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## Czesław Miłosz and „The Generation of Columbuses” in Lithuanian Literature: A Contribution to One More Parallel Biography

The inspiration to undertake this subject was twofold. Firstly, it was born from the reading of the preface by Czesław Miłosz’s and the afterword by Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas, a Lithuanian poet, to a collection of Lithuanian translations of Miłosz’s poems entitled *EPOCHOS sąmoningumo poezija* (*The Poetry of an Epoch’s Self-Consciousness*) published in 1955 in Buenos Aires by the editors of a Lithuanian emigrant literary journal “Literatūros lankai” (“Literary Sheets”)<sup>1</sup> as the first volume of a literary publishing series [see Miłosz 1955]<sup>2</sup>, as well as from the question about the motivation of this publishing decision and the

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<sup>1</sup> The journal was published in Buenos Aires in the years 1952—1959. It was edited by Juozas Kėkštās and Kazys Bradūnas. Its purpose was to serve the idea of including Lithuanian literature in the Western literary current. The objective of the book series that accompanied the journal and whose first volume was Miłosz’s *EPOCHOS sąmoningumo poezija* was to present the works of contemporary literature incorporating the idea of “art for man’s sake”, or art consciously reflecting its epoch.

<sup>2</sup> Maybe the Polish title of this book should be *Poezja świadomości epoki* [The Poetry of an Epoch’s Consciousness], following Miłosz’s phrase from his preface). I, nevertheless, decided to use another version of the translation: *Poezja samoświadomości epoki* [The Poetry of an Epoch’s Self-Consciousness] as it is adopted in fundamental bibliographic studies. The original of the preface in Polish, see: Miłosz 2014b, pp. 13—24.

nature of the cooperation between the editorial board and the Polish poet<sup>3</sup>. Secondly, it was supplemented by studies on the authors of the Polish “formation 1910” published in the recent years. Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas (as several other closest collaborators of “Literatūros lankai”) belongs to the same generation as our Columbuses<sup>4</sup> both in terms of age and the fact that his youthful poetical output was vested in war experience. In my understanding, however, his intellectual “encounter” with Miłosz during the preparation of *Epochos...* allows to attempt a comparison similar to those made by the authors of *Formacja 1910: Biografie równoległe*.

During the first decade after the war, which is the focus of this study, Czesław Miłosz and Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas did not yet know each other personally. As it follows from the entries in a diary of the Lithuanian poet, they met for the first time almost ten years after the publication of *Epochos...*, in 1964 [see: Nyka-Niliūnas, vol. I, pp. 412—413]. It may be concluded that, being an active and respected literary critic, Nyka-Niliūnas received a proposal to write the afterword for a collection of poems by the Polish poet, while the *spiritus movens* of the whole undertaking was Juozas Kėkštis (1915—1981), featured on the title page as the author of translations and editor, a friend of Miłosz yet from the pre-war times, as well as an admirer and the first translator of his poetry into Lithuanian. After the second world war, he settled in Argentina and, earning his living as a physical worker, he wrote poems, translated literature, did editorial jobs, and strived to care for the development of Lithuanian literary life in exile [see: Kasner, *passim*]. Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas (born 1919) does not know Polish<sup>5</sup>, but accustomed his ear to it when young—similarly to many Lithuanians from outside the Vilnius Region who had moved to Vilnius for good or for studies in the years 1939—1940.

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<sup>3</sup> About “Literatūros lankai” of Lithuanian poets of the so-called *žemininkai-lankininkai* generation, see: Kasner; Daujotytė & Kvietkauskas; Miłosz 2014b, pp. 25—26.

<sup>4</sup> Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas (born Alfonsas Čipkus) was born in 1919 in Nemeikštai (Pl. Niemekszta) near Utena (Pl. Uciana). In the years 1938—1939 he studied Romance philology and philosophy at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas. During the war, he continued his studies at the university in Vilnius; since 1944 he was in German camps for displaced persons and pursued his education in Tübingen and Freiburg. There, he studies art history and literary history in relation to Germany, France and England. Since 1949, he resides in Baltimore (USA). He is considered the most eminent representative of the generation of *žemininkai-lankininkai*, emigrant poets, and one of the outstanding Lithuanian modernist poets.

<sup>5</sup> This follows from the poet’s diaries (he read classical works of Polish literature in Lithuanian translations, but knew only single Polish every-day phrases). This hypothesis was confirmed by Manfredas Žvirgždas in an interview with an author of a paper, who added that for several decades Nyka-Niliūnas was employed in the Library of Congress (Washington), in the Slavic Literatures department, where he mainly worked with writings in Russian.

In his afterword to *Epochos...*, Nyka-Niliūnas mentions also the name of Albinas Žukauskas (1912—1987). Žukauskas was another Lithuanian poet from Vilnius active in the interwar period who knew Miłosz, was interested in his literary output, and translated it into Lithuanian. Both pre-war friends of the author of *Three Winters*, Lithuanians with Polish citizenship, were connected with Polish culture not only due to their Vilnian identity. Before the war, both of them studied in Warsaw, and Kėkštas spent their over 20 last years of his life. Both are known to Polish literary scholars mainly due to their relations with Czesław Miłosz. In terms of age, both belong to the “1910 generation”.

From among the authors of “Literatūros lankai”, the greatest recognition was gained by younger creators, peers of our Columbus generations. They included, apart from Nyka-Niliūnas, the following names: poets Kazys Bradūnas (1917—2009), Henrikas Nagys (1920—1996), Vytautas Mačernis (1931—1944), and a philosopher Juozas Girnius (1915—1995). Except Mačernis, who died in Lithuania in 1944, all of them, aged ca. 25—30, found themselves in exile, mainly in South America; most of them got across the ocean and were put in camps for displaced persons<sup>6</sup>. In 1951, an anthology with their works (from pre-war debuts to contemporary texts) entitled *Žemė* (En. *The Earth*) was released in Los Angeles. The title of this volume gave the name to the whole “literary circle”: they are called *žemininkai* (En. the poets of the Earth, or literally “landowners”) or—due to their connections with “Literatūros lankai”—*žemininkai-lankininkai*.

As it follows from the most fundamental biographical and literary-history findings, Czesław Miłosz’s “meeting” with this Lithuanian emigrant milieu was, on the one hand, continuation of the pre-war Vilnian cooperation (with Kėkštas), and on the other, as we may assume, a result of the fascination and—probably most of all—the sense of intellectual community between *žemininkai-lankininkai* and the Polish poet. It is worthy of attention that, in the 1950s, Czesław Miłosz, an exceptional representative of the “1910 formation” was read, interpreted and published by Lithuanian intellectuals and writers who in terms of age could belong to the following two Polish generations: peers of the Polish Columbuses *žemininkai-lankininkai* (the most remarkable among them were Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas and Henrikas Nagys) and their mentors born around 1910: the philosopher and literary critic Juozas Girnius, the poet,

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<sup>6</sup> Girnius, Nagys, Nyka-Niliūnas, and Bradūnas, as well as Antanas Škėma left Lithuania for Germany in 1944, and later went to the USA in 1949. All of them stayed for some time in camps for displaced persons. We should here mention a famous New York film-maker Jonas Mekas, born in 1922 in Lithuania, whose memories constitute an abundant source of knowledge about the exile way of Lithuanian intellectuals born ca. 1920 [see: Mekas].

literary critic and authority Juozas Kėkštas, and last but not least the modernist prosaist, playwright and actor Anatanas Škėma<sup>7</sup>. What could this intellectual encounter consist in then?

The possible interpretative paths may be set out thanks to an analysis of a publication of Czesław Miłosz's works in "Literatūros lankai". The journal featured several of his poems, most of which came from the *Daylight* collection<sup>8</sup>, as well as fragments of a novel entitled *The Seizure of Power* referring to the Warsaw Uprising, published previously in issue 6 in 1955. Czesław Miłosz himself sent to "Literatūros lankai" his essay about Adam Mickiewicz; this text was published in the last, 8th issue of the journal [see: Miłosz 1959].

The first work of Miłosz to be published in "Literatūros lankai" was the *Dedication* [see: Miłosz 2014a, p. 78] from the *Rescue* volume. The same poem opens the collection *Epochos sąmoningumo poezija*. What is more, a quote from it (the fourth stanza) beginning with the words "What is poetry which does not save / Nations or people?" [Miłosz 2014a, p. 78] served as a motto in the afterword by Nyka-Niliūnas. The Lithuanian poet quotes this poem there once more when he writes about changes in Miłosz's poetic language:

Renouncing showiness ("Try to understand this simple speech" [Miłosz 2014a, p. 78]) and choosing not the "craft of a Prince's kept men" (poetry in the service of politics) or "an esperantists' club exercises" (poetry *ars gratia artis*), but the path of poetry that brings rescue through its very self, Czesław Miłosz in a sense assumed the position of a moralist. In his works, words have such meanings as if they belonged to a language not yet used or vulgarized by anyone. [Miłosz 1955, p. 88].

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<sup>7</sup> Bearing in mind that the legitimacy of employing the notion of a "literary generation" in historicoliterary syntheses may be undermined, I purposefully bring forward only dates. I am of opinion that the comprehension and description of the meaning that the person and literary output of Czesław Miłosz had for the biography and literary achievements of *žemininkai-lankininkai* could benefit the most from comparative studies of their literary production conducted with the application of the modern comparative literature. To date, there are no findings on the subject that would go beyond the cautious hypotheses made with the constant reference to the "general intuitions" (see Kasner; Daujotytė, Kvietkauskas). Incidentally, in terms of aesthetics and subjects, the poems of Vytautas Mačernis published posthumously by *žemininkai-lankininkai* as an eminent instantiation of their own understanding of literariness, seem to be close to the poetic output of Baczyński and Gajcy.

<sup>8</sup> Issue 1 from 1952 featured translations of two poems: *Dedication* and *Hymn* [see: Miłosz 2014a, p. 13-15], and issue 5 from 1955 contained *Earth* [see: Miłosz 2014a, p. 102], *The Journey* [see: Miłosz 2014a, p. 96], *Mysl o Azji* (*Thought on Asia*, most probably not yet translated into English), *The Spirit of The Laws* [see: Miłosz 2014a, p. 97-98] and *Café* [see: Miłosz 2017, loc. 60].

Here, Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas provides an outline of his own (or his generation's) understanding of the meaning of Miłosz's poetry: a modern poetry created by poets whose generational experience included war, the appropriation of their motherland by Soviets and emigration should be moralizing (that is humanist), free from any political involvements and accessible to “a simple man” [*You who wronged*; see: Miłosz 2014a, p. 103]. It also ought to be a poetry of a new language, in which the word matches the needs of the times. And most of all, it should have a rescuing power, which provides the human existence with a meaning in boundary situations such as the experience of war or eradication from one's family land and culture. This was elaborated by Juozas Girnius, an existential philosopher, one of the most important authors of “Literatūros lankai”, the first interpreter of the *žemininkai-lankininkai* output in generational terms, who termed the output of the *Žemė* anthology authors as “the poetry of the sense of human existence on Earth”:

This is the direction of our latest poetry [...]: Earth. [...] in the centre of this poetry, there is the problem of the metaphysical fate of humans. [...] This is the poetry of the sense of human existence on Earth.<sup>9</sup> [Girnius 1991, p. 13].

The last issue of “Literatūros lankai” contained a review of the volume *Epochos sąmoningumo poezija* written by a world-famous semiotician coworking with *žemininkai-lankininkai*, Algirdas Julius Greimas. For him, reading the translations of Miłosz's poems became a pretext for deliberations that were particularly interesting for the Lithuanian authors of “Literatūros lankai”, that is for pondering the awareness of the epoch evoked by the poetry:

The poetry of the consciousness of the epoch. *Transformer l'expérience en conscience*: Malraux.

[...] Awareness is the stigma of our epoch, its grandeur and its vanity. [...] Conscience is the new humanism, the pride of a modern human, but there are traps every step of the way, and the metaphysical ones are the most dangerous. [...]

*Transformer l'expérience en conscience!* Experience reformed into consciousness; however, no dialectics shall target a beam of consciousness light back to the specific human being. “Esperantists club”—says Miłosz, who knows well the vertigo caused by contacts with the top brass.

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<sup>9</sup> The emphasis comes from Girnius.

– “Earth, / do not abandon me.”—prays Anna. And the choir, the wisdom of the old, the voice of a humane community, confirms it:

“All joy comes from the earth, there is no delight without her, / man is given to the earth, let him desire no other”. [*The Song*, see: Miłosz 2017, loc. 27-28]

For whom should poems be written? For whom anything should be written? This question bothers not only Miłosz alone. Modern poetry annihilated literature as a source of fun and pleasure. Its current objective is to create a new language, a language of truth, whose words would cease to be tools in social communication and would instead adhere to things, to the essence indicated with a finger. [Greimas, p. 9]

The postulated concept of a new language, a derivative of the new consciousness of the new times, provokes Greimas to semiotically ponder the ontological and epistemological nature of a sign (for form’s sake, it may be added that this is, of course, a significant subject of both Miłosz’s and Nyka-Niliūnas). Despite the doubts concerning the capability of words to “adhere” to things, Greimas—following Miłosz—focuses on the relation between literature (a symbol) and the human (*Dasein*, in a given historical and existential situation), a more precisely on the ability to make a “human” contact by way of literature:

Poetry that renounces consociation with a human commits a suicide. Miłosz chooses “a bottle thrown into a sea” [...], thus cultivating the hope that the rise of a human, a worm [my emphasis—B.K.] contact is possible.<sup>10</sup>

Four years before Greimas’ review, that is in 1955, when the Lithuanian volume of Miłosz was published in Buenos Aires, “Literatūros lankai” printed excerpts from *The Seizure of Power*. From chapter XII of the first part, published was a fragment beginning with the words: “I shall never see Catherine again” and ending with the sentence: “From the windows of houses on the embankment one could see German gun positions, beyond them the river and the further bank, on which – though no one knew precisely where – the Russians were” [Miłosz 1985, p. 53-56]. Fragments selected from chapter XIII included portraits of Dan, Michael, Bertrand, medical orderly Vila and Magda, Captain

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<sup>10</sup> Here, Greimas refers to, among others, Miłosz’s foreword to *Epochos...*: “There was and will always be the incommensurability between the word and the existence, but in some periods blackening paper with signs indeed requires Lithuanian pertinacity. For me, the volume prepared by Kėkštas is a valuable gift. Dispersed in various lands, we still constitute a community [...] Poems, published today in Polish or Lithuanian, are truly as a manuscript placed in a bottle thrown into a sea”. [Miłosz 2014b, p. 23].

Osman, as well as the scene in which Magda was supposed to have provoked shots from the German side, until the words: “Thus did the line of Magda’s life cross the lifeline of an unknown man – a watchmaker from Heidelberg, a workman from Berlin, or a farmer from the Black Forest – nobody would ever know who he was.” [Miłosz 1985, p. 58-61]. Chapter XV, containing the events after the death of Captain Osman [see: Miłosz 1985, p. 68-71], was published in full. The scene accompanying the execution by a firing squad of a psychiatric hospital patients seems particularly important:

Magda grasped Seal’s hand. Magda schwyciła Fokę za rękę. He felt the warmth [my emphasis—B.K.] of her palm, then only amazement. The discovery of another human being. [...] He had ceased to be a separate being, everything that made him different was gone. [Miłosz 1985, p. 70]

I should here remind that according to Nyka-Niliūnas Czesław Miłosz chose the path of poetry that “brings rescue through its very self”. *Žemininkai* understood rescue in several different ways: among others, as the rescue of truth (mainly historical truth, but also the truth about the essence of humanity from the lies of the Soviet propaganda) and the dignity and identity of the human, as well as the language in the new historical and existential situation (this chiefly concerned exile). This rescue was supposed to take place through, among others, becoming aware of and then affirming loneliness and the liberty of human in relation to the Earth and other people, both close and strange, in order to subsequently try and find a significant, substantial community through a bodily and linguistic contact [see: Girnius 1991; Venclova; Šilbajoris; Balsevičiūtė]. A good poetical brief on such an understanding of the relation between the human, Earth (nature) and language (literature) is provided in a fragment of Antanas Škėma’s *White Shroud*:

Słowik trylował. Lole palo eglelo – sutartinia. Opadające mgły – dusze zmarłych. Baśń – zapomniany język.

Antanas Garšva pisał. [...] W rozbrzmiewającej w nim pieśni słowiczej Garšva szukał umarłego świata. [...]

Na kiepskim papierze z tarcicowych desek żyły dwie linijki wiersza. Drzewa i krzewy rosły w umarłym świecie. Jodła, sosna, lipa, dąb, brzoza, jałowiec. [Škėma, p. 101]

Antanas Garšva wrote this poem during the second world war, at the time of the first Soviet occupation of Lithuania, after a night visit paid by a communist poet and an NKVD officer who brought him an offer: his life for poems written along the lines of the people’s government. “Lole palo eglelo” is a mode of expression imitating Lithuanian folk singing, maybe a daina—a sort of carol (*egle* is a fir, a Christmas tree). *Sutartinia*, on the other hand, is one of the most significant genres of the Lithuanian folk polyphonic song, an exam-

ple of archaic polyphony based on syncopation and dissonance accords. The *eglė*, which appears here twice, refers also to one of the most famous Baltic fable, one about Egle, the Queen of snakes. Garšva cannot write for people as the people's government requires because he listens intently to his own self and thus, in harmony with his internal voice, inspired by the contact with nature, he has a chance to make contact with other people. And indeed, this takes place when Garšva—beaten black and blue for insubordination—lied in a hospital and where he gained listeners when he unconsciously declaimed his poems.

Antanas Garšva, the main character of the Lithuanian emigration novel from 1958, is a figure of a Lithuanian writer-emigrant. His grasp on the relation between the family land, folk traditions and literature is one of the keys to the understanding of the output of the Lithuanian publishers of Miłosz's poems in the 1950s. Besides, it seems to me that this fragment may also be another invitation to comparative studies on the output of *žemininkai-lankininkai* and the author of the *Netive Realm*.

Fragments of *The Seizure of Power* published in "Literatūros lankai" were provided with the title *Enwheeled by Hopelessness (Nevilties apgultieji)*. Hopelessness, or despair is one of the most important existential experiences of Antanas Garšva. In this context, in his essay on *Epochos...* mentioned before, Greimas points out that Czesław Miłosz belongs to those authors who treat literature as a weapon against despair:

Consciousness alone often lead to despair. Consciousness goes in circles and eats its own tail. Albert Camus: the fight with plague origins in compassion; the fight with plague requires the resignation from compassion. [...] The fruits of despair. Should we never surrender? Should we protest? On whose behalf? Nobody is without guilt—well, we know this thanks to the very consciousness. Each "no!" is answered by a hundredfold echo of "yes!", which sounds as a betrayal of both of them. All that is left is writing for the non-existing reader, maybe a future one. According to his own words, the poetry of C. Miłosz is a fight with despair, a means of avoiding it. [...]

This testimonial (literature and art—added by B.K.) is a moral act of historic meaning. H e r e t u r n s t h e c o n s c i o u s n e s s, which broke away from the reality, t o t h e p r o c e s s o f h u m a n h i s t o r y [my emphasis—B.K.]. Indeed, a poet is still *desdichado*, but no longer *desperado*. [Greimas, p. 9]

Lithuanian authors present in the *Žemė* anthology and assembled around the "Literatūros lankai" journal drew their inspirations from existentialism, chief-

ly from the output of Albert Camus and the writings of Martin Heidegger<sup>11</sup>. Their fascination with this philosophical current was anchored mostly in experiences which shaped the attitudes and poetics of many writers of that time: the world war, totalitarianisms, exile (see: Girnius 1955]. Translations of Czesław Miłosz’s works undertaken by Lithuanians in the 1950s, interpretations of his poems and thus established dialogue with him introduced the Polish poet into the circle of the Lithuanian discussion on the condition of an emigrant from Eastern Europe.

The tendency to the fierce actualization of Miłosz’s output (and his personal choices in the public sphere) in the context of historic event is especially evident in Nyka-Niliūnas’ afterword, mentioned here before. Presenting the Polish writer to the Lithuanian reader, Nyka-Niliūnas, an expert in western literatures, philosophy and art, a witness of the Sovietization of his country, an emigrant repeatedly returning in his writing to his family village in Aukštaitija, focused mostly on determining a line connecting the pre-war (catastrophic) and post-war (“salvaging”) works of Miłosz. According to Nyka-Niliūnas, the invariable quality of this poetry consists in consciously assuming a position of a witness of a catastrophe, identical with a catastrophe concerning man and culture, a constantly happening apocalypse:

A catastrophe is the most proper exegesis of the poetry of Miłosz [...].

The poetry of Czesław Miłosz reached its time and simultaneously became universal in accordance with the rhythm of historical convulsions: the lost war, the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto, the Warsaw uprising—a theatre where roles were played by dying insurgents, while the audience consisted of the Red Army stationed on the other bank of Vistula, the bitterness of betrayal, the illusion of liberations and its loss. [...]

In its essence, it is a poetry of *a city besieged by barbarians*. Its ideological leitmotif, so frightening for the contemporary society, may be characterized in the following manner: there are barbarians behind the city walls, which for us—the inhabitants of the city—is tantamount with the following question: When will they enter the city and we, together with our culture, become only a legend of the past? [Miłosz 1955, pp. 87—89).

Therefore in the end, a writer of the *žemininkai-lankininkai* generation found a common ground with Czesław Miłosz not only as a man experienced by History (human history in their poetry was often personified), but also as

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<sup>11</sup> The main “ideologist” of this generation, Juozas Girnius, was a philosopher—existentialist, specializing particularly in Heidegger. Philosophical notions such as “Dasein”, “Sein” (“being”), “Sein zum Tode” (“being-toward-death”), “Zeitlichkeit” (“temporality”), in the meanings given them by this German philosopher were assumed, internalized and quoted in their poetical works by Nyka-Niliūnas and Nagys.

a fugitive from his family Europe<sup>12</sup>. And here lies a particularly important common point of opinions about Czesław Miłosz formulated by Lithuanian writers in the 1950s and of what he himself wanted to tell those emigrant Lithuanians.

In the foreword Miłosz wrote for *Epochos sąmoningumo poezija* one can discern plots that refer to his essayist output, as well as to his fictional prose and poetry, which allow “situating” this text (which is, indeed, yet another Miłosz’s essay on identity) in time: precisely in the 1950s. Here, in my opinion, particular emphasis should be put on the origins of the poet and his sources of poetic imagination:

I was born in 1911 by the Nevėžis river, near Kėdainiai, and my documents obviously say nothing about the shade of the meadows and the echoes of songs coming in the evenings from the villages on the other side of the river; it is replaced by a brief: Šeteiniai, Lithuania. [...]

My imagination was shaped by the Lithuanian village by Nevėžis, as well as by the woods and waters surrounding Vilnius. [...] I have always had a very vivid attitude to Mickiewicz. Nothing in him is “Lithuanian exoticism” to me, all is familiar. [...] [Miłosz 1955, pp. 13—14]

Miłosz’s essay contains statements that are comprehensible in the context of his entire output (both literary works and his public speeches in Poland and Lithuania), which, however, sometimes raised controversies both among Poles and Lithuanians or were received with ambivalence and puzzlement, to say the least:

we do not gain anything by effacing traces, unless we wish to become people who come from nowhere. That corner of Europe with all its complications is inseparably connate with me [...].

Poems included in this book were not translated into a “foreign” language. After all, I have heard this language around me when I was a child. Juozas Kekstas [tak u Miłosza—B.K.] gives our common motherland back what is to large extent its property. [Miłosz 1955, p. 22]

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<sup>12</sup> More: a fugitive from his family, worse, provincial Europe. In the Lithuanian’s text from the 1950s cited in this paper, in the memories of Nyka-Niliūnas and Jonas Mekas, as well as in the poetry of Lithuanian emigrants, mainly those over a decade younger, such as Algimantas Mackus, one can easily come across fragments that may be interpreted with the application of the terminological apparatus provided by postcolonial studies. Incidentally, a collation similar to the one proposed by Marta Wyka in her essay on two “unknown children, secondary regions”, that is Czesław Miłosz and Albert Camus, could be very interesting and instructive [see Wyka, pp. 167—180].

Czesław Miłosz’s national affiliation, as well as the “national” identity of his literary output in Polish was a rather weighty question for Girnius, Greimas and Nyka-Niliūnas. The latter’s diaries give us an idea of the rationalization of this “nationality” of the author and his texts. This issue, however, exceeds the though frames of this paper [see: Kasner].

These notes also include ponderings which—as I have written above—were regarded as the most significant by Nyka-Niliūnas and other Lithuanian interpreters of Miłosz:

Poetry allowing the immodesty of demands was beginning to be my ideal. [...]

But there is a space between the objective set by such poetry and its achievement. [...] In any case, my conception of poetry as the consciousness of an epoch made me particularly resistant to both the “socialist regime” and the “pure art” [Miłosz 1955, p. 17].

We may assume that Juozas Kėkštas made more efforts, both intellectual and organizational, in order to present the person and output of Czesław Miłosz to the Lithuanian reader. However, even a perfunctory and preliminary reading of Lithuanian texts on Miłosz written in the emigrant milieu of *žeminiškai-lankininkai* allows hypothesising that their authors granted the Polish poet’s output a role much more serious than only a sentimental link with the little motherland of their youth. It was supposed to become one of the interpretation keys enabling the understanding of the present day. It may also have been supposed to be the source of inspiration for the poetic language, as well as of essayist and philosophical reflection.

We should also bear in mind that the cooperation of Lithuanian emigrant writers with Czesław Miłosz had more than one, “Lithuanian”, dimension. It also resulted texts published in the Paris “Kultura” and concerning Lithuanian literature in exile. In issue 10 of “Kultura” from 1955, Miłosz thanked for the Lithuanian volume of his poems (in a short note entitled *Pokwitowanie* (Eng. *Receipt*)). The issue also featured Girnius’ essay *W poszukiwaniu dialogu polsko-litewskiego* (Eng. *In search of the Polish-Lithuanian dialogue*), Nyka-Niliūnas’ *Najnowsza poezja litewska* (Eng. *The latest Lithuanian poetry*) and several poems by Lithuanian poets, including: Kazys Bradūnas, Henrikas Nagys, Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas, and Vytautas Mačernis translated by Juozas Kėkštas.

Parenthetically, we should also note two more problematics, which cannot be discussed in this paper:

1. “Lithuanian” texts published by Czesław Miłosz in “Literatūros lankai” seem to impose a type of reading that evokes his personal biographical demons from the 1940s and 1950s. We may here recall e.g. the with his Lithuanian passport, the Lithuanian visa list to the USA, troubles with national identity, and critical attitude to the “old emigration” and more

broadly to Poles (“Królewski”—inhabitants of the Crown) in general. This nationality or community looping and difficult identification with the Polish national tradition is particularly discernible in the abovementioned essay on Mickiewicz, which is in fact a very sharp lampoon on Poles as a very intolerant, envious and buffoonish nation<sup>13</sup>.

2. Another interesting thing is how Alfons Nyka-Niliūnas’ attitude to Czesław Miłosz changed over time. In order, however, to properly comment the intellectual dialogue inscribed in the whole output of these outstanding modernist poets, we should attempt to write parallel biographies, which requires source studies and, most of all, comparative studies of the poetic and essayist output as well as literary criticism written by Czesław Miłosz and the Lithuanian Columbuses.

## Literature

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<sup>13</sup> The original text is preserved in Miłosz’ archives in the collection of the Beinecke Library. It appears it has not been published in Polish [see Miłosz 1959].

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