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

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The inspiration to undertake this subject was twofold. Firstly, it was born from a 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*). This was published in 1955 in Buenos Aires by the editors of a Lithuanian emigrant literary journal “Literatūros lankai” (“Literary Sheets”)¹ as the first volume of a literary publishing series [see: Miłosz 1955]². This paper is also concerned with the question regarding the motiva-

* Polish original: (2014) Czesław Miłosz i litewscy „Kolumbowie”. Przyczynek do jeszcze jednej biografii równoległej. *Wielogłos* 2(20), pp. 65–80.

¹ 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.

² 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 Po-

tion for this publishing decision and the nature of the cooperation between the editorial board and the Polish poet³. Secondly, it was supplemented by studies on the authors of the Polish “formation 1910” published in recent years. Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas (as several other of the closest collaborators of “Literatūros lankai”) belongs to the same generation as our Columbuses⁴ both in terms of age and the fact that his youthful poetical output was vested in the war experience. In my understanding, however, his intellectual “encounter” with Miłosz during the preparation of *Epochos...* allows one 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 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. 1, pp. 412–413]. It may be concluded that, as an active and respected literary critic, Nyka-Niliūnas received a request to write the afterword to the collection of poems by the Miłosz, while the *spiritus movens* of the whole undertaking was Juozas Kėkštys (1915–1981), featured on the title page as the author of translations and editor, a friend of Miłosz from 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 labourer, he wrote poems, translated literature, did editorial work, and strived to take care of the development of Lithuanian literary life in exile [see: Kasner, *passim*]. Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas (born 1919) did not know Polish⁵, but had accustomed his ear to it when young—similarly to many Lithuanians from outside the Vilnius Region who had moved to Vilnius for good or to study in the years 1939–1940.

etry 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.

³ On “Literatūros lankai” and Lithuanian poets of the so-called *žemininkai-lankininkai* generation, see: Kasner; Daujotyte & Kvietkauskas; Miłosz 2014b, pp. 25–26.

⁴ Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas (born Alfonsas Čipkus) was born in 1919 in Nemeikštai (Pl. Niemieszta) 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; from 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 has resided 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.

⁵ This follows from the poet’s diaries (he read classic works of Polish literature in Lithuanian translation, but only knew single Polish every-day phrases). This hypothesis was confirmed by Manfredas Žvirgždas in conversation 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 mentioned 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 over 20 last years of his life there. 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”.

Of the authors of “Literatūros lankai”, the greatest recognition was gained by younger writers, of the same generation as the Polish Columbuses. They included, apart from Nyka-Niliūnas, the 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 c. 25–30, found themselves in exile, mainly in South America. Most of them got across the ocean and were put in camps for displaced persons⁶. In 1951, an anthology of 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 follows from the most fundamental biographical and historico-literary findings, Czesław Miłosz’s “meeting” with this Lithuanian emigrant milieu was, on the one hand, a 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 two Polish generations. They were the *žemininkai-lankininkai*, peers of the Polish Columbuses (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, literary critic and authority Juozas Kėkštas, and last but not least the

⁶ 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 mention here a famous New York filmmaker Jonas Mekas, born in 1922 in Lithuania, whose memories constitute an abundant source of information about the exile of Lithuanian intellectuals born c. 1920 [see: Mekas].

modernist prosaist, playwright and actor Anatanas Škėma⁷. 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* collection⁸, 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 have been published in "Literatūros lankai" was the *Dedication* [see: Miłosz 2014a, p. 78] from the volume *Rescue*. 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 "the exercises of an esperantists' club" (ars gratia artis poetry), 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 vulgarised by anyone. [Miłosz 1955, p. 88]

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 appropria-

⁷ Bearing in mind that the legitimacy of employing the notion of a "literary generation" in historico-literary syntheses may be undermined, I deliberately bring attention only to the dates. In my opinion 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 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; Daujotyė, Kvietauskas). 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 Krzysztof K. Baczyński and Tadeusz Gajcy.

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

tion of their motherland by the Soviets and the notion that emigration should be moralising (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 human existence with a *meaning* in boundary situations such as the experience of war or being torn out 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 output of the *žemininkai-lankininkai* in generational terms, who termed the output of the authors of the anthology *Žemė* 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*⁹ [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 who worked together 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 *consciousness* of the epoch evoked by the poetry:

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

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

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

– “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 should anything 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].

⁹ The emphasis comes from Girnius.

This 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's works). 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), and more precisely on the ability to make a "human" contact through literature:

Poetry that renounces consociation with a human commits suicide. Miłosz chooses "a bottle thrown into the sea" [...], thus cultivating the hope that the rise of a *humane, warm* [my emphasis—B.K.] contact is possible¹⁰.

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, a fragment was taken 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 far bank, on which—though no one knew precisely where—the Russians were" [Miłosz 1985, pp. 53–56]. Fragments selected from chapter XIII included portraits of Dan, Michael, Bertrand, nurses Vila and Magda, Captain 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, pp. 58–61]. Chapter XV, containing the events after the death of Captain Osman [see: Miłosz 1985, pp. 68–71], was published in full. The scene accompanying the execution by firing squad of psychiatric hospital patients seems particularly important:

Magda grasped Seal's hand. 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 the reader that according to Nyka-Niliūnas Czesław Miłosz chose the path of poetry that "brings rescue through its very self". The

¹⁰ Here, Greimas refers to, among other things, Miłosz's foreword to *EPOCHOS...*: "There was and will always be the incommensurability between the word and existence, but in some periods blackening paper with signs requires real Lithuanian pertinacity. For me, the volume prepared by Kėkštis is a valuable gift. Dispersed across various lands, we still constitute a community [...] Poems, published today in Polish or Lithuanian, are truly like a manuscript placed in a bottle thrown into the sea" [Miłosz 2014b, p. 23].

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 Soviet propaganda) and the dignity and identity of the human, as well as language in a new historical and existential situation (this chiefly concerned exile). This rescue was supposed to take place through, among other things, becoming aware of and then affirming loneliness and the liberty of humans in relation to the Earth and other people, both close and strangers, in order to subsequently try to find a significant, substantial community through bodily and linguistic contact [see: Girmius 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*:

A nightingale was singing. *Lole palo eglelo—sutartinės*. Falling mist-souls of the dead. A tale—a forgotten language.

Antanas Garšva was writing. [...] He was looking for a dead world in the song of the nightingale which was resounding in him. [...]

Two lines of a poem were living on lumpy produced from planks. Trees and bushes were growing in the dead world. Fir, pine, lime, oak, birch, juniper. [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. *Sutartinė*, on the other hand, is one of the most significant genres of the Lithuanian folk polyphonic song, an example of archaic polyphony based on syncopation and dissonant chords. The *egle* (fir), which appears here twice, also refers to one of the most famous Baltic fables, one about Eglė, 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 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—was lying in a hospital, where he gained listeners when he unconsciously declaimed his poems.

Antanas Garšva, the main character of the Lithuanian emigration novel after 1958, is a figure of a Lithuanian emigrant writer. 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 *Native Realm*.

Fragments of *The Seizure of Power* published in “Literatūros lankai” were provided with the title *Enwheeled by Hopelessness* (Lith. *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 above, Greimas points out that Czesław Miłosz belongs to those authors who treat literature as a weapon against despair:

Consciousness alone often leads to despair. Consciousness goes in round circles and eats its own tail. Albert Camus: the fight with plague originates in compassion; the fight with plague requires one to give up 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 like a betrayal of both of them. All that is left is writing for the non-existent 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—B. K.] is a moral act of historic meaning. *He returns the consciousness*, which broke away from reality, *to the process of human history* [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 journal “Literatūros lankai” drew their inspiration from existentialism, chiefly from the output of Albert Camus and the writings of Martin Heidegger¹¹. Their fascination with this philosophical current was anchored mostly in experiences that 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 the dialogue with him established in this way introduced the Polish poet into the circle of the Lithuanian discussion on the condition of an emigrant from Eastern Europe.

The tendency to fiercely actualise Miłosz’s output (and his personal choices in the public sphere) in the context of historic events 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 Sovietisation 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 invar-

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

able quality of this poetry consists in consciously assuming the position of the witness of a catastrophe, identical with a catastrophe concerning man and culture, an apocalypse that is constantly taking place:

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

The poetry of Czesław Miłosz was topical 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 liberation and its loss. [...]

In its essence, it is a poetry of *a city besieged by barbarians*. Its ideological leitmotif, so frightening for contemporary society, may be characterised in the following manner: there are barbarians behind the city walls, which for us—the inhabitants of the city—is tantamount to 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, the 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 a fugitive from his family Europe¹². And here lies a particularly important common point regarding opinions about Czesław Miłosz formulated by Lithuanian writers in the 1950s and regarding 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 of his essays on identity) in time, precisely in the 1950s. Here, in my opinion, particular emphasis should be placed 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. [...]

¹² More: a fugitive from his familial, worse, provincial Europe. In the Lithuanians’ 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 using the terminological apparatus provided by postcolonial studies. Incidentally, a collation similar to the one proposed by Marta Wyka in her essay on two “children from unknown, secondary regions”, that is Czesław Miłosz and Albert Camus, could be very interesting and instructive [see: Wyka, pp. 167–180].

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 heard this language around me when I was a child. Juozas Kekstas [sic—B.K.] gives our common motherland back what is to a large extent its property [Miłosz 1955, p. 22].

Czesław Miłosz’s national affiliation, as well as the “national” identity of his literary output in Polish was a rather weighty question for Girmius, Greimas and Nyka-Niliūnas. The latter’s diaries give us an idea of the rationalisation of this “nationality” of the author and his texts. This issue, however, goes beyond the thought frames of this paper [see: Kasner 1999].

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

Poetry that allows 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 “pure art” [Miłosz 1955, p. 17].

We may assume that Juozas Kėkštās made more efforts, both intellectual and organisational, in order to present the person and output of Czesław Miłosz to Lithuanian readers. However, even a perfunctory and preliminary reading of Lithuanian texts on Miłosz written in the emigrant milieu of *žemininkai-lankininkai* allows one to hypothesise that their authors granted the Polish poet’s output a role much more serious than a sentimental link with the little motherland of their youth. It was supposed to become one of the interpretation keys enabling an 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 in texts published in the Paris “Kultura” and concerning Lithuanian literature in exile. In issue 10 of “Kultura” from 1955, Miłosz thanked Lithuanians for the Lithuanian volume of his poems (in a short note entitled *Pokwitowanie* (literally: *Receipt*). The issue also featured Girnius’ essay *W poszukiwaniu dialogu polsko-litewskiego* (literally: *In search of Polish-Lithuanian dialogue*), Nyka-Niliūnas’ *Najnowsza poezja litewska* (literally: *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 subjects, 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 problem of his Lithuanian passport, the Lithuanian visa list to the USA, troubles with his national identity, and his critical attitude to the “old emigration” and more broadly to Poles in general. This nationality or community entanglement 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 nation¹³.

2. Another interesting thing is how Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas’ attitude to Czesław Miłosz changed over time. In order, however, to properly comment on 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 on the poetic and essayist output, as well as literary criticism written by Czesław Miłosz and the Lithuanian Columbuses.

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¹³ 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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