the consciousness of someone whose premonitions came true. It does not result in haughtiness but rather in bitterness. Miłosz’s letters to Różewicz

<sup>13</sup> An interesting reading of this poem was presented by A. Fiut, *Moment wieczny. Poezja Czesława Miłosza*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Cracow 1998, pp. 221–223.

<sup>14</sup> Z. Łapiński, *Oda, gatunek oświecony*, in: idem, *Jak współżyć z socrealizmem*, Polonia, London 1988, p. 78. This suggestion was also used by Ł. Tischner in his interpretation of *Traktat moralny* (*Treatise on Morals*) in: *Sekrety manichejskich trucizn. Miłosz wobec zła*, Znak, Cracow 2001, p. 120.

<sup>15</sup> See R. Matuszewski, *Dążenie do formy pojemnej*, in: idem, *Moje spotkania z Czesławem Miłoszem*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Cracow 2004, pp. 111–159; S. Balbus, *Między stylami*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Universitas, Cracow 1996, pp. 231–243; T. Kostkiewiczowa, *Oda w poezji polskiej. Dzieje gatunku*, Fundacja na Rzecz Nauki Polskiej, Wrocław 1996.

indicate the affinity between the writers. The author of *Świat* (*The World*), perhaps a hidden addressee of the poem *Ocalony* (*The Survivor*), shared many beliefs with the disputing debutant. In *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*), Miłosz did not include a draft of the poem from 1948, which was so close to the tonality of Różewicz's poetry:

Czy to słuszne,  
że nie można zapalić ziarenek kadzidła  
przed obrazem Matki Boskiej  
z Częstochowy czy Toledo  
i prosić żeby wrócono  
jeden uśmiech na tę ziemię  
i jedno oczu spojrzenie  
pełne spokojnej dobroci?  
Czy to słuszne, że koniecznie  
trzeba w tę przepaść spadać  
gdzie złote lampy cesarów  
są najmniejszym incydentem?  
W groby sprzed lat miliona,  
w braterstwo z Neanderthalem  
czy to słuszne żeby człowiek  
na zawsze został strącony?<sup>16</sup>

[Is it just that one cannot  
light the grains of incense  
in front of a painting of Virgin Mary  
in Czestochowa or Toledo and  
ask for one smile and one look  
of those eyes full of  
calm kindness  
to be returned to this earth?  
Is it just that it is necessary  
to fall in this abyss, where  
the golden lamps of the Caesars  
are the smallest incident?  
Into the graves from millions of years ago,  
into the brotherhood with the Neanderthal,  
is it just for the human  
to be forever pushed down?]<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> C. Miłosz, *Wiersze i ćwiczenia*, ed. M. Skwarnicki, Świat Książki, Warsaw 2008, p. 112.

<sup>17</sup> Transl. Karolina Marzec.

How should the moral diagnoses from *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*) be interpreted? Miłosz would like to see them anchored in what is fontal and constant. He knows, however, that his stance is not common, that the territory of laws and truths where his personae try to exist, is often perceived as a land of noble charms. It is worth mentioning that when he referred to this period in his conversations with Gorczyńska, he conditioned that he did not want to be identified as a “receipt of virtue” (PŚ, 83). After finishing *Głosy biednych ludzi* (*Voices of Poor People*), translating *Wydrążeni ludzie* (*The Hollow Men*) and *Ziemia jałowa* (*The Waste Land*), the poet does not agree with labelling the judgements expressed in the poems with the ironic inverted commas or having them perceived as charms. Hence the fury, despair and sorrow of being trapped within the prison of self-knowledge, the longing for order and fear of nihilism. Miłosz called this trap a “spin” (PŚ, 90). That is why, in the collection from 1953, apart from the political and didactic roles, there are other ones – deliberately juxtaposed: a mourner, a person talking with ghosts, a person seeking consolation and confidants.

Once we move from the level of a game and topical disputes to the level of the reflection upon history, *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*) appears as a mourning collection. It happens not because it includes poems which are dedicated to the dead. The poems in which Miłosz bids Teresa Żarnower and Tadeusz Borowski farewell fall within the ambit of a mourning convention. Some people are symbolically escorted to their place of final rest by the poet, for some he performs the rite of the Forefathers’ Eve. He appeals to his mother or Jonathan Swift in order to find strength and wisdom – in this context the poems would be didactic in the sense of a self-didacticism. History is complemented with eschatology and deepened to a meta-historical dimension. The poet sometimes behaves like a mourner, sometimes like a psychic because he cannot translate and live in the present aside from the past, which is understood deeper than as a set of events. Next to the graves and among ghosts Miłosz’s persona abandons the mentor’s speech rhythm, and confesses weakness, mourns what has been taken by the past. Faithfulness to the dead shapes his conscience, and enables him, in the name of this faithfulness, to adopt the moralist’s role. Every day a person is born to whom the world needs to be explained. If one notices autobiographical elements in the poems *Narodziny* (*Birth*), *Rodzina* (*A Family*), *Ocean* (*Ocean*) – during the poet’s first stay in America his son Antoni was born – this need seems to be more understandable. Even though the father does not dedicate a separate poem to his son, the boy’s presence is assured in *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*) in the mentioned verses and in the poem entitled *Mittelbergheim* (*Mittelbergheim*). Apart from many recipients of the poems from this collection there appears a new one: a youth, a successor. In *Trzy zimy* (*Three Winters*), he was presented as a younger brother, in *Świat* (*The World*) he was the archetypal child, in *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*) and later on he some-

times shows features of Miłosz's sons<sup>18</sup>. As a result, the history is extended by means of the future, creating for the poet a complete system in which he ponders memory, the here and now of the people who shape the present and the next day of their heirs. His reflection is not proportional in all these stages, however, this inclination for the future should not be neglected in *Światło dzienne* (Daylight). The author speaks about the new born who learns for the first time, and who tries to make himself at home in this world which is indifferent to his presence. He reminds the reader that history is the environment of the human, and the memory of the species is their legacy:

Gdziekolwiek stąpnie, tam wszędzie  
 Trwa odcisnięty na piasku  
 Ślad stopy z szerokim palcem  
 I wzywa, aby przymierzył  
 Swoją dziecinną stopę  
 Idącą z dziewiczych lasów.  
 Gdziekolwiek pójdzie, tam wszędzie Znajdzie na rzeczach ziemi  
 Ciepły i ręką ludzką  
 Wytarty polerunek.  
 Nigdy go nie opuści,  
 Na zawsze przy nim zostanie  
 Bliska jak oddech obecność,  
 Jedyne jego bogactwo.  
 (Narodziny, W II, 35)

[Wherever he steps, there always  
 Endures traced in sand  
 A large-toed footprint  
 Which clamors to be tried out  
 By his childish foot arriving  
 Out of the virgin forests.  
 Wherever he goes, he always  
 Will find on things of the earth  
 A warm luster furbished  
 By a human hand.  
 This will never leave him,  
 It will stay with him always,

<sup>18</sup> See an interpretative sketch of the poem *Następca* (Inheritor) from the collection entitled *Dalsze okolice* (Regions further Afield): J. Driscoll, OSB, "Inheritor". *A Poem by Czesław Miłosz*, "Logos", Fall 2005, number 4, vol. 18, pp. 36–46.



A presence close as breath,  
 His only wealth.]  
 (*Birth*)<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, he has doubts to what extent he can bequeath the memory of the experiences to the successor:

Matka pierś jasnobrązową  
 Prostuje w rannym upale,  
 Ojciec policzki namydla  
 Pod tęczującym promieniem.  
 Czy to nie dziwne, mówią,  
 Że prądy naszego ciała  
 Nic nie zdołają przekazać  
 Z tego, co myśmy widzieli?  
 To tylko w nas mieszka pamięć,  
 Sny nasze mają kotwicę  
 W pogorzeliśkach dna,  
 Pod komnatami morza.  
 Dla niego nasza opowieść  
 Jak słowa Józefa Flawiusza,  
 Jak *Rozkład i upadek*  
*Cesarstwa Rzymskiego* Gibbona.  
 (*Rodzina*, W II, 36)

[On a sultry morning, Mother  
 Wears only her light-brown breast,  
 Father is soaping his cheeks  
 Under an iridescent light.  
 Is it not strange, they say,  
 That the currents of our bodies  
 Are unable to impart  
 Any of the things we have seen?  
 Memory resides in us only,  
 Our dreams have their anchor  
 In the burning ember, deep,  
 By the chambers of the sea.  
 For the child our tale is alien

<sup>19</sup> Transl. Peter Dale Scott, in: C. Miłosz, *The Collected Poems (1931–1987)*, Viking, London 1988, p. 93.



As the words of Josephus Flavius,  
Or Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*  
*Of the Roman Empire.*]  
(*A Family*)<sup>20</sup>

This passage from *Rodzina* (*A Family*) is a self-polemic with poems such as *Ojciec objaśnia* (*Father Explains*) and *Przy piwoniach* (*By the Peonies*) from *Świat*. (*Poema naiwne*) (*The World*). Miłosz feels uncomfortable with the inability to share his knowledge and memory. Perhaps this is why didacticism becomes one of the primary virtues in *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*). The poems in which a mother, a father and a child are present expose a new dimension of his reflection upon history. He observes as it leaves its imprint on the life of a single person and the smallest community, as it destroys both those who do not understand it and those who try to oppose it, as it designates repetitive tasks and roles for new people. Many of these images confirm how painful "Hegel's bite" was for him back then, as well as how persistent was the memory of T.S. Eliot's poems<sup>21</sup>. At the same time Miłosz dreams of a revival, of overcoming the laws of necessity:

Myślę o rzeczach, które dają siłę  
Do walki z pustą wiedzą daremnego czasu,  
O rozżarzoną drucie w sercu, o decyzji,  
Przed którą nie uchroni się, nie schowa nikt.  
Myślę o wszystkich mężczyznach i kobietach,  
Którzy zwyciężają w sobie śmiech przedwiecznych skał.  
(*Myśl o Azji*, W II, 67)

[I am thinking of the things which give strength  
To fight the empty knowledge of the futile time,  
Of the burning hot wire in my heart, of the decision  
No one can escape from, no one can hide from.  
I am thinking of all the men and women  
Who fight the laughter of the primeval stones within themselves.]<sup>22</sup>  
(*Thinking of Asia*)

The poet – not without the influences of Oskar Miłosz, William Blake and Arnold J. Toynbee – treats the existence of a human in a meta-historical dimension. He will later explain that:

<sup>20</sup> Transl. Czesław Miłosz and Robert Hass, in: C. Miłosz, *The Collected Poems...*, p. 95.

<sup>21</sup> See M. Heydel, *Głosy Miłosza. T.S. Eliot w twórczości poety z lat czterdziestych*, in: eadem, *Obecność Eliota w literaturze polskiej*, Wydawnictwo UWr, Wrocław 2002, pp. 48–95.

<sup>22</sup> Transl. Karolina Marzec.

The poems such as *Central Park (Central Park)*, *Do Jonathana Swifta (To Jonathan Swift)* or *Traktat moralny (Treatise on Morals)* are a kind of an appeal, a kind of faith in the other side, a modification of eschatology because the line between the revived world which appears already in the history and the revived world or the Kingdom of God, which appears after the history is very thin. These concepts interlace, they are connected. That is why all Christian eschatology is close to the borderline. In the Apocalypse of St. John there is a thousand years of peace and the revived world before the complete end of the history and the world takes place thus there is no clear division. The Kingdom of God, the kingdom of the revived humanity on Earth before the end of the history are very intimately connected (PŚ, 85).

A Russian theologian Sergei Bulgakov conducted an analysis of the Apocalypse of St. John in this context. St. John adopted the situations of the contemporaneous Roman Empire, at the same time changing the dimension of the repetitive situations in the history of mankind into the meta-history. It is an elevation into the dimension of paradigms of the repetitive situations in history in general (PŚ, 87).

This way, in *Światło dzienne (Daylight)* Miłosz broadens and deepens his reflection upon the present-day dimension of history. The stories of his hometown and his generation are presented in the poem *Toast (Toast)* in the context of Polish and European history. In the syntheses of the histories of the Polish and German nations he highlights all the complications, elements of a mythopeic nature and fabled threads. In the poem *O duchu praw (The Spirit of the Laws)*, he juxtaposes one day in Washington with the road the prison trains going to Vladivostok had to take. In *Przypomnienie (A Reminder)*, he compares the American democracy with the Athenian tradition. When talking about atomic bombs, he uses the style of an ancient tragedy. In the volume he includes the translations of the works written by African-American poets and of *negro spirituals*. He seeks answers for topical questions both among the living and the dead. It is not difficult to notice a connection with Auden who reassesses the leftist pre-war world view in favour of the metaphysical and theological poetry from after the war<sup>23</sup>. If one agrees with Łapiński, who captured Miłosz's contemplative poles in *Światło dzienne (Daylight)*, it should be added that the political pole of the volume was noticed much faster and it was more visibly exposed by the critics. After many valuable analyses of *Traktat moralny (Treatise on Morals)*, it is worth emphasising that despite the obsessive returns to the topical issues in Poland and in Europe after World War II, also thanks to the American perspective, history gained a global dimen-

<sup>23</sup> See L. Elektorowicz, *O poezji W.H. Audena*, in: W.H. Auden, *Poezje*, ed. L. Elektorowicz, transl. L. Elektorowicz, C. Miłosz, J. Prokop, B. Rostworowski, J. Rostworowski, J.M. Rymkiewicz, J.S. Sito, B. Taborski, J. Wittlin, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Cracow 1988, pp. 279–291; J. Jar-niewicz, *Auden, czyli bezradność poezji*, “Odra” 1989, No. 1, pp. 99–100.

sion for the poet, and, following the example of John of Patmos, it gained the most important dimension of meta-history. This is the sense of the first American experience that I notice in *Światło dzienne* (Daylight). By means of the mourning and autobiographical poems the author also deals with, as Jan Błoński calls it, the fanaticism of the mind, of which the poet was afraid in the theory and practice of Marxism, and which was used in *Dziecię Europy* (Child of Europe) and *Traktat moralny* (Treatise on Morals) in order to expose its consequences. Brooding about the fate of the new born, he looked for the balance between the speculations of the mind and the law of the heart. In this context, the recognition of the expert from Cracow, who specialises in Miłosz's poetry, proves to be exceptionally accurate:

History is not Miłosz's Muse, but – for lack of a better word – it is sociology. Because where does he look for his “instrument and weapon”? Not in the variability and the laws ruling the transitions of the masses but in the stability of structures – or conventions – which organise the relations between people. These are family, professional, cultural structures. For him the symbol of historicity is a wrinkle on a hand embracing a jar: the work and the feast, an uninhibited, although a social celebration, by which the human can strengthen their humanity. Miłosz turns away from the Spirit of History – the mechanics of history – with revulsion: he draws encouragement from the work of history, from the tradition of the human symbiosis, which he more eagerly seeks in everyday life than in grand events<sup>24</sup>.

Can thus the juxtaposition of Europe and America in *Światło dzienne* (Daylight) be reduced to the history – nature relation? One can track the contrasts between the Old and the New World, to which Miłosz attributed a poetic value in his collection from 1953. It is known that European historicism was contrasted with its absence in the United States, and he called this physiologism, which is another type of the biologism ascribed to the Americans. The trendsetting observation about the technicalisation of nature, which forms the basis for the poem *Nie ma wzroku* (No Sight)<sup>25</sup>, is also extremely interesting. The thought that nature is masked, that technology has so deeply enrooted itself in the everyday American life that it has become a part of their nature, anticipates the analysis of the problem of the postmodern cyber-body<sup>26</sup>. In other words: since the diplomat moved to the United States, he distributed ideas to Poland. These ideas, in their moderate presentation, did not find repercussions in the homebred reflection, however, they were adopted later on, when they took a different path and they were presented in a more radical version.

<sup>24</sup> J. Błoński, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

<sup>25</sup> See C. Miłosz, *Notatnik amerykański*, in: idem, *Kontynenty*, pp. 38–39.

<sup>26</sup> See B. Bodzioch-Bryła, *Ku ciału post-ludzkiemu. Poezja polska po 1989 roku wobec nowych mediów i nowej rzeczywistości*, Universitas, Cracow 2006 (a bibliography of works devoted to this notion).

The analysis of the poems such as *Przypomnienie* (*A Reminder*), *Nie ma wzroku* (*No Sight*), *Podróż* (*The Journey*), *O duchu praw* (*The Spirit of the Laws*) exposes the scale of feelings of the American life observer – from fury, through disgust, boredom, contempt, reluctance, to resignation expressed by means of an ironic modification of the evangelical commandment *Więc otrząsnąłem popiół z mojego cygara* (*With the dying ash of my cigar*) (*O duchu praw* [*The Spirit of the Laws*], W I, 53). The stay in the United States heightens the war trauma, it multiplies the horror of the memories. The poet writes to Tadeusz Różewicz:

In America I feel the same way as I felt in the summer before the war, when I was visiting a certain estate in Polesia. The sight of people “enjoying their live” can be sometimes equally painful as looking at suffering people. The urge to grab people by their throats and shake them, so these bulks of meat would understand something, is not an urge that can make life easier (ZPW, 583–584).

The dialectical method also prevails in these occasional observations – as in opposition to the mentioned works, there is a reflection voiced in the poem *Na śpiew ptaka nad brzegami Potomaku* (*On a Bird's Song Heard on the Banks of the Potomac*):

[...] Ptaku, wdzięczny ptaku,  
 Ty, który dzisiaj śpiewasz mi to samo,  
 Co słyszał tutaj indyjski myśliwy Stojący z łukiem na ścieżce jeleni,  
 Cóż możesz wiedzieć o zmianie pokoleń  
 I o następstwie form w ciągu jednego  
 Ludzkiego życia? Tamte moje ślady  
 Zatarł nie tylko pęd zim i jesieni.  
 Ja byłem świadkiem nieszczęść, wiem, co znaczy  
 Życie oszukać kolorem pamiątek.  
 Radośnie słucham twoich ślicznych nut  
 Na wielkiej, wiosną odnowionej ziemi.  
 Mój dom sekunda: w niej świata początek.  
 Śpiewaj! Na perlę popielatych wód  
 Syp roś pieśni z brzegów Potomaku!  
 (W II, 32–33)

[... Bird, cunning bird,  
 You, who today sing me the same song  
 Which was heard by the Indian hunter  
 Standing with a bow on the deer's path,  
 What may you possibly know of the change of generations  
 And of the form consecution during one  
 Human lifetime? Those steps of mine

Were blurred not only by the rush of winters and autumns.  
 I was a witness of misery, I know what it means  
 To fool life with the colour of souvenirs.  
 With joy I listen to your pretty notes  
 On the great Earth, renewed by spring.  
 My house a second: in it the beginning of the world.  
 Sing! On the pearl of the ash-coloured water  
 Scatter the dew of the song from the banks of the Potomac!]<sup>27</sup>

The speaking person of the poem expresses inconsistent desires. Reluctant to reminisce, once in America, he does not want to go back to a past which is unintelligible to the local people. He skilfully uses a rhetorical ploy, enlisting all the events, to which, as he claims, he does not wish to resume<sup>28</sup>. He finishes his poem with a remark about the advantages and limits of the historical thinking. By saying “Mój dom sekunda” (“My house a second”), he follows Eliot as much as he ponders upon the proportions he should keep between the historical reflection of a local meaning, the historiosophical reflection and the meta-historical one. *Na śpiew ptaka u brzegów Potomaku* (*On a Bird's Song Heard on the Banks of the Potomac*) is a poem important to Miłosz in a deeply intimate way – it was “convincing oneself that one has to turn their back on the history” (PŚ, 86). The poems *O duchu praw* (*The Spirit of the Laws*), *Odbicia* (*Reflections*), suggest the difficulty of the process. They are full of self-quotations from *Biedny chrześcijanin* (*A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto*) where the protagonist – a poet – suffers in his faithfulness to the ideal of the poetry expressed in *Nad wodą wielką i czystą* (*Over water wide and clear*). Its chorus “Taki obraz odbija się w wodzie” (“In its limpid glass appear”)<sup>29</sup> seems ironic but its strength lies in its ambiguity – the reflected images are images of death, scenes of destruction that happen within the halo of indifferent elements.

In *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*), one cannot yet find this view over the American landscape, which delights in the Californian series. Here Miłosz looks at how the Rousseau-like dream of the noble savage came true in America – he sums it up in the poem *Podróż* (*The Journey*) with the mocking “tralala tralali”. How to liberate oneself from the past among people who – paradoxically – because of their indifference towards the past, strengthen the sense of obligation to remember?

It does not seem that the strongly experienced difference between Europe and America is reduced for Miłosz to a confrontational relation between historicism and biologism, despite the misleading pretence, which is created by the selectively

<sup>27</sup> Transl. Karolina Marzec.

<sup>28</sup> See B. Tarnowska, *Geografia poetycka w powojennej twórczości Czesława Miłosza*, Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna, Olsztyn 1996, pp. 74–75.

<sup>29</sup> Transl. Anita Dębska, in: <http://translationjournal.net/>

read poetry from *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*). For the poet who tracks aberrations in Marxists' historiography, the triumph of historicism in everyday practice does not differ from the cruelty of nature. When he says the famous words “i odtąd dom swój mieliśmy w historii” (“and since then we’ve had a residence in history”) he does not mean being at home in an abstraction – he will elaborate on this thought in *Traktat poetycki* (*Treatise on Poetry*). The Spirit of History cannot provide shelter for people, just like it cannot be given by nature; *Notatnik amerykański* (*American Notebook*) – in which the author critically ponders upon D.H. Lawrence’s utopian stance recommending going back to the primeval forms of life – is a peculiar complement to *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*):

Do we remember well enough how fresh our knowledge of the natural world is? This scenery of a blind fight, of mutual devouring, as if an embodied dream of Goebbels, appeared to us about a hundred years ago. After all, it is good that I had pored over Darwin’s works and dealt with ornithology before I started taking the Roman law exams and Church law and administration and statistics exams.

Nature is fascinating and terrifying. Observing lives of ants and spiders is a sadistic activity. Praise the laces, the corsets, the lipsticks, the high studs, the washstands, the fancy hairdos and the swish of skirts! They keep us away from nature. Any regression to nature in customs is a humiliation of human dignity (K, 39).

Thus, it is neither the history that the Marxists’ take, nor nature as understood by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Miłosz criticises American sentimentalism, however, for when he comes back to France, he senses its different conspicuous type. He solves the dilemma of history – natural relations in a different way. *Dolina Issy* (*The Issa Valley*) and *Rodzina Europa* (*Native Realm*) are testimonies of such actions. Nevertheless, in the late 1940s a sketch of such a solution appears – in a family description in the poems from *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*), in a note about refugees on a railway station in *Zniewolony umysł* (*The Captive Mind*), and it is a remark not overlooked by Jan Błoński. In America Miłosz misses this symbiosis of the human and the nature, thanks to which households, human nests are created. He is interested in the history of imagination and work. The poet, who wishes – like Balzac and Baudelaire – to be a painter of habits, does not find inspiration for his writing in America. Then what would be the literary benefit of his first stay in the United States? America, being for the poet an extension, a transition and an antithesis of Europe, teaches the distance one should have towards their desires, perceptions and beliefs. It shows opportunities to create different proportions, to build new hierarchies. It can be provocatively stated that almost all poems in *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*) are American poems. Marian Stepien, analysing this experience when the poet was awarded the Nobel prize, stated that:



*Do Jonathana Swifta* (To Jonathan Swift), *Dziecię Europy* (Child of Europe), *Dwaj w Rzymie* (Two in Rome), *O duchu praw* (The Spirit of the Laws), *Koncert* (Concert), *Ocean* (Ocean) and other poems from this collection, which, although dated in Washington or New York, could be written by the Polish poet anywhere<sup>30</sup>.

Is it really so? In America, Miłosz does not stop being a European poet, perhaps being away he understands his Europeanness much better. Although there are a few poems which directly refer to the United States, in many verses this country serves as a hidden background, thanks to which it is easier to confirm one's identity. America cannot be ignored because it is also, to a large extent, a creation of Europe. If the New World appears to be a kind of a distorting mirror of the Old World, one should take a look at themselves in it. In *Notatnik amerykański* (American Notebook) the author reveals why he does not want to publish the poem entitled *Detroit*:

It is ironic, the image favours these American clichés which are known in Poland, at least in some circles: dehumanisation done by means of a dollar and technology. It is the popularity trap – this is the only way one gains recognition in Poland – for the poems to be “topical” in the sense of reassuring the images created in advance (K, 56).

If the American city appears to be, as Jan Błoński says the “anti-city”<sup>31</sup>, then it must find – according to Miłosz's rule of experience accumulation<sup>32</sup> – a place in his poetic tale. The author does not shunt completely from the American perspective after his return to Europe – the Old and the New Worlds are the communicating vessels of a single civilizational system. *Światło dzienne* (Daylight) is interesting in so far as by means of the tension between the Europeanness and the Americanness it exposes how this awareness is brought to life.

The American experience impacts Miłosz homoeopathically – it both intoxicates him and heals him. How does he overcome it and how does he benefit from it? His instruments are fragile: an image, a word play, rhythm and rhyme? The poem *Pałac moich muz* (Palace of my Muses) speaks about their scant power, the very first lines “Niestety, kraina pozorna / Kaktusowego cienia” (“Alas, the deceptive land / Of a cactus shadow”) (W II, 42) remind us that Eliot's diagnosis from *Wydrążeni ludzie* (The Hollow Men) stays prevailing, and, what is more, as one reads – “Niestety, wiatr pióra porwał, Gaśnie kraina pozorna” (“Alas, the wind swept the feathers, The deceptive land fades”) (W II, 43). The ironic and sorrowful reference to Mickiewicz in *Odbicia* (Reflections) suggests that the poetic programme of Mick-

<sup>30</sup> M. Stępień, *Czesława Miłozsa odkrywanie Ameryki*, “Pamiętnik Literacki” 1981, vol. 4, p. 146.

<sup>31</sup> J. Błoński, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

<sup>32</sup> See R. Nycz, *Miłosz: biografia idei*, in: idem, *Sylwy współczesne*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Universitas, Cracow 1996, pp. 58–84.



iewicz's Lausanne Lyrics does not seem to Miłosz impossible to maintain – it is beyond his powers. The rule of a faithful reflection would result in the poetry which was presented by Różewicz, and with that, Miłosz did not want to agree. Nevertheless, in the poem *Do Tadeusza Różewicza, poety* (*To Tadeusz Różewicz, Poet*) there are words which today are a well-known aphorism: „Szczęśliwy naród, który ma poetę / I w trudach swoich nie kroczy w milczeniu” (“Happy is the nation that possesses a poet / And does not march in silence through its hardships”). The author settles accounts with the Polish Romanticism; he is “the poor poet” from the period of occupation and, at the same time, he is looking for new forms of writing poetry, which would live up to the present-day reality. He finds them among the Anglo-Saxons, who advised to overcome the “hardships” by means of a form.

He takes a lesson from Robert Browning constructing – like in *Dramatis personae* – dialogues of antagonists in the poems *Dwaj w Rzymie* (*Two in Rome*) and *Trzy chóry z nienapisanego dramatu “Hiroszima”* (*Three Choruses from the Never-Written Drama “Hiroshima”*), as well as lines of a tragic dialogue in *Antygona* (*Antigone*), which was not included in the volume<sup>33</sup>. He follows Auden's path, who made the confessions objective through personification and anthropomorphisation of the ideas, as well as through dramatising the monologue<sup>34</sup>. The reflection rule is understood differently than in Lausanne Lyrics – in one or a few poems he associates analogies in seemingly contradictory or unrelated images. A sketch of a poetry project is made, and this sketch was improved by Miłosz in his later collections. Jan Błoński names this predisposition very nicely as “the connection – or contraposing – not of sentences or phrases but of styles and speech forms”, as well as a technique of collage and montage<sup>35</sup>.

In *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*), this collision of images and characters works very well. In the poem *Zuławy* (*Zulawy*) a memory of fruitful earth in Poland is correlated with an observation of the farmlands in America. A pair of portraits is created by the characters from *Nie ma wzroku* (*No Sight*)<sup>36</sup> and *Poeta* (*The Poet*) – the first one, a random American, on whom a certain procedure was conducted, loses his identity:

Wtedy przepuszczają urywany strumień cyfr  
I szczypcami srebrnych rąk budują

<sup>33</sup> Arent van Nieuwerkerken argues that this form could have been borrowed from Cyprian Kamil Norwid by developing in the Polish poetry a dramatic concept of a poetic speech similar to the one that Auden and MacNeice adopted from Yeats. See idem, *O “niewczesności” Norwida, dwóch modernizmach i Miłoszu*, in: *Poznanwanie Miłosza 2...*, pp. 384–398. Miłosz himself indicates the inspiration by Norwid and Browning in his sketch *Norwid*, “Kultura” 1952, No. 12, p. 39.

<sup>34</sup> See A. van Nieuwerkerken, *op. cit.*, p. 385.

<sup>35</sup> J. Błoński, *op. cit.*, pp. 117 i 121.

<sup>36</sup> In relation to this poem see C. Miłosz, *Rodzinna Europa*, p. 313.

Szklaną klatkę wokół czerwonego serca.  
 Wstaje nucąc i idzie pogodny,  
 Wolny od smaku wody,  
 Od smaku chleba i wina,  
 Od miłości, nienawiści i od przerażenia.  
 I pamięta nazwy wszystkich rzeczy,  
 I pamięta, że dobrze jest jeść,  
 I pamięta, że dobrze się rozmnażać,  
 Nauczony udawać przed sobą,  
 Że radość jest radość,  
 Rozkosz – rozkosz.

(*Nie ma wzroku*, W II, 71–72)

[Then they transmit a saccadic stream of numbers  
 And with the claws of silver hands they build  
 A glass cage around the red heart.  
 He gets up humming and walks cheerful,  
 Free from the taste of water,  
 From the taste of bread and wine,  
 From love, hatred and from terror.  
 And he remembers the names of all things,  
 And remembers it is good to eat,  
 And remembers it is good to proliferate,  
 Taught to pretend to himself  
 That joy is joy,  
 Pleasure – pleasure.]<sup>37</sup>

(*No Sight*)

It is difficult to say how much this poem owed to Huxley's dystopia, which was eagerly read by Miłosz in 1940s. The poet observes similar measures leading to the creation of a poet representing the style of the Socialist realism:

Usłysz, gdy go chirurg weźmie:  
 „My krzywdy twojej tu nie chcemy,  
 Piers otworzymy bezboleśnie,  
 Węgiel gorący z niej wyjmujemy.

Żyć będziesz od cierpienia wolny.  
 Poczytność damy ci i sławę.

<sup>37</sup> Transl. Karolina Marzec.

Niech wiersz twój, zamiast toczyć wojny,  
Kształcąca ludziom da zabawę”.

Stanie się tak. I popiół szary  
Zakryje strony jego pisma.  
Choć będą śniły się koszmary,  
Nikt do nich głośno się nie przyzna.

(*Poeta*, W II, 131–132)

[Once the surgeon takes him, he'll hear:  
“We'll open the chest painlessly,  
We do not wish you ill,  
Without the hot coal it will beat freely.

You shall live free from suffering.  
We'll give you popularity and fame.  
Your poem, instead of feuding,  
Will give people an educational game”.

So shall it be. And the ash gray  
Will cover the pages of his writing.  
And although nightmares he have may  
No one will admit to it loudly.]<sup>38</sup>

(*The Poet*)

There are many such reflections and pairs holding dialogues in *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*), which only confirms that Miłosz is using dialectics as a logical, eristic and a poetry-creating method. There is also another rule of contrast visible in the collection, perhaps taken straight from the English metaphysical poetry. As in John Donne's and George Herbert's works, the human is here a speck of dust, a worm, there is no passage between the human microcosm and the macrocosm. The human was described like that already in *Book of Job*:

Czy człowiek jest sprawiedliwy w oczach Boga, a syn niewiasty – bezgrzeszny? Jeśli niejasny i księżyc, gwiazdy przed Nim nieczyste, tym więcej człowiek – ten robak, i syn człowieczy – znikomość.

(*Księga Hioba*, 25, 4–6)<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Transl. Karolina Marzec.

<sup>39</sup> *Biblia Tysiąclecia*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Pallotinum, Poznań 1991, p. 555. It is, as one may know, a popular literary topos in the European culture recurring in many different compilations.

[How then can man be justified with God?\_or how can he be clean *that is* born of a woman? Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man, *that is* a worm? and the son of man, *which is* a worm?]

(*Book of Job*, 25, 4–6)<sup>40</sup>

The “I” in *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*) is overwhelmed by the tragic memory and the feeling of remoteness, and that is why all this “I” can cling to is the solidarity of the species. The contrast between what is small and weak, and what is huge and emotionless is an echoing rule of constructing the images in this collection. Its effect is stronger as the figure of a man is hidden within the image of an insect, and – as in *Myśl o Azji* (*Thinking of Asia*) – “ludzki owad usycha” (“the human insect withers”) (W II, 67):

Łagodny język liżący  
Okrągłe, małe kolana,  
(*Ocean*, W II, 38)

[A gentle tongue lapping  
Small chubby knees,]  
(*Ocean*)<sup>41</sup>

Mrówka zdeptana, a nad nią obłoki.  
Zdeptana mrówka, a nad nią kolumna błękitu.  
(*Odbicia*, W II, 47)

[An ant trampled, and above it – clouds.  
A trampled ant, and above it – a column of blueness.]  
(*Reflections*)<sup>42</sup>

Na dnie, gdzie lampki owadów się jarzą,  
Mucha zaczęła brzęczeć. I to trwało.  
Biła w wykute z pajęczyny kraty.  
(*Dzień i noc*, W II, 46)

<sup>40</sup> Holy Bible: King James Version, London 2001, p. 528.

<sup>41</sup> Transl. Peter Dale Scott, in: C. Miłosz, *The Collected Poems...*, p. 97.

<sup>42</sup> Transl. Karolina Marzec.

[At the bottom, where the insects' lamps glow,  
A fly began to buzz. And it lasted.  
It was hitting the bars forged of cobweb.]  
(*Day and Night*)<sup>43</sup>

The poet's imagination seeks an analogy between the human and animal worlds, between the cataclysm of history and nature. The gesture found in *Głosy biednych ludzi* (*Voices of Poor People*) is continued here – instead of describing human tragedies, Miłosz talks about the everyday tortures and extermination of ants, flies, grasshoppers, field mice. The ostensible comicality in the characters' plans finds its continuation in the seeming lightness of the form of the poems, with which the poet juggles in the volume from 1953 in order to ponder upon the most important issue. On the other hand, it is worth recapturing the recollection from *Rodzina Europa* (*Native Realm*):

Tiger claimed I had a dialectical mind. Dialectical or catastrophic? It is not quite the same thing, but almost. In any case, from it came my power of discernment, my capacity for seeing time brutally condensed, and my pride in dominating the anthill immersed in the daily bustle; that is, in the meaningless (RE, 295).

Miłosz overcomes the despair and fury by means of a phrase. In the years when the poems form *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*) were being created, Miłosz was learning from Auden<sup>44</sup> the distance achieved through form. He tells Gorczyńska: "I haven't read much of Auden, however, I have read some of his works. He experimented with different literary forms" (PŚ, 111). He confirms it in his later conversations: "It seems that Auden's poem suited my need for broadening the poetic forms"<sup>45</sup>. As Miłosz admits, under this poet's influence, he used to write stylistic exercises to check his fluency in using various verses, forms and metres of poems<sup>46</sup>. It appears that on the one hand, Auden patronises the practice in the artistry, on the other had, he also gives Miłosz the so much needed at that time type of irony<sup>47</sup>. Not being familiar with Auden's *For the Time Being* makes the

<sup>43</sup> Transl. Karolina Marzec.

<sup>44</sup> In relation to this see A. Poprawa, *Akceptujący dystans W.H. Audena*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 1994, No. 31, p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> *Pokochoć sprzecznosc*. A. Fiut's and A. Franaszek's conversation with Czesław Miłosz, in: *Rozmowy polskie 1979–1998*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Cracow 2006, p. 572.

<sup>46</sup> Marek Zaleski proves the affinity between Miłosz's poetic songs and W.H. Auden's song-like forms. See M. Zaleski, *Piosenki niewinności i doświadczenia*, in: *Poznawanie Miłosza 2...*, pp. 311–326.

<sup>47</sup> Feeling the intellectual and technical relationship with Auden, Miłosz, paradoxically, spoke of him much less in his interviews and essays than of those with whom he disputed. Nevertheless, he often used Auden's argumentation in order to defend his own views on poetry. See C. Miłosz,

reading of *Traktat moralny* (*Treatise on Morals*), and essentially of *List noworoczny* (*New Year's Letter*), incomplete<sup>48</sup>. Also, the reception of the now textbook poem *Który skrzywdziłeś* (*You Who Wronged*) can be reconsidered, once it is read along with *Epitaph on a Tyrant*. It is worth recalling Miłosz's utterance on Auden, which was a part of his discourse with Robert Lowell about the period when *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*) was being created:

He had his moments of joy because I attacked him on a friendly basis, whereas Auden was attacked more violently. Indeed, Auden's "Age of anxiety" is really bad. I can only congratulate myself the sharp eye: what I foretold a long time ago, worked out in this huge lyric. L. has the ambition to be the best American poet, and when someone shares his bad opinion on Auden it makes him feel happy. The pleasure is also based on the fact that someone sees through Auden's falsehood during this phase, and it means they are a part of the clan<sup>49</sup>.

It is worth adding that the poet omitted this fragment and composed *Notatnik amerykański* (*American Notebook*) anew...

In the 1950s Miłosz assails the style of the Anglo-Saxon poems and equally often uses the melody of the Polish poetry: the Polish alexandrine of a characteristic rhythm. He uses this line ironically, for example in *Dziecię Europy* (*Child of Europe*), to escalate the terror. In an attempt to evaluate *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*) one has to say that seeking a capacious form resulted in a collection with metrical, strophic, generic and rhetorical diversity. Although later the poet regretted its disorganisation, it should be emphasised that he achieved in this volume an intellectual coherence. This coherence is created by the use of irony, also of the Swiftian genesis<sup>50</sup>, and the opposing longing for innocence in accordance to Blake's spirit and the *negro spirituals*. Amid these poles the critique of the dialectical mind takes place. Irony and fury dominate other tones,

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*Poezja amerykańska*, in: idem, *Kontynenty*, p. 411; idem, *Zaczynając od moich ulic*, Instytut Literacki, Wrocław 1990, p. 88; idem, *Życie na wyspach*, Znak, Cracow 1998, pp. 82–83 and 102–103. A. Fiut, Z. Łapiński, M. Zaleski, S. Barańczak, J. Dudek also pointed to the spiritual and formal closeness between Miłosz and Auden, which was felt even stronger in the later years, also because of the friendship with the poet Josif Brodski.

<sup>48</sup> About the relations between *Traktat moralny* (*Treatise on Morals*) and *List noworoczny* (*New Year's Letter*) Miłosz spoke with Aleksander Fiut and Andrzej Franaszek. See *Pokochać sprzecznosc*, pp. 571–573. It is mentioned by E. Kiślak, *op. cit.*, p. 137. The concept is also convincingly developed by J. Zach, "Traktat moralny": *poezja jako "akt umysłu"*, "Teksty Drugie" 2008, No. 5, pp. 180–187.

<sup>49</sup> C. Miłosz, *Notatnik*, "Nowiny Literackie" 1948, No. 15.

<sup>50</sup> See F.R. Leavis, *Swifts Negative Irony*, in: J. Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*. An Authoritative Text. The Correspondence of Swift. Pope's Verses on *Gulliver's Travels*. Critical Essays, ed. by R.A. Greenberg, W.W. Norton & Company, New York 1970, pp. 419–423.

hence, perhaps, the author's reluctance to this volume. Zdzisław Łapiński comments it this way:

Miłosz's poetry [...] has gone through many crises, it took rapid turns. It should be positively accounted that such a deep cut in his biography – as choosing emigration, that is entering a completely new mode of the literary life – did not directly influence the continuity of poetry. The author was able to republish all the poems which were announced during the worst years in Poland. The poems which had not seen the light of the day stayed in full harmony with the ones which had broken through censorship. New poems continued the thematic and stylistic line of the previous works<sup>51</sup>.

In the context of Auden's poem Josif Brodski wrote:

This pressure on objectivity, on the aridity of the tone, etc. is at the same time a curse and a blessing of the modern poetry. It throttled many throats; one of them was Eliot's, although the same force made him an exquisite critic<sup>52</sup>.

How much did Miłosz achieve in his pursuit of the impersonality of poetry, restricting his own voice, hiding in the guise of numerous characters, in voices of other people, often mimicked only to challenge their arguments? The question about the poetic value of *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*) has not been posed very often. This volume illustrates the difficult stage in the intellectual and psychological biography of the poet but is it only a document of his inner struggle? If one can expect a dispute over the advantages of this bitter polyphony, it is unimpeachable that since the 1940s they have been able to hear in this polyphony the voice of America, which has permanently influenced its sound.

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<sup>51</sup> Z. Łapiński, *Między polityką a metafizyką*, p. 24.

<sup>52</sup> J. Brodski, *Mniej niż ktoś. Eseje*, Znak, Cracow 2006, p. 210.



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### **Czesław Miłosz' American Experience in *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*)**

(Summary)

Miłosz's volume *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*, 1953) is conventionally read by critics as the political poetry deeply engaged with history. The article offers a corrective to this traditional reading by interpreting the volume as an interplay of European and American influences. As a European poet, Miłosz had experienced the violent demise of ideals that were the foundation of the Old World. *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*) is, therefore, at one level, an elegiac volume, in which both persons and ideas are mourned. On the other hand, to the extent that for Miłosz America continues the noble ideas abandoned in Europe, he cannot accept what he regards as their misguided or perverse incarnations. This explains the emotional climate of the whole volume, with its dominant mood of disappointment, anger and a refusal of reconciliation. *Światło dzienne* (*Daylight*) is American in its outlook on taking seriously America's status as a superpower and its influence on the future direction of the global history. It is anti-American, however, in identifying America's perceived failures to live up to the post-war challenge for the human civilization in general, and the consequent dangers. The article intends to assess Miłosz's debt to English-language poetry in this volume in light of his personal notes from his reading and translation work at the time.

Keywords: Czesław Miłosz, *Daylight*