THREE TYPES OF ÉMIGRÉ IDENTITY – ZBIGNIEW HERBERT'S ÉMIGRÉ, POLISH ROMANTICISM AND MIŁOSZ'S IDEA OF REDEMPTION

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1.

When an individual is exiled from his homeland, he may either cling to the old forms of life, or consciously experience his sense of loss of centre. In the latter case, he discovers that forms of life are not rooted in being itself, but are (or must be) created (or adopted) by individuals facing the (original?) void of human life. Living means to be exiled from the realm of transcendence and to be thrown into a space of alienation – being determined by forms that have not been created (or adopted) by myself. When I simply "am", I am alienated from myself (i.e. I am not a real self, but a "product" of "circumstances"). "Coming" to myself, I have to (re)create myself by consciously experiencing my alienation (i.e. I have to perceive my "otherness"). The condition of the émigré (a special case of this condition is exile as a "mental state") helps us to discover this essential truth. I have to "lose" myself in order to regain my true selfhood.

In Polish literature the experience of exile has long been an essential element with regard to the constitution of the national identity. In other words, "I" can only be a true self, return to my-self, by attempting to reaffirm, to recover the greater self of nationhood, by being a "Pole". This collective idea of "selfhood" that was "created" – and consciously experienced – by the Polish romantic poet Mickiewicz, became as a conventionalized, merely slavishly repeated "form" the starting-point of Witold Gombrowicz's metaphysical rebellion against the tyranny of "Polishness" and resulted in the awareness that the dialectics of form are at the core of human being and have a "universal" import. Universal values or

ideas are always rooted in particular experience, e.g. the predicament of a "Polish" émigré. Gombrowicz denies that the idea of a "transcendent" origin of values and ideas is meaningful and replaces it by nothingness, indetermination. However, man is always to a certain extent determined, even if he takes a negative attitude to a certain form by creating an "anti-form", which is not the absence of form, but just a paradoxical specimen of form. This *aporia* cannot be intellectually resolved; it should be "held out", even though it seems to make "my" existence unbearable. Gombrowicz's concept of form should be seen as a reaction to the romantic idea of exile.

The extra-literary task of much of Polish literature, its concern with the constitution and preservation of national identity, has often been explained by a specific historical situation: the Polish state disappeared in the eighteenth century, after three partitions (1772, 1793, 1795), from the map of Europe. The only remaining trace of nationhood was the common language spoken in the Russian, Austrian and Prussian parts ("*zabory*") of Poland. As strict censorship laid severe restrictions on the free development of Polish literature in the partitioned country, Polish literary life shifted during the nineteenth century, in the period of Romanticism, to the emigration, particularly in France, where the political and intellectual elite of the nation had retired after the suppression of the "November Rising" (1830/31). The most important romantic poets (Adam Mickiewicz [1798-1855], Juliusz Słowacki [1809-1849], Zygmunt Krasiński [1812-1859] and Cyprian Kamil Norwid [1821-1883]) lived during the greatest part of their life outside the historical boundaries of Poland. Their poetry was very much preoccupied with the attempt to guarantee the survival of the nation as a community of language and certain ideals in the field of ethics (the state as a confederation of free men uniting on a voluntary basis, rejecting Rousseau's "general will"). Literature should not merely urge the Poles to undertake action (so that they could eventually regain their statehood) – it became itself a mode of spiritual action. Even if the emigrant was not allowed to return to his fatherland, he could – due to the power of poetry, its ability to establish a link with the transcendent realm and to discover and explain the mysteries of God (romantic poetry is essentially a state of inspiration; the poet defines his role as being the

spokesman or mouthpiece of certain supernatural agencies), attain spiritual salvation in an alienated, foreign world, and at the same time preserve his "Polishness".

Thus the loss of statehood, the awareness that "our" very nationhood is under threat, could become a source of creative energy. It allows the émigré, especially when he is an artist, a poet, to pass to the level of metaphysics and ask about life's true meaning, overcoming fragmentation and restoring "wholeness". The particular turns out to be inextricably bound up with the universal. We are all émigré's (perhaps one should, because of its sacral connotations, rather employ the term "pilgrims"[1]), do not know whence we come and whither we go. Our destiny is to solve this mystery of exile as an existential predicament through the medium of language, poetic language – in other words: poetry in our "native" tongue (actualizing "potential" nationhood). Particularly the Polish romantic émigrés felt "predestined" to accomplish this metaphysical task. They had not only lost the centre of their individual existence (the places where they spent their childhood and youth, "home" as a "landscape", suffused with "sensual" detail [cf. Mickiewicz's descriptions of nature and customs in his narrative poem "Pan Tadeusz"]), but also their political existence, their statehood (in this respect their predicament resembles to a certain extent the fate of the Jewish *Diaspora*).

The Polish romantic émigré could in his attempts to come to grips with the loss of statehood (a calamity concerning the whole *nation*) not fall back on previous models by which the experience of exile had been expressed. Exile had always been an individual calamity: a courtier banished from court, a citizen driven from his town or country (the classical example is Dante Alighieri). When the Latin poets of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance gave voice to their feeling of loss in a foreign country, they often expressed this state of mind within the context of the canon of Latin literature. The "archetype" of a poet who had been forced to leave the centre of his existence and to travel to the border of civilization was the Roman nobleman Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso, 43 BC-17 AD). He had been exiled from the capital of the ancient world, probably for being one of the lovers of the Roman emperor Augustus's daughter Julia, and died in what is now Northern Bulgaria. In his lamentations ("Tristia, Ex Ponto") he expressed his

longing for Rome, the centre of arts and learning, and depicted the desponding state of mind of a sophisticated gentleman who had to live among barbarians that do not understand him (cf. the famous picture of the French romantic painter Eugène Delacroix "Ovid amongst the Scythians").

The "Ovidian" experience of exile has been very influential in European literature, not only during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, but also in the twentieth century. It could be expressed in all "vernacular" languages. However, it seems that the Ovidian model of being an émigré is entirely incompatible with the romantic experience of emigration. The latter (romantic) experience is – as I already stressed – of great importance for Polish literature, but the former (Ovidian) model has re-appeared (with a difference!) in post-war Polish poetry, especially in Zbigniew Herbert's famous poem "The Return of the Proconsul". When we attempt to develop a typology of Polish emigration poetry, we should start by confronting the distinctive features of the romantic model of emigration with the Ovidian one.

1. The Ovidian émigré belongs to a universal culture. Beyond the borders of this universal civilization there is nothing, or – in other words – barbarism, the absence of culture. This model of being an émigré is based on the opposition between centre and periphery. Beyond the periphery there is only a void (the idea of periphery relates to the centre and not to a possible border that could be crossed).

2. The universal culture is centred on the capital (Rome) and governed autocratically (by the emperor).

3. No one is prepared to leave the centre of civilization voluntarily. People are either forced to go to the boundaries of civilization because of their duties as a soldier or civil servant, or as the result of punishment (being banished).

4. Staying at the boundaries of the empire of civilization does neither enrich us intellectually, nor existentially. It merely causes us to "suffer", to complain, and to lament. We only crave to return to the centre of culture as essentially unchanged people, to enjoy again the benefits of arts and learning.

5. Yet, in some specific cases, the periphery (its people or the people living beyond the boundaries of civilization) is from a *moral* point of view superior to the centre (cf. Tacitus's description of "Germania"). It seems that a highly developed civilization, because of its affluence and luxury, is prone to moral degeneration, to vice and corruption. The banished poet may experience the difference between the simple customs of the people among which he lives as a mirror, showing the corruption of the centre. However, this awareness does not impose an ethical commitment on him to improve the morals of the centre.[2]

6. There is no transcendent realm. Only nothingness is infinite (its emblem: the "wide desert"). Our existence remains individual. The concept of nationhood, of man being born into a mystic community of blood ties, is irrelevant in the context of the universal Empire that presents itself primarily as an administrative structure. People are considered to be "numbers". We can be just, but we must all die and we can neither expect redemption, nor an after-life. Justice, honour and courage are their own reward. I must be true to myself (cf. Herbert's poem "The Envoy of Mr Cogito": "Go where those others went to the dark boundary/ for the golden fleece of nothingness your last price [...] go because only in this way will you be admitted to the company of cold skulls/ to the company of your ancestors: Gilgamesh Hector Roland/ the defenders of the kingdom without limit and the city of ashes/ Be faithful Go").[3]

Zbigniew Herbert (1924-1998) revived this concept of exile in his famous poem "The Return of the Proconsul". The difference is of course that in this poem the periphery remains an integral part of the autocratically governed empire, which seems to be boundless. The empire presents itself as an all-encompassing *universe* of evil, from which the individual cannot escape. Even the gates to nothingness (the undeveloped countries of the barbarians that could *potentially* become the realm of a new, morally superior civilization) are closed, or rather non-existent. Being banished from the centre, living at the periphery, "in this remote province/ under the full sweet leaves of the sycamore/ and the gentle rule of sickly nepotists",[4] means merely a softening of the evil radiating from the centre (the court of the emperor), that still pervades the world, although with a lesser

intensity (it diminishes proportionally to the distance separating it from the capital).

Twenty years later Zbigniew Herbert wrote a second poem on the return from exile (or, in this case, rather from voluntary emigration) to the homeland. In this poem ("Mister Cogito – the Return"), written during the so-called "State of War" when the Polish communist government tried to suppress the Solidarity movement, the relationship between centre and periphery has undergone an essential change. The existential centre of Mister Cogito[5] has ceased to be the capital of civilization. Instead it has turned into the "stony womb/ of the fatherland". From a material and cultural point of view it would be more advantageous to remain an émigré in the highly developed realm of show-windows (with all the products of an affluent society on display), but Mister Cogito is suspicious of easy solutions. He rejects the civilization of consumerism. Yet, he feels greatly attached to the treasures of classical and Renaissance culture:

> przywiązał się tylko
> do kolumny doryckiej
> kościoła San Clemente
> portretu pewnej damy
> książki której nie zdążył przeczytać
> i paru innych drobiazgów
>
> (He became attached only/ to a Dorian column/ the Church of San Clemente/ the portrait of a certain lady/ a book he didn't have time to read/ and a few other trifles (Z. Herbert, *Poezje wybrane/Selected Poems*, 102-103; translated by John and Bogdana Carpenter))

It is not easy for him to sacrifice the possibility of unimpeded communion with these treasures, the relicts of an ancient culture (the obtrusive presence of the objects of consumerism may have closed our eyes to the true meaning of their presence, but in a contemplative mood we again experience their significance as signs of man's metaphysical plight, his task to overcome alienation by creation), yet he feels obliged to return to his poor, relatively backward homeland that has succumbed to totalitarian oppression and foreign occupation (it seems that while returning he can take culture with him, as a state of mind). His return is dictated

by a higher imperative: to be together with his less fortunate compatriots. He feels himself *committed* to *suffer* as one of the members of a community, which is constituted by the very fact of being born and spending one's childhood and (a part of one's) life in the same place:

> więc po co wraca
> pytają przyjaciele
> z lepszego świata
> [...]
> - do wody dzieciństwa
> - do splątanych korzeni
> - do uścisku pamięci
> - do ręki twarzy
> spalonych na rusztach czasu

> (so why is He returning/ – etc.to the waters of childhood/ - to entangled roots/ - to the clasp of memory/ - to the hand the face/ seared on the grill of time (Herbert, *Poezje wybrane/Selected Poems*, 104-105; translated by John and Bogdana Carpenter))

It would be morally unacceptable to enjoy the benefits of material prosperity, including the eternal values of culture, when his countrymen have no access to these goods. By returning he may not change the fate of the nation, but sharing the life of his compatriots seems to be a (pre-rational) value in itself. "I" (the speaker of Herbert's poetry) should not try to explain its metaphysical fundament (being does not possess any fundament – life "is" as it "appears"; there is nothing hidden beyond the veil), but merely do my duty. Herbert refrains from locating this "community of suffering" in a specific part of the world. The Polish reader instinctively identifies Mister Cogito, returning to his homeland, with a Polish émigré, returning to his enslaved fatherland, but the author never expressly mentions the name of his fatherland (it is merely "fatherland", a general notion that can be applied to many areas in the world, where "I" feel at home).

2.

In the second part of this paper I will compare Herbert's concept of exile with the wider significance that the experience of exile acquired in the poetry of Czesław Miłosz (1911-2004), the legitimate heir of Polish Romanticism, who has by many

critics been hailed as the central Polish poet of the twentieth century. It seems that the main difference between the stance of Herbert's protagonists and the protagonists of Polish romantic poetry derives from the former's strategy of objectifying (by using a *persona*, a poetical mask) the experience of the émigré as being committed to the fate of his homeland. Poland is never explicitly mentioned. Yet, this difference is essential. Herbert aims at representing the particular experience of being part of a national community as man's universal existential condition (the very idea of nationhood seems to imply plurality and relativity, in opposition to the concept of the Empire, which is at best universal, but in reality often merely totalitarian). Description of the historical circumstances among which individual acts of commitment have occurred, is in his poetry reduced to a minimum, leaving many "spots of indeterminacy" (Roman Ingarden's term) that are to be filled in by the reader according to his own knowledge of (or about) exile. Due to this transformation of an essentially romantic experience (the mystical union between the individual and his nation) into an objectified universal mode of commitment Herbert has become one of the most popular Polish poets. His poetry "travels" far more easily than Miłosz's that – even when it gives voice to the experience of exile - remains *expressly* rooted in the peculiarities of the Polish (and Lithuanian) cultural tradition, whilst it refers in its descriptive parts to the distinctive features of the Lithuanian countryside. The speaker in Miłosz's poems of exile often mentions events from the history of the ancient Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, comments in the "Treatise on Poetry" upon the fate of his fellow poets, describes the meadows and forests where he spent his youth, comparing them with the much larger proportions of nature in the United States, the country in which he lives as an émigré. The carefree, egalitarian and a-historical attitude of modern (Western) mass-civilization is confronted with life in pre-modern Lithuania with its vertically organized society consisting of a rural population living in accordance with the changing seasons and a nobility still very much devoted to the native tradition of the ancient Grand Duchy (Miłosz himself was a descendant of the Lithuanian nobility).

Yet, in my opinion, Miłosz's poetry of the *Polish* (or Lithuanian) émigré attains a far deeper level of human experience than the "universal" model of exile

represented by Herbert (although even in the latter case the Polish reader can choose almost at random events from nineteenth- and twentieth- century Polish history that seem to match the "spots of indeterminacy" of poems like "Mister Cogito – the Return"). The crucial difference between Miłosz and Herbert lies elsewhere. As we have seen, Herbert is hardly interested in speculative philosophy and religion. In his poetical universe man can make his existence meaningful without taking recourse to the notion of transcendence. Exile is simply an inner worldly experience that "befalls" us, and cannot boast of any privileged relationship to man's "metaphysical" essence. Herbert, being for most of his life an agnostic, consciously refrained from asking ultimate questions about the essence of human existence, turning his attention rather towards the ethical implications of individual human acts. Miłosz – on the other hand – became the heir to Polish Romanticism with its authoritative, "bardic" ("*wieszczy*") claims precisely because of his awareness that the fate of the émigré, as an individual severed from his national community (or "little fatherland"), constitutes an exemplary instance of the human condition as "metaphysical" exile. In Miłosz's later poetry man, i.e. each particular individual, is severed (geographically as well as metaphysically) from the "entangled roots" of being, has fallen (cf. the notion of "original sin") from the infinite plenitude of the Godhead,[6] to which he cannot return as a single "person". The road towards retrieving this primeval unity of being leads through the "Communion of the Holy" ("Obcowanie świętych", cf. Miłosz's long poem *Gdzie wschodzi słońce i kędy zapada* ["From the Rising of the Sun"]), in other words, it presents itself as a process of reintegration of all members into the Whole. However, this "Whole" must be recovered consciously. Being its passive, unconscious part does not suffice. Thus, dismemberment of the primeval whole, Adam and Eve's experience of being exiled from the Garden of Eden because of their loss of innocence, could be conceived of as a positive event. Paradise must be lost, before it can be regained or rather reestablished at a higher, conscious level.

From these premises it follows that individual Redemption is impossible, since that would imply the redeemed accepting the imperfection or even ultimate condemnation of the none-redeemed. When "I" (i.e. the speaker in Miłosz's later poetry) understand the status of exile, of being an émigré, in this sense, relating

metaphysics to ethics, my commitment to my fellow countrymen transforms itself into a commitment to the redemption of humanity or even the created world as a whole. Creation presupposes space and time. Thus "I" suddenly become aware of my commitment to the redemption of all aspects of being in their *sensual and spiritual particularity*. Ultimately it turns out that ethics ("I" am responsible for my fellow men, even when they lack the awareness that their present life is imperfect and requires redemption) are a particular instance of metaphysics. Polish Romanticism, in the person of its greatest representative, Adam Mickiewicz, established – as we have seen – a relationship between this metaphysical notion of exile and the destiny of the Polish nation, represented as a person whose self-redemption initiates the redemption of all nations, i.e. humanity, transforming its dismembered parts into a Whole not by using force (as the Empire does), but by a Christ-like self-sacrifice.

Czesław Miłosz consciously developed this structure, adapting it to the conditions of modernity. "Historiosophy", being concerned with the destiny of collective "nation-persons", is replaced by "memory" or rather "individual" acts of memory. "My" nation or community can be saved by restoring the memory of its past, i.e. by trying to catch into language and fix "for all eternity" as many moments of individual existence as possible, not allowing them to sink into oblivion. Language is not an impersonal medium alienating man's authenticity, but the very condition for overcoming his present alienation by (re)uniting him with his fellow men. Thus the poet's linguistic commitment turns out to be part of a wider process of redemption, called "*apokatastasis*" (a notion developed by Origenes, a not entirely orthodox church father from the second century A.D.). He shares this intuition with many predecessors: church fathers, mystics and heretics:

> Należę jednak do tych, którzy wierzą w *apokatastasis*.
> Słowo to przyobiecuje ruch odwrotny,
> Nie ten, co zastygł w *katastasis*,
> I pojawia się w Aktach Apostolskich, 3, 21.
>
> Znaczy: przywrócenie. Tak wierzyli święty Grzegorz z Nyssy.
> Johannes Scotus Eriugena, Ruysbroeck i William Blake.

> Każda rzecz ma więc dla mnie podwójne trwanie.
> I w czasie, i kiedy czasu nie będzie. (Cz. Miłosz, *Wiersze*, t. 3, Kraków, 2003, 176)
>
> (Yet I belong to those who believe in *apokatastasis*./ That word promises reverse movement,/ Not the one that was set in *katastasis*,/ And appears in the Acts 3, 21./ It means restoration. So believed: St. Gregory of Nyssa,/ Johannes Scotus Erigena, Ruysbroeck, and William Blake. (Cz. Milosz, *The Collected Poems* (1931-1987), Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1988, 310))

Furthermore, this poetical attempt to retrieve life in its individuality by showing it to be part of a larger community refers to man's sensual experience, as Miłosz cannot conceive of words without a sensual impact. The testimony of our senses should – according to Miłosz – always be trusted, even if different sense-impressions of the same object may seem to exclude each other from a "logical" point of view. Logical contradictions derive essentially from man's fallen state, i.e. his impaired ability to experience the world with his senses (e.g. a "straight" stick partly immersed in water seems to be bent to the eye). In this respect Miłosz's worldview is very similar to William Blake's mystical sensualism (both tried to come to terms with the influence of British eighteenth-century empiricism). Due to these "contrarieties" man discovers that his perceptions depend on his relative position in the universe that should not be conceived of as a fixed state of being but as infinite energy.[7] Moreover Miłosz does not doubt that sense-data refer to the "real" world, even though he admits that our attempts to translate sense-data into language may fail:

> [...] Teraz mnie język zawodzi
> I nie wiem, jak nazwać miedzę grodzoną żerdziami
> Od ostatnich domów wioski pod sam las.
> (Zawsze tych słów brakowało i nie byłem właściwie poetą,
> Jeżeli jest poetą, komu słowo sprawia przyjemność). (Miłosz, t. 3, Kraków, 158)
>
> ([...] Speech betrays me here:/ I don't know what to call a strip of land fenced with poles/ That leads from the last hut of the village up to the forest./ (I have always lacked words and have not been a poet/ If a poet is supposed to take pleasure in words). (Milosz, *The Collected Poems*, 292))

Had Miłosz been successful in retrieving the local expression for this particular object from oblivion (in fact, his failure seems to be only relative, since language has provided him with adequate means to describe this particular nameless "strip of land" by naming the objects by which it is surrounded), he would have achieved much more than merely actualizing his potential community with the past, present and future inhabitants of the region where he spent his childhood and from which he has been separated by exile. Sharing this linguistic experience with his readers would – from Miłosz's point of view – in itself be a moment in the process of reintegrating the divided, "fallen" world, a particular instance of "*apokatastasis*", incorporating the community of Miłosz's native Lithuania into the larger community of poetry readers all over the world. At this point we begin to understand why Miłosz's poetry of redeeming man's individual existence by acts of memory is so closely connected with the experience of exile. The émigré, being severed from his homeland, either as the result of external (political, economic) circumstances or by his own choice, experiences this plight as separation from a former part of his self. Exile turns out to be a state of *self*-dismemberment that is only slightly alleviated by the power of memory to evoke (but not retrieve) places of the past.[8] However, the very fact that men live and perceive in space and time[9] already implies that they are separated. Being a self means not only to be divided from the "other", who appears to "me" as an object, but also from myself, since I can grasp my subjectivity only by objectifying it (in other words: betraying its active, "energetical" essence). Therefore man is not satisfied with his anyway delusive "self-sufficiency" and craves instead to be redeemed from separateness, wishes to return to the natural state of immediate communion which – if we are to believe the wide-spread myth of a Golden Age – must once have existed, preceding the first instance of exile, and in which "Contrarieties are equally true".[10] However, this return to the state of innocence means to consciously recover it. It is a rebirth of the "whole" man.[11] Thus it could be asserted that modern (or perhaps even post-lapsarian) man has been born as an émigré.[12] Miłosz's later poetry links, in order to make us familiar with this existential truth, the twentieth-century experience of political exile with the metaphysics of romantic exile, and points to a possible means of overcoming self-

alienation, due to the mental faculty of memory and the mimetic quality of poetic language that – due to the power of the human imagination – not simply represents past experiences, but actually recreates them.

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Notes

1 Cf. Mickiewicz's "Books of the Polish Nation and Books of the Polish Pilgrimage", published in 1832, the year following the suppression of the November Rising.

2 It seems that this model of being an émigré also appears in Chinese poetry, or – at least – in certain adaptations of this poetry, as e.g. Ezra Pound's volume *Cathay*; cf. "The Lament of the Frontier Guard" by Li Po: "By the North Gate, the wind blows full of sand,/ Lonely from the beginning of time until now!/ Trees fall, the grass goes yellow with autumn./ I climb the towers and towers/ to watch out the barbarous land:/ Desolate castle, the sky, the wide desert" (E. Pound, *Poems and Translations*, New York, 2003, 254).

3 "Idź dokąd poszli tamci do ciemnego kresu/ po złote runo nicości twoją ostatnią nagrodę [...] idź bo tylko tak będziesz przyjęty do grona zimnych czaszek/ do grona twoich przodków: Gilgamesza Hektora Rolanda/ obrońców królestwa bez kresu i miasta popiołów/ Bądź wierny Idź"(Z. Herbert, *Poezje wybrane/Selected Poems,* Kraków, 2000, 95-97; translated by John and Bogdana Carpenter).

4 "[...] tutaj w odległej prowincji/ pod pełnymi słodyczy liśćmi sykomoru/ I łagodnymi rządami chorowitych nepotów" (Herbert, *Poezje wybrane/Selected Poems,* 30-31).

5 The name of the speaker suggests that he is a typical "Cartesian" intellectual who believes that there is no fundamental opposition between a "rationalistic" epistemology and the notion of an "absolute" morality.

6 This "lapse" may not be a matter of "chance" or "individual" guilt, but the very essence and sense of human existence, the precondition of creativity and ultimate fulfilment (*felix culpa*).

7 Cf. the following statement from Blake's "Marriage of Heaven and Hell": "The Giants who formed this world in its sensual existence, and now seem to live in its chains, are in truth the causes of its life & and the sources of all activity" (W. Blake, *Complete Prose and Poetry*, London, 1975, 187) (the intertextual relationship between Miłosz and Blake has been minutely investigated by Jolanta Dudek in her book *Europejskie korzenie poezji Czesława Miłosza*, Kraków, 1995).

8 Miłosz and Blake differ in their assessment of the power of memory. According to the Polish poet it is – if correctly employed – an active faculty, the precondition of overcoming self-dismemberment. Blake condemns in his famous prophetic poem "Milton" memory because of its incompatibility with the "energy" of poetic imagination: "These are the destroyers of Jerusalem, these are the murderers/ Of Jesus, who deny the Faith & and mock at Eternal Life,/ Who pretend to Poetry that they may destroy Imagination/ By Imitation of Nature's Images drawn from Remembrance" (Blake, *ibid*., 430).

9 Miłosz always intuitively rejected the notion that the passing of time should be equated with the annihilation of the existential content of the moments of which it consists. The confirmation of this intuition, justifying poetry as a means of saving unique "particles" of human life from oblivion, he found in Blake's poetry. Quoting Blake in his essayistic book *Ziemia Ulro* Miłosz in fact epitomizes his own conception of poetry as an act of redemption: "...for not one Moment/ Of Time is lost, nor one Event of Space unpermanent,/ But all remain: every fabric of Six Thousand Years/ Remains

Permanent, tho' on the Earth where Satan/ Fell and was cut off, all things vanish & are seen no more,/ They vanish not from me & mine, we guard them first & last" (Miłosz, *Ziemia Ulro*, 178; Blake, *ibid.*, 401).
10 Cf. Blake in "Milton": "THERE is a place where Contrarieties are equally True:/ This place is called Beulah. It is a pleasant lovely Shadow/ Where no dispute can come, Because of those who sleep" (Blake, *ibid*., 415).
11 Cf. Blake: „Terror struck in the Vale I stood at that immortal sound./ My bones trembled, I fell outstretch'd upon the path/ A moment, & my Soul return'd into its mortal state/ To Resurrection & Judgment in the Vegetable Body [...]" (Blake, *ibid*., 431).
12 Miłosz explicitly presents the expulsion from paradise as a form of Exile, relating it to Blake's theosophical myth-making : "Man left his fatherland and strives to return to it: his fatherland is Eden, the eternal Paradise, the eternal Golden Age, and the prophetic poet announces this return by actually bringing it closer" (Cz. Miłosz, *Ziemia Ulro*, Kraków, 1994, 177).