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Dialogue of Cultures in the Creative Work by Czesław Miłosz

Abstract: The article deals with the peculiarity of the literary representation of multiculturalism and the borderland in creative work by Czesław Miłosz. The factors which influenced the development of Miłosz's poetry are revealed, the life of the author in Wilno in the inter-war period is considered, and the romantic tradition of Adam Mickiewicz is outlined. The cultural and political events which were reflected in the legacy of Miłosz are examined; the period of emigration and the homecoming are studied. The cultural and national specificity of the borderland, which affected the creative writing of Miłosz, is depicted, and distinct ethnic and cultural models, images and symbols in the author's ideological and artistic inquiries are analyzed.

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Key words: literary adaptation, history, tradition, multicultural space, Polish literature, borderland, image, stereotype, intercultural communication, identity, literary translation.

Introduction

The problem of dialogue of cultures has become one of the topical areas of literary research in recent decades. However, the writings by representatives of Slavic literatures through the prism of dialogue of cultures have not been systematically and thoroughly analyzed. It could be explained by the old-established traditions of Slavic literary criticism, with its main focus on social and national problems. A dialogue of different cultures and traditions is an inseparable part of the creative activity by Czesław Miłosz (1911–2004) – a poet, novelist, literary critic, philosopher, essayist and translator whose literary works are becoming more familiar to contemporary reading audiences around the world. New books about his life and literary talent in different languages are being published; new articles are appearing in literary and scholarly journals; conferences and cultural events dedicated to the life and work of the great writer are held; and finally, the Internet space provides rich information about the winner of the 1980 Nobel Prize for literature.

The creative work by Czesław Miłosz who strongly influenced the development of the Polish poetry in the second half of the 20th century became the subject of intense scientific reflection in foreign literary criticism in the 1980-90s. However, the problem of dialogue of cultures in Miłosz's writings is not sufficiently researched. In theoretical, historical and literary aspects the Belarusian cultural discourse in the poetry of Miłosz is of great significance since it reflects important cross-cultural connections, a dialogue of national traditions and reveals some peculiarities of Polish literature. We will indicate and consider in the chronological order only the most important literary studies about Miłosz for the past three decades¹.

¹ Andrzej Zawada. *Miłosz*. – Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1996; Aleksander Fiut. *W stronę Miłosza*. – Kraków: Wydawnictwo literackie, 2003; Marek Zaleski. *Zamiast. O twórczości Czesława Miłosza*. – Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2005; Jan Błoński. *Miłosz jak świat*. – Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2011

The objective of this article is to identify the peculiarities of the most important cultural interactions in the life and work of Czesław Miłosz. The theoretical basis of the research is M.M. Bakhtin's concept of "dialogue of cultures". The main research methods used here are historical and cultural, hermeneutic and biographical.

Results and Their Discussion

Czesław Miłosz was not widely known in his home country, Poland, before he was awarded the prestigious prize. The lack of recognition can be explained by objective reasons: since 1951, when the poet deliberately chose exile, his name was suppressed in the Polish People's Republic. Only at the end of the 1970s, in the atmosphere of anticipation of changes in the socio-political and spiritual life of the country, reprints of his books that had been published abroad began to appear in the Polish illegal press. After the year 1980, "official" editions of Miłosz's writings also came out. Miłosz's book *The Captive mind* ("Zniewolony umysł", 1953), along with his other works, created an atmosphere of resistance and contributed to the most important changes that took place at the turn of the 1990s. The writer revealed the metamorphosis of the world views of some Polish writers (their real names were changed) who were prominent after 1945. *The Captive mind* was Miłosz's automythification and a literary parabola. It is a book about the mechanisms of the "enslaved, captive mind" and about the socio-political manipulation of power. The first official edition of this work was not published in Poland until 1990. In the Preface to the Belarusian edition of *The Captive Mind* (Wilno, 2000) the writer emphasized: "The demons of those times, unfortunately, have not disappeared, and I would very much like the Belarusian translation of this book to help finally leave them in the past". Thus, the creative work of this unique writer, whose many-sided personality was formed largely at the intersection of the Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian cultural borderlands, is gradually spreading among readers.

Proclaiming 2011 as the year of Czesław Miłosz, the Polish Sejm noted in its message: "Because Miłosz was a universal writer and thinker, he became one of the greatest intellectual figures of authority. In his work, he courageously went beyond the boundaries of cultures and languages". Yet although Miłosz was *a priori* a "borderlander" (*kresowiak*), he did not like to be called that.

He explained: "I do not fit the definition of a 'border man', and this definition even irritates me. Never in our family did we use such a word to call ourselves. On the contrary, we came from the ancient Grand Duchy of Lithuania"².

Contemporary scholars recognize the phenomenon of a talent born at the crossroads of different nationalities and social boundaries, at the intersection of cultures and traditions, when the uniform successions and reiterated patterns of life in self-contained and closed national and social environments are violated. Miłosz was born near Vilna (Sheteyne manor), on the Lithuanian-Belarusian borderland, a place where the multinational conglomerate of ethnic groups, cultures, and faiths manifested itself to the highest degree. The birthplace of the future poet, as well as his education at a gymnasium and then at Wilno University, which was considered to be a unique Babylon at that time, also greatly contributed to the multicultural discourse of his life and creative work.

The dialogue of cultures is the ideological and philosophical basis of Miłosz's artistic worldview which is embodied in the description of the cultural borderlands and civilizational interactions reflected in the writer's works. This aspect of Miłosz's work is a continuation of the literary tradition which was established in the times of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as well as a reflection of the centuries-old ethno-confessional dialogue. Regional problems, motifs, themes and images considered by the writer acquired a universal significance and raised deep existential, national, moral and ethical problems.

In this context it is necessary to recollect the poem by Czesław Miłosz *My grandfather Zygmunt Kunat* (*Mój dziadek Zygmunt Kunat*) from the collection *This* (*To*, 2000), which may be read as a special reconstruction of the history of the poet's family, which settled on the border territory in the 16th century. This poem is also the author's attempt to determine his place and his identity in the paradigm of his family roots. Miłosz meticulously reconstructs the realities, facts and memories associated with the history of his family:

Nad znajomym jeziorem, do którego właśnie rzuca kamyki, pod jesionami, które miały znaleźć się w moich wierszach. Kunatów liczono do szlachty kalwińskiej, co

² Miłosz, Cz. *Wyprawa w dwudziestolecie* / Cz. Miłosz. – Kraków, 2000. P.9.

snobistycznie odnotowuję, bo u nas na Litwie najbardziej oświeceni byli kalwini. Rodzina zmieniła wyznanie późno, około 1800 roku, ale nie zachowałem żadnego obrazu dziadka w kościelnej ławce w Świętobrości³.

In an interview, Czesław Miłosz confided about his multicultural family roots: “The documents about the life of my family, for example, going back to the 16th century, are written in two languages. For me, it is an absolute mystery what language my ancestors spoke in the 16th century. Was it Lithuanian, or Polish, or the old Belarusian language? I cannot answer that. Most probably they spoke Polish”⁴. It is interesting to consider this comment made by the Nobel Laureate, in light of the words of the Russian scholar V. Britanishsky:

“In the 17th and 18th centuries, the Miłoszes, like the Lithuanian gentry (shlyakhta), became Polish-speaking. In the 20th century, the problem of self-identification of the Polish-speaking Lithuanian man revealed itself. Miłosz defines himself as a Lithuanian man but also as a Polish poet, and compares his situation as a Polish-speaking Lithuanian poet to that of the English-speaking poets of Irish descent. In Miłosz’s consciousness, the atmosphere of the dual Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is alive, just as it was alive for Mickiewicz, who was born only a few years after the destruction of the Commonwealth. Czesław Miłosz considered the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to be his Motherland, which was multi-ethnic and, as he liked to stress, multi-confessional. It was the land where Lithuanians, Poles, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Jews, Karaites, and Lithuanian Tatars lived side by side”⁵. It is this complex national self-identification that will often resonate in the creative mind of Miłosz as a writer, philosopher and teacher. It will be revealed through various reflections, allusions, reminiscences, and quotations from texts written at a time when Poland was a mighty state, as well as images of historical and cultural iconic figures, including Belarusian ones.

³ Miłosz, Cz. *To / Cz.* Miłosz. – Kraków, 2001.P.13.

⁴ Czesława Miłosza autoportret przekorny. Rozmowy przeprowadził A.Fuit. – Kraków, 1994.P.180.

⁵ Britanishsky, V. *Vvedenie v Miłosza / Britanishsky // Voprosy Literatury*, 1991. – No. 6. – S. 109–133.P.111.

Miłosz had a unique surprising ability to masterfully combine both Mickiewicz's (nineteenth-century) and his own (twentieth-century) love for the homeland (according to Goethe, the "land of childhood"), with universalism and the desire for intercultural dialogue. The Polish scholar Helena Głogowska rightly emphasized that "Miłosz's homeland was Lithuania – multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-confessional. Belarusians in his literary work are an inseparable part of this native community – the community of the writer's Small Motherland. The author has always treated Belarusian people with respect. Miłosz's sympathetic attitude to Belarusians and Jews was the reason for his dismissal from radio Wilno"⁶.

The Belarusian literary critic Svetlana Musienko aptly observed in this respect: "It should be emphasized that Miłosz's literary hero does not have the features of localization (place of birth, nationality, local customs) since he is a citizen of the world and he represents the author's wide knowledge about different cultures. Miłosz's Small Motherland is revealed through the memories of his childhood, his parents, and the blurred image of the country of his youth. The lyric hero visited many countries, learned their customs and traditions, and received extensive knowledge of the world. That is why he can represent the memories of the past from a philosophical distance. Sometimes he recollects episodes of his life with irony, no matter how dramatic they are, since he looks back from the perspective of fifty years. Miłosz's literary hero revived the lost Small Motherland in his memories and reconstructed this powerful image in his artistic work, because it was no longer possible to find the homeland in reality. For this reason, the emotional and lyrical component of Miłosz's poems was subordinated to the philosophical-pessimistic factor: "Let the dead poets touch the strings" ("Zmarli poeci niechaj dotkną strun") (in *Prayer on Christmas Eve (Modlitwa wigilijna)*)"⁷. The idea expressed by Musienko is exemplified in the following lines from Miłosz's poetry, which reflect the colors and smells of the Arcadian memories of his native land:

⁶ Głogowska, H. *Bezdomność prawdy – o białoruskich motywach w twórczości Czesława Miłosza* / H.Głogowska // *Pogranicza, cezury, zmierzchy Czesława Miłosza*. – Białystok, 2012. – S. 215 – 229. P.226.

⁷ Musijenko, S. «Mała ojczyzna w twórczości Czesława Miłosza» / S.Musijenko // *Polonistyka wobec wyzwań współczesności*. – T.1. – Opole, 2014. P. 667.

Była to łąka nadreczna, bujna sprzed sianokosów,
 W nieskazitelnym dniu czerwonego słońca.
 Całe życie szukałem jej i rozpoznałem.
 Rosły tu trawy i kwiaty kiedyś znajome dziecku.
 Przez na wpół przymknięte powieki wchłaniałem światłość.
 I zapach mnie ogarnął, ustało wszelkie widzenie.
 Nagłe poczułem, że znikam i płaczę ze szczęścia⁸.

Miłosz also noted down vivid childhood impressions of war: during the First World War, together with his parents he was forced to leave his country, become a refugee, and depart for the remote corners of Russia through Belarus. The description of this road is presented in the famous poem *Anxiety-dream* (*Trwoga-sen*) and based on biographical facts. In 1939–1940 Miłosz would make his way to Wilno several times through the territory of contemporary Belarus, which repeatedly became the scene of military confrontation between the neighboring Great Powers. This largely determined the political and socio-cultural existence of this region.

It is well known that as a result of the Polish-Lithuanian and Polish-Soviet wars, as well as the conclusion of the Riga Peace Treaty (1921), Wilno and the territories adjacent to the city became part of the second Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów) for twenty years. It was during the interwar period that Czesław Miłosz completed the Polish gymnasium and graduated from the Stefan Batory University in Wilno, whose corridors Mickiewicz and his friends, the philomats, frequented so the rebellious spirit was felt especially strongly there. In this regard, Miłosz's attention to Adam Mickiewicz, who was a star of the first magnitude in world literature, was not accidental. The Nobel Laureate wrote about Mickiewicz – the writer of the Belarusian-Polish cultural borderland cross-cultural frontier. Miłosz revised the stereotype of the poet-prophet which was developed in Polish national consciousness and added his own nuances to the portrait of Mickiewicz, focusing not only on the lyrical and romantic nature of his talent, but also on the complex interweaving of various currents, poetics, and artistic trends in his creative consciousness.

⁸ Miłosz, Cz. *Wyprawa w dwudziestolecie* / Cz. Miłosz. – Kraków, 2000. P.414.

As a student, Czesław Miłosz was one of the organizers of the *Zhagary* poetic group, which entered the history of Polish literature as “The Second Avant-garde”. In the years 1931-1934, this society of young Wilno poets published the monthly journal *Zhagary*, whose title, as Miłosz explained in his book *The History of Polish Literature* (1969), took its origins from “the Lithuanian word which meant “firewood” or in the local meaning it denoted “dry branches for lighting a fire”⁹. Although the group did not have an aesthetic program, its members were united by catastrophic motifs, apocalyptic visions, and the anticipation of the inevitable extermination of humankind, which were born in the disturbing atmosphere of the 1930s. It can be noted that all Polish poetry of that time was marked by catastrophism whose vector inspired not formal experiments but attention to content. The desire to understand what was happening in the world led writers to present catastrophic scenarios in such fields as historiography, philosophy, metaphysics, and religious studies.

Miłosz’s first two books – *A Poem On Frozen Time* (*Poemat o czasie zastygłym*, 1933) and *Three winters* (*Trzy zimy*, 1936) – are evidence of a wide artistic range. The poems included in these poetry collections combined realistic features (as the basis of the poetry), the formal experiments of Polish futurists, surreal imagery, and expressionistic details. All these components surprisingly co-existed, interacted with, and did not oppose each other. In the early works by Czesław Miłosz one can find motifs, images and realities born in the cross-cultural borderline of the inter-war period in Poland.

Nad brzegami niebieskiego Niemna
I Niewiaży o wodzie czarnej
Zasiewają jasnowłosi chłopci
ciężkie pszenicy ziarna.

Koszą łąki, których zieleń jest
Największą radością świata,
I wierzą, że dobry Bóg
Jak jastrzęb w niebiosach lata¹⁰.

⁹ Miłosz, Cz. *Historia literatury polskiej* (do roku 1939). – Kraków, 1993.P.471.

¹⁰ Miłosz, Cz. *Jeszcze wiersz o ojczyźnie* / Cz.Miłosz // *Żagary*, 1931, nr 2.

After the war, Miłosz, who was fluent in English, worked for the diplomatic service in the United States and then in France. However, after a short visit to the pro-Soviet People's Poland, the writer decided to emigrate. This decision to a great extent determined the drama of the poet's future fate, his creative work, and his perception of the socio-political and cultural problems of Europe. The ideas of the future Nobel Laureate expressed in his essay *On Exile* (*O wygnaniu*, 1951) about man's search for Home, his place in the axis of anthological coordinates sound prophetic even today: "Those who leave their land, its landscapes and customs, will remain in no man's land, which like a desert, the desert that believers have chosen for wisdom and prayers. The only way to acquire orientation is to re-establish your own North, East, West and South, and in this own space place your Vitebsk or Dublin, raise them, so to speak, to a new height. What was lost is returned on a higher level, as real and alive..."¹¹. "Exodus of people from their countries is a fundamental feature of our century, with various reasons... Looking for happiness in distant countries, we must be prepared for disappointment, and even for a dubious leap from the fire into the flames..."¹².

"For centuries, the tradition of showing the image of the entire earth as a land of exile, which is usually drawn as a desert in which Adam and Eve wander alone with their heads down. For they are banished from their homestead, from their own home..."¹³.

In the poem *Choosing the poems of Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz for an Evening of His Poetry* (*Wybierając wiersze Jarosława Iwaszkiewicza na wieczór jego poezji*) from the collection of poetry *This*, Miłosz defined the role of this classic of Polish literature, who was a representative of the Ukrainian–Polish borderland:

Bo to przyniosłeś ze swojej Ukrainy
Barwy i zapach kwitnącego stepu,
Słone powiewy od greckiego morza

¹¹ Miłosz, Cz. Poszukiwanie Ojczyzny / Cz. Miłosz. – Kraków, 1991. P.203.

¹² Ibidem, p.215-216.

¹³ Ibidem, p.212.

I biel, i złoto bizantyjskich zmierzchów.
 Nienasycony i zdumiony pięknem,
 Słuchałeś rytmów dnia i rytmów nocy,
 Zmieniając siebie w muzyczny instrument¹⁴.

As a man of the cultural frontier, Czesław Miłosz could say something similar conceptually about himself, since his artistic heritage could be typologically correlated with the work of Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz.

Daylight (*Światło dzienne*, 1953), composed of works written between 1946 and 1952, was Miłosz's first poetry book created abroad. The geography of the countries in which he wrote is very diverse: it included Poland (Kraków), where Miłosz lived for some time, America, where he worked in the diplomatic corps, and France (Paris), which became a refuge for the émigré poet. In the works from *Daylight* the moral-ethical and psychological state of the Polish intelligentsia in the post-war period was investigated with particular acuteness. The mighty power of irony, and the tendency to use paradoxes gave the texts of the books a special coloring and the perfect artistic form provided lyrical poetry with internal dynamics. The poetry of Czesław Miłosz was detached from politics: "And so we had our home in history" – this thought would be interpreted in many poems of the *Daylight* collection. It would also repeat the idea that in the twentieth century human destinies were ("swallowed") dissolved in history in a special way. The writer perceived history as a variable and relative phenomenon: truth was presented with a touch of falseness, its sentences were random and unfair, there was nothing definite about it and only with terrible regularity do wars and cataclysms recur.

In the poem *Poetic treatise* (*Traktat poetycki*, 1957), Miłosz considers the spiritual and aesthetic inquires of Polish poetry of the first half of the twentieth century. He represents his ideas about the Spirit of History, placing his theory in the context of the philosophical history of the world created by Hegel – one of the greatest thinkers of the world. Miłosz argues that the Spirit of History, the one of which Hegel spoke and according to which historical facts and events are placed according to the highest order and to the laws predetermined by God, is an unhappy Spirit. From this understanding of history Miłosz's conviction about

¹⁴ Miłosz, Cz. *To / Cz. Miłosz*. – Kraków, 2001. P.55.

the mission of poetry as salvation was born. None of the contemporary poets managed to state so concisely and courageously: “You, who offended the common man, be not safe” (“*The Poet Remembers*”, “*Poeta pamięta*”). But at the same time the writer’s philosophical skepticism becomes apparent in this statement, since the power of history is wide-ranging and all-encompassing, and it is this power that makes relative everything that is created by man. That is why it spreads its power to history, and hence poetry is also subject to it.

Most of the works by Miłosz have a strong autobiographical impulse and were born from nostalgic memories of his childhood and youth. A vivid example of his autobiographical writing is the book *Native Realm* (*Rodzinna Europa*, 1958), in which he presents a search for national and cultural self-definition and examines the consciousness of a writer and an individual personality. Miłosz states: “I admit that Belarusians are still a mystery to me”¹⁵. Another book of essays by the writer, *Search for the Motherland* (*Szukanie Ojczyzny*) is directly connected with the history of Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine and Poland. In the Preface to the book Miłosz emphasized: “I am interested in geography and history of the territory from which I came, the lands once called the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This knowledge can help understand the historical mistakes of the past, and this is very necessary when Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine are trying to establish neighborly relations that correspond to the realities. In my opinion, I can be proud of one thing: I have never been gripped by hatred in the twentieth century filled by terrible endurance and mass crimes; on the contrary, I sought to speak out against mutual accusations of different peoples and ethnic groups. This may not be much but we are witnessing what inter-ethnic conflicts lead to; that is why every voice aimed at mutual tolerance is important”¹⁶.

Polesie is such a special symbol of unity and common destiny of neighbouring peoples. It is a small part of the world where a unique interaction of the cultures and folklore of Belarusians, Poles and Ukrainians exists even today. Polesie became a problematic subject in the twentieth century, after numerous wars, government redistribution, land reclamation and the catastrophe at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. Literature repeatedly turned to the reflec-

¹⁵ Miłosz, Cz. *Rodzinna Europa* / Cz. Miłosz. – Warszawa, 1990. P.61.

¹⁶ Miłosz, Cz. *Poszukiwanie Ojczyzny* / Cz. Miłosz. – Kraków, 1991. P.5-6.

tion of people's lives in this region and their original traditions, and depicted the manifestations of their material and spiritual culture. Czesław Miłosz also contributed to the preservation of the uniqueness of Polesie: "An abandoned province of Europe is located around it, and its inhabitants, who speak Polish, Lithuanian, Belarusian or a mixed language, have preserved many traditions and customs that are unknown anywhere else"¹⁷.

The Nobel Laureate was concerned about the processes that were taking place in this region, because, as he believed, a special local color may be lost in the ethno-cultural palette of Europe.

Once abroad, Miłosz did not depict the realities of foreign life for a long time. It was only after 10 years of living abroad that he turned his attention to the panorama of Western European and American life, interpreting it artistically in many chapters of the book *Vision From San Francisco Bay* (1969). But at the same time, the author always preserved the Polish-Lithuanian perspective of vision and perception, which created a multicultural discourse of the writer's artistic work.

Czesław Miłosz could masterfully combine the universal and the national, the planetary perspective and his local, micro vision. This can be confirmed by his poetry books *King Popiel and other poems* (*Król Popiel i inne wiersze*, 1962), and *Charmed Gutya* (*Gucio zaczarowany*, 1965).

In the volume of poems *Where the Sun Rises and Where It Sets* (*Gdzie odchodzi słońce i kiedy zapada*, 1974), there coexist works that are thematically dedicated both to California, and, as before, to Lithuania, which remained dear to the writer's heart. The spirit of Lithuania is reflected in every line of the book, and the poem that gave the title to the entire collection is dedicated to Lithuania. Prosaic and poetic passages, quotations from different books and ancient documents, lines from Miłosz's friends' letters and his favorite literary works, some fragments from the Bible and the imitation of the Old Belarusian language are intertwined in seven chapters of this book, which is complex in its structure but compositionally logical and coherent.

Unattainable Land (*Nieobjęta ziemia*, 1984) is another poetry collection by Miłosz. The wide geographical and time range represented in the poems is stressed by the title of the book. The powerful intellectual and creative poten-

¹⁷ Miłosz, Cz. *Zniewolony umysł* / Cz. Miłosz. – Kraków, 1989. P. 146.

tial of the writer's poetry is also displayed in his inquiries. In the preface to this edition, the author noted: "the method of combining poetry and prose is most evident in *Unattainable Land*. It is about searching for the most capacious form that will incorporate the free use of fragments of prose, quotes, and even personal letters"¹⁸.

Miłosz's mind and his poetic imagination are often filled with sharp conflict (he is famous for his antithesis). He wrote more than once about history as such, reflecting on its laws, regulations and power, paying attention to the history of an individual personality engaged in everyday work. The writer spoke about planetary, universal problems and often described insignificant scenes, painting the unique color of everyday life. Opposing ruthless events in history, he praised the fate and deeds of man, who was able, despite all obstacles, to create masterpieces and a cultural treasury over the centuries. That is why Miłosz was and remains a humanist and an advocate of culture. His poetry allows readers to feel life in all its complex, multi-dimensional and contradictory integrity.

Over time, in the poetry of Czesław Miłosz a new trend became increasingly noticeable. It reflected the writer's special attitude to reality, which he perceived simultaneously in the heterogeneity and the diversity of the world and the unity of each object as a whole. On the one hand, his poetic strategy includes the desire to describe the materiality and specificity of the surrounding world, but on the other hand, the writer realized that this could not be fully implemented, because words, even poetic ones, deprive things and phenomena of their unity and uniqueness. Miłosz always tried to reach a synthesis of poetry and prose, genre syncretism, the fusion of ancient images and forms with modern ones. This project of poetry is obviously avant-garde; it is designed for an active dialogue between the writer and the reader.

Miłosz's poetry is a multi-dimensional phenomenon which includes the writer's wide intellectual horizons. Each book by Miłosz must be read in the context of the previous ones. The phenomenal fact is that he worked fruitfully as a poet for twenty years after he had been awarded the prestigious Nobel Prize. This is confirmed by the book in which the author was able to realize the ideal of poetry "with a more capacious form" ("formy bardziej pojemnej"). In this book, the writer deliberately limited his usual arsenal of poetic and formal

¹⁸ Miłosz, Cz. Nieobjęta ziemia / Cz. Miłosz. – Paryż, 1984. P.4.

means but retained his rich metaphorical imagery and his originality of style. The stanzas of this book are always aphoristic, they are filled with allusions and reminiscences, and they are distinguished by a specific rhythm. Thus, before us, on the one hand, is a poetic prose, and on the other, – a pure poetry, great in its simplicity, which signifies the highest poetic mastery. In the poetry book *This* it becomes obvious that the author distances himself from objective poetry in order to tell more about himself, which leads to the prevalence of the poetics of confession and repentance. Miłosz's artistic universe and its existential paradigm are defined primarily by the following binary oppositions: good and evil, life and death, the sacred and the profane, the national and the universal. It is no accident that the writer assigns poetry the role of the one who will say the last "Yes" to this world and life:

Jasności promeniste, niebiańskie rosy czyste,
Pomogajcie każdemu ziemi doznającemu¹⁹.

The intuitive metaphor of childhood and the ironic rationality of adulthood are combined in many works by Czesław Miłosz. The poetry collection *The Second Space* (*Druga przestrzeń*, 2002) is a lyrical and philosophical dialogue of the poet with God, and with the people with whom his fate brought him together. The central work of the book is the poem *Treatise on Theology* (*Traktat teologiczny*), in which the author deals with the religious and metaphysical sphere, and he does this by representing all the processes through his own "self", through his personal experience. The author also explores the categories of faith, hope and love, and reflects on the problems of art and nature²⁰.

On the one hand, Miłosz always rejected the imposition of certain rules, restrictions and recommendations. This is why prose and poetry, translations and originals of literary works, artistic and documentary texts often intertwine in his poetry. In a particular way, without difficulty he combines the four systems of versification – syllabic, tonic, syllabotonic, and free verse in his poetic practice. Of great importance for the poet is free verse, which became dominant

¹⁹ Miłosz, Cz. *To / Cz.* Miłosz. – Kraków, 2001. P.54.

²⁰ Miłosz, Cz. *Druga przestrzeń / Cz.* Miłosz. – Kraków, 2002.

in many literatures of the world in the twentieth century. On the other hand, Miłosz's poetry develops in the context of literary tradition, and through quotations and allusions it is interconnected with many classical works that the poet remembers very well, since this literary legacy taught him not only poetic skill, but also patience, humanism, and high culture.

Concerning the example of Miłosz's poetry collections, one can observe his skilful use of the experience of his predecessors' works, starting with those of Adam Mickiewicz, which enriched the younger poet's creative writing. As he acquired artistic experience, Miłosz's connections with the past and tradition became more and more subtle and complex, which was extremely important for his poetry. The untapped potential of literature – the world of its images, motifs, conflicts, themes, and metalanguage – were gradually passing to a new generation as historical and cultural memory. After all, the more original a writer is, the deeper and more obvious is his connection with the previous artistic experience and literary tradition. Miłosz's work is characterized by the combination of the old and the new, the tradition and innovation, the common and the transcendental.

Conclusion

Thus, the research carried out emphasizes the significance of the dialogue of cultures in Czesław Miłosz's literary works. The most important concepts that determine the writer's worldview are "borderlands", "dialogue", "tradition", "nature", as well as "Polish" and "Belarusian". The author's poetics can be defined as the "poetics of the borderland" since it is formed in the constant dialogue of traditions and cultures, in the process of intensive reception of spiritual meanings and stylistics. The wit and aphoristic nature of Miłosz's poetry, the cascades of metaphors which create vivid artistic images, the fine use of antithesis, irony, intertextuality, and intercultural discourse – all this combined with the wealth of versification and varied rhythms which reflect the dynamics of the thoughts and feelings of the lyrical "I" make the poetry of Czesław Miłosz a valuable contribution to the literature of the 20th and early 21st centuries and define the author's peculiar poetics as the poetics of the borderland.

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