WOUNDS SPEAK: TRAUMA IN THE POETRY OF CZESLAW MILOSZ`

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To Appa and Amma

Declaration

The work presented in the thesis Wounds Speak: Trauma in the Poetry of Czeslaw Milosz has been carried out by me under the guidance of Dr Adrene Freeda Dcruz at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research Mohali. This work has not been submitted in part or in full for a degree, a diploma, or a fellowship to any other university or institute. Whenever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions. This thesis is a bona fide record of original work done by me and all sources listed within have been detailed in the bibliography.

Nidhin Johny

In my capacity as the supervisor of the candidate's thesis work, I certify that the above statements by the candidate are true to the best of my knowledge.

Dr Adrene Freeda Dcruz

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"The essence of all beautiful art, all great art is gratitude."

Friedrich Nietzsche

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Wounds Speak: Trauma in the Poetry of Czeslaw Milosz

Abstract:

The thesis attempts a reading of the Polish American Nobel Laureate, Czeslaw Milosz's poetry from the perspective of literary trauma studies. A poet, translator, essayist, and verse novelist, Milosz began his literary journey from Poland, and owing to political reasons, he defected to the West. Milosz's poems dealt with themes such as governmental repressive mechanisms and the censorship of his works. Choosing Milosz's *New and Collected Poems 1931-2001*, this thesis looks at how the places and geographical features participate in the expression of the trauma of exile. The loss of homeland is an important event in the life of the poet, and by resorting to the use of various cities, forests, and rivers in the poems, the poet captures the trauma of this loss. The harsh imposition of censorship impacted the literary career of the poet, and the thesis investigates the choice of the Polish language as a form of resistance and the poet's use of inner censorship to circumvent the suppression of the voices of dissent. Mythological narration is yet another indispensable part of his poems. Using Greek and Eastern European myths, the poet uniquely addresses the question of trauma. Contributing to the existing literary repertoire of trauma studies from these perspectives, this thesis situates such traumatic experiences in the larger socio-cultural and historical context.

Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Trauma in the Poetry of Czeslaw Milosz

The thesis seeks to examine the poetry of Czeslaw Milosz from the perspective of literary trauma studies. Milosz's works capture the traumatic experiences of loss of homeland, war, exile, and censorship. His personal traumatic experience is extended to the plights of the Polish masses. His works also bear witness to the turmoil the nation and its people have been through. Poland endured national catastrophes in multiple time periods because of various historical interventions. The partition of the nation was a recurrent traumatic event. Poland was divided multiple times during its existence. The partitions were events of great magnitude that played a crucial role in shaping up the Polish identity. Trauma is created and sustained as a nationalist aspiration in the works of various Polish authors. For instance, Adam Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz* (1834), which many consider the epic national anthem of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, was set in the background of the Russian partition. Likewise, many of the later Polish writers attempted to weave together a collective identity around the wounds of national division.

The history of division does not cease with the partition of the Duchy. The newly founded Republic was again partitioned during the Second World War. The trauma of partition again comes to haunt the Polish psyche. Milosz's poetry captures the lived experience of the division. The author's experience of the war was first-hand. His poetry talks about the moral responsibility of witnessing. Milosz believed in poetry serving a moral purpose, especially after witnessing and surviving the trauma of war and

destruction. The poet feels morally responsible for chronicling the events of the war. Some of the major themes that run in his poetry are the experience of the war and the Holocaust. The need for witnessing characterises the memory of the Holocaust. Milosz was raised in a multicultural environment, and during his time at the University of Wilno, he was exposed to Jewish and other ethnic minorities. The extermination of the Polish Jewry was a shameful act for him. Milosz took it up on himself the responsibility to talk about the plights of Polish Jews. Milosz was also awarded the "Righteous Among the Nations" in 1989, conferred to non-Jews who risked their lives for altruistic reasons to save Jews during the Holocaust by the Israeli government. Poland was a main battleground during the Second World War and the Masterplan for the East by Nazi Germany did not discriminate between the Jews and the Slavs in their extermination campaigns. The poems recall the bloodshed and destruction of the people in graphic detail and with historical accuracy. The act of witnessing is not limited to survivors and victims of trauma. It can be extended to people who bring aid to them. James Dawes names them "surrogate voices" (4) who are tasked with the responsibility of giving voice to the victims of trauma. They can be doctors, lawyers, activists, or writers who fulfil the moral and social responsibility to voice their wounds.

The end of the war did not go as planned for the Poles. Poland fell under Soviet influence, and the government in Poland was directly controlled by the Soviet communist party. The next big blow to Milosz came from exile and censorship. The experience of trauma and exile go hand in hand with the Eastern European ordeals. The political dissidents and writers were forcefully exiled to the Gulags during the Stalinist regimes and their works and ideas were suppressed. Milosz is a prime example of exile

and censorship. He had to be exiled from Poland for artistic freedom, and his exit was followed by censorship of his works. Milosz's experience of exile can be fathomed against the cultural background of Soviet territorial expansion. After the end of the Second World War, the ensuing power struggle with the Eastern and Western blocs resulted in a rigorous cultural, political, and military expansion. Both blocs attempted to bring together nations under their influence; hence, the sovereignty of many new nations was at risk. Milosz's trauma of exile and censorship can be read in the background of aggressive institutional and ideological imperialism. The Soviet Union attempted to bring in as many countries as possible to their ideological and political fold. The Soviet Union employed rigorous and systematic censoring mechanisms to control popular opinions. The expanse of the censoring machine was so intricate that it engaged with almost everyday interactions. The Polish government set up institutions to monitor and censor public opinion and art. The trauma of exile can be made sense in the background of the historical contexts of national divisions during various historical periods and the failed promises of a sovereign state. The trauma of censorship is best understood in the backdrop of the systematic institutional and ideological censoring mechanisms. Milosz's work provides the opportunity to understand these traumatic memories as they uphold these experiences in their style, theme, and subject matter. Milosz's poetry is chosen for the present study. As the poetry is not studied from the perspective of literary trauma.

1.2 Czeslaw Milosz: A Brief Biography

Czeslaw Milosz was born to Polish nobility in 1911 in Szetejnie, present-day Lithuania. His parents were Weronika and Aleksander Milosz. Aleksander was a bridge

construction supervisor for the Tsarist army. The travelling nature of Aleksander's work led to many journeys throughout Russia for young Milosz. Thus, railway stations and wagons formed a recurring motif in his poetry. His birthplace carries the scars of multiple partitions. Milosz identified himself as a citizen of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, a historical and political entity that then encompassed the regions of Eastern Europe, including Poland and Lithuania. It was divided amongst Russia, Austria, and Prussia in 1772. The call for an independent Poland thus formed a part of multiple generations, which finally came to fruition during the end of the Second World War. The economic perils of the pre-war years from the 1900s fuelled the nationalist aspirations, culminating in the rejuvenation of the Polish Question. From the time of partition to the beginning of the First World War, the solidarity of the partitioning powers was always intact until the First World War when the Germans fought the Russians. Poland became a battleground for the East and West. In the book *God's Playground: A History of Poland,* Norman Davies writes "The Polish Republic came into being in November 1918 by a process which theologians might call parthenogenesis. It created itself in the void left by the collapse of the three partitioning powers" (291). Thus, along with the Treaty of Versailles and the changing power dynamics of the First World War, the resistance and the determination of the Polish people resulted in the independence of the Polish Republic.

Milosz writes in his autobiographical work *Native Realm* that "I have been tossed by circumstances" (206). The political turmoil and displacements influenced his works greatly. Milosz had his early childhood in Lithuania, where the natives spoke Lithuanian. While being part of the Polish gentry, he spoke Polish and started

composing verses in Polish. In the article “Private Obligations”, Milosz writes, “I was not born in Poland, I did not grow up in Poland, I do not live in Poland, but I write in Polish” (104). Milosz had his education in Vilnius, and he claims this displacement was his first exile. He enrolled in the University of Vilnius as a law student, and during this period, he was part of a literary group named the ‘Zagary’, an avant-garde leftist group experimenting with style and subject matter. Besides Milosz, Teodor Bujnicki, Jerzy Putrament, and Jerzy Zagorski were part of the left-leaning intellectual magazine. During this period, Milosz also encountered a multi-ethnic crowd of Poles, Lithuanians, Jews, and Belarusians. The nationalist fervour and calls for independent Poland during the post-war period often coincided with antisemitism and ultranationalism. Milosz vehemently opposed such radical political ideologies and was vocal against the discrimination of Jews on campus.

Milosz published his well-received collection of poems titled *A Poem on Frozen Time* and *Three Winters* in 1933 and 1936, respectively. After graduating from college, he left for Paris, where he met with his cousin, poet and mystic Oscar Milosz. The meeting was a turning point in his life. Oscar Milosz greatly influenced Milosz’s poetry. Milosz returned to Poland in 1935 and took a job in the Polish National Radio. He met his future wife, Janina, while working for the Polish radio.

Milosz was in Warsaw during the Second World War. It had a profound impact on the life and career of the poet. He watched the fires engulfing the Warsaw ghetto where the Nazis rounded up the Jews to be transported to concentration camps. The Warsaw Uprising was the largest Jewish resistance against the Nazis during the war. Milosz also worked as part of the socialist underground, published his poems

clandestinely, and translated the works of William Shakespeare and T. S Eliot. His wartime experience was published in the poetic collection named *Rescue* published in 1945. The destruction, death and survival are featured repeatedly in the poetry. One of the important aspects of his writing was 'witnessing'. Milosz wanted his poems to stand as a testimony to the horrendous events of the war associated with a sense of shame and guilt of survival. Milosz, though, was present and active during the battles, laments over the death of many comrades, and a sense of guilt followed him in his writings.

Milosz's earlier association with 'Zagary' and its left alignment helped him secure the position of cultural attaché to the Polish Republic after the war's end, while he was not a party member. Milosz was posted in America, where he worked to promote Polish culture while pursuing his own literary career. Joanna Mazurka writes the following in the post-war Polish Republic: "The authorities made an effort to develop the literary and publishing sector early on and to provide writers with good living conditions. This subsequently lured many of Milosz's colleagues into full collaboration within the framework of the state-organised literary industry" (38). In post-war Eastern Europe, writers were considered part of the intelligentsia, a group that traditionally consisted of the educated upper class. Emerging in the 19th century, they played an important part in opposing autocratic regimes. They were believed to be influential in shaping public opinion. Governments sought to control influential writers like Milosz, who could shape opinion either in support or challenge the governments, making them valuable assets in the ideological landscape.

One of the life-altering events happened during this period. The authorities behind the Iron Curtain, a political metaphor used to describe the political division of

Europe into Eastern and Western spheres of influence after the end of the Second World War, always suspected its subjects, especially artists and people abroad. While Milosz was committed to the Polish cause, his loyalty was questioned. Milosz was called back to Poland in 1950. His passport was confiscated, and he was kept under house arrest. With his influence in the political top brass, he was reinstated to his post in Paris, and on 1 February 1951, he defected to France and from there to the United States. Life in Paris was difficult; he lost his job, was deprived of friends, and lost his audience. Moreover, his family was in America and there was a grand attempt to discredit him by the government. Milosz was in dire financial difficulty and had to resort to writing articles for the émigré magazine *Kultura* which yearned his meagre sustenance. The publication of *The Captive Mind* in 1953 was a turning point in his life. Though originally a poet, his reputation shot up after its publication. His work brought to light the inner workings of the intelligentsia behind the Iron Curtain. Milosz was then contacted by the Conference for Cultural Freedom, a CIA-sponsored propaganda group which tried to destabilise communist governments. Milosz initially attended the group meetings but later distanced himself from them because of political biases. Milosz moved back to California and took a position in the Department of Slavic Language Studies. His works were smuggled into Poland during the Cold War and circulated clandestinely. There was government-sanctioned censorship of his works, which was removed after he won the Nobel Prize in 1980. After the end of the Cold War, Milosz spent his time between his house in California and in Krakow, Poland. Milosz continued to write till his old age, and he passed away at the age of ninety-three in his hometown in Krakow, Poland, in 2003.

1.3 Milosz's Literary Contributions

Milosz's literary oeuvre consists of fiction and non-fiction. This thesis will analyse the poetic collections of the author. Milosz began writing from a young age and garnered attention for his avant-garde poems. The time period and the location of his writings play an important role in understanding his poetry. He began writing as a student at the University of Wilno in the early 1930s. The Second World War made a significant impact on the writings of the poet. *Rescue* captures the lived experience of the war. Milosz was in Warsaw during the Nazi occupation and survived the war and captured the memories and events of the war in the poetic piece. It contains the most moving pieces of Milosz and captures the scenes of the war. Poland was a major battlefield during the war, and because he was present in Warsaw during the occupation, Milosz had first-hand experience of the atrocities of the war. *Rescue* talks about war, the holocaust, and the need for witnessing and the collection also contains a tinge of the survivor's guilt.

The next major collection of poems, *Daylight*, was published in 1953 after he had defected to the West and was living in France. *Daylight* contains scathing criticism of the communist bloc. The harsh reality of exile and the politics of the time are narrated in the poems. It was published in exile and is considered political poetry which engages deeply with history. The biographical elements of the poet help to understand the cultural context of the poem. The historical period, the geographical position and the political situations are essential markers to unravel the meaning of the poems. The later collections of poems were written after Milosz reached the United States. These poems

deal with life in exile and the memory of their homeland. The questions raised in these collections centre around philosophical and metaphysical concerns.

A Treatise on Poetry, published in 1957, is a book-length poem divided into four parts that encapsulates Polish literature, history, and poetry from 1900 to 1949. The book was written between 1955 and 1956 and was published in France. It also won the literary prize from *Kultura*. Though there were bans on his works, the collection was available in underground editions in Poland. *King Popiel and Other Poems* and *The City Without Name* are the two other collections that feature prominently in the thesis. The former was published in 1962, and it deals more with metaphysical questions and less with political concerns, while the latter was published in 1969 and is a reflection on the complicated history of Vilnius. The historical time frame and the geographical situatedness of the poet during the publication are important to understanding the poem's meaning. The events and the experiences cannot be analysed in isolation, but the rich historical and cultural references provide adequate information regarding their meaning.

1.4 Literary Trauma Studies

The scholarship on trauma began with the drastic social changes in the 19th century. The rapid industrialisation and changing social structures contributed greatly to the growth of the field. The works of Sigmund Freud laid the foundations for the studies. Trauma theory began as a medical concern, especially related to railway accidents, which resulted in coining the term 'railway spine'. Freud's later Works, *Studies on Hysteria, Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Moses and Monotheism* published in 1895,1920 and 1939 respectively, laid the foundations of trauma, which he

analysed in the aftermath of the ‘shell shocks’ of the First World War. The great social changes in society and the wars fuelled the scholarship on trauma studies. The major breakthrough happened in 1980 when the American Psychiatry Association recognised Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a mental health diagnosis.

The development of Literary trauma studies began with romantic aesthetics, studies in psychology, psychoanalysis, and poststructuralism. The recent scholarship in medical humanities, ecocriticism and posthumanism has also contributed to the growth of the field. The canonical works of Cathy Caruth, Shoshanna Felman, Doris Laub, and historian Dominik LaCapra laid the foundations of literary trauma theory. Caruth revisited Freud's works from a post-structural perspective. Her interest in psychoanalysis renewed the scholarship on trauma studies. The publication of Caruth’s *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* in 1996 redefined the understanding of literary trauma. She argues that “trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature— the way it was precisely not known in the first instance— returns to haunt the survivor later on” (4). Trauma is characterised by a delayed response to an overwhelming event that the victim cannot process in the original event but returns to haunt through flashbacks, thoughts, and nightmares. Belatedness becomes a constitutive operant in the temporal structure of trauma. Felman and Laub worked on holocaust testimonies. Their works focused on trauma and witnessing. LaCapra’s work integrated history and trauma.

One of the major concerns in the study of trauma is the crisis central to the language of traumatic representation. The enormity of the experience leaves the psyche

defenseless and defies the knowledge about the event. Trauma theory takes a post-structural turn where the disconnect between language and experience becomes evident. Thus, the central crisis in trauma becomes the unspeakably of the event: "Trauma signifies an impossibility of representation and the possibility of accessing unmediated, unsymbolic truth, which otherwise is not accessible" (Sütterlin 18). The representational paradox in the centre of trauma opens possibilities in literature. Geoffrey Hartman, in his article "On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies", discusses the importance of trauma theory and its relationship with words and wounds: "A theory emerges focusing on the relationship of words and trauma and helping us to 'read the wound' with the aid of literature" (537). Literature provides the medium through which the trauma finds an expression in figurative language and narrative structures. The unconventional use of language and the novelty of narrative techniques are similar to the features of traumatic recollection, making literature a fitting tool for understanding trauma.

Sütterlin calls the performance of trauma in literature the poetics of trauma. The narrative techniques in literature resemble traumatic processes like flashbacks, re-enactments, and dissociation. In the essay "Trauma and Narrative" Joshua Pederson discusses three literary tropes that appear in texts that feature traumatic recollections. They are absence, indirection, and repetition. The first one refers to how the text eludes trauma through textual gaps and silence, and the second is the narrative use of indirect events to talk about the traumatic experience. Finally, repetition happens when the text repeatedly returns to the same traumatic events. These trauma tropes connect the text with the experience.

Another important feature of trauma and literature is testimony. The crisis of linguistic representation of trauma extends to the crisis of witnessing. The traumatic recollection bordering the referential limits of language poses the difficulty in bearing witness to historical atrocities. The historical trauma of war and violent events like the holocaust need to be testified in public. The crisis in witnessing hinders this aspect. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub insist that literature holds the responsibility to witness. The famous dictum of Theodor Adorno, "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (34), is negated, and trauma theoreticians call for representation of the events in literature. This is also an intersectional approach where disciplines from medicine, law and history come together.

While it was widely acknowledged that individuals could be traumatised, the concept of societies being traumatised gained attention in the twentieth century. The theory of cultural trauma is the extension of the theories of trauma of the individual to the collective. Jeffrey Alexander, in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, published in 2004, asserts that "Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (1). In literature, the protagonist functions as a cultural figure, and his traumatic experience conveys the historical trauma of the group. Trauma is not something that exists on its own; rather, it is constructed by society.

One of the features of collective trauma is the intergenerational transfer of trauma. Michelle Balaev discusses it in his essay "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory": "Massive trauma experienced by a group in the historical past can be experienced by an

individual living centuries later who share similar historical attributes of the historical group" (152). There is a conflict between personal loss and historical absence in intergenerational trauma. Personal loss is the individual's experience of the trauma and historical absence is found in ancestral lineage. Historical absence is a documented trauma experienced by ancestors, which is not a direct experience for present-day community members. Literature provides a scope to understand an individual's trauma and, through him/her, the traumatised society at large.

The psychoanalytic, poststructuralist approach to trauma had its critics from the beginning. The aestheticised linguistic representation of trauma evaded the ethical question. Balaev in his edited book *Contemporary Approaches to Trauma Theory* published in 2014 talks about the Caruthian model:

> A theoretical trend was introduced by scholars like Caruth, who pioneered a psychoanalytic post-structural approach that suggests trauma is an unsolvable problem of the unconscious that illuminates the inherent contradictions of experience and language. This Lacanian approach crafts a concept of trauma as a recurring sense of absence that sunders knowledge of the extreme experience, thus preventing linguistic value other than a referential expression. For Caruth's deconstructive criticism in particular, the model allows a special emphasis on linguistic indeterminacy, ambiguous referentiality, and aporia. The unspeakable void became the dominant concept in criticism for imagining trauma's function in literature. (1)

The model characterises trauma as a pre-linguistic event. This model of trauma is called the classical model. The classical model removes the agency of the victim from the experience since it is not directly available. The inability to situate the event in particular social, psychological, and rhetorical levels creates an indeterminacy, leaving it to the consciousness. Historical events of magnitude and horror give a punctual blow to the psyche that leaves it defenseless and denies access to the original event. However, this understanding does not factor in events that are mundane and, yet, can be traumatising. The daily events or affirming unjust social orders can be traumatising experiences. It also does not factor in the variability of trauma over time. The original event at the time of occurrence might not even be traumatising; sometimes, they are not even unpleasurable, but in retrospect, these events may return to haunt the victim. This creates a conflicting starting point; trauma that emanates from a singular event and ongoing everyday acts of violence create a chronic traumatic experience. The accumulation of knowledge after the event can alter the perception of the experience and can lead to a traumatised self. The classical model fails to address these concerns. Trauma is not a memory arrested in time but evolves and acquires new meanings over time.

The pluralist model of trauma was a reaction against the classical model. It is also called the revisionist model, an approach from an interdisciplinary point. The pluralist model is an umbrella term used for the alternate approaches to trauma. The revisionist school moves away from the classical model's focus on the unspeakability of the traumatic event and tries to situate the event in a larger social and cultural consideration from which the meaning of trauma can be understood. When the larger

cultural, social, and political rubrics run in the background of the violence, trauma can be situated in these structures. The meaning of trauma is not permanently lost but is locatable in the structural foundations of society. For example, by situating the individual experience of trauma in the historical and social realities of slavery the meaning of the event can be understood with clarity.

The revisionist model opposes the unspeakability of the event. Though it accepts the paradox in language and experience, it does not see the crisis in representation as the predetermined end of trauma. Barry Stampfl discusses his stance on the unspeakability of trauma in the article "Parsing the Unspeakable in the Context of Trauma" published in the edited volume *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory*; "The unspeakable deserves to be rejected because it has become a mandatory destination, a kind of conceptual stagnant pool" (Balaev 22). Resorting to the unspeakable leads to complacency and ethical problems. Unspeakable is the phase in the traumatic process. It is not the end.

Greg Forter formulates a revisionist two-phased approach to trauma. In his approach, Forter does not dismiss Caruth's punctual blow, but rather, he admits it as the first phase of trauma. The first phase is the observation of the primal scene; it is the punctual blow to the psyche, which leaves it speechless. Hence, this phase is a period of dormancy. The unspeakability of the event is characterised as the dormant state; it is rather a pause in the traumatic process and not the final result. The second phase is characterised by signification. It is the realisation process and by which the psyche gains information regarding the traumatic event. The initial phase is characterised by a sudden or ongoing traumatic event whose outcomes are not readily available. The

unspeakability arises from this lack of knowledge accessible to the individuals. In the latter phase, the individual realises the events and this realisation leads to traumatic knowledge. This realisation is made possible by situating the experience to the larger cultural contexts in which the event occurs.

Witnessing is an important aspect of trauma memory. Major developments in trauma witnessing happened with the World War and the Holocaust. The need for witnessing became a historical and moral obligation. Felman and Laub's work, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* shed light on the role of witnessing in trauma memory. The work collected testimonials from survivors regarding the holocaust. Carolyn J. Dean states the following, "The Holocaust can only be witnessed belatedly as an event whose assault on victims' psyches fragments coherent memorial narratives" (115), and this difficulty in testimony alludes to the title of Laub and Felman's concept of "crisis in witnessing". The Caruthian model discusses the crisis in witnessing because of the inherent difficulty in accessing the experience and the language to relate it. Felman and Laub conceptualise trauma as transmissible to the secondary witness, and this has been of paramount importance to accessing traumatic memory.

1.5 Literature Review

Milosz's literary oeuvre consists of both fiction and non-fiction. His writings also cut across various genres, including poems, verse novels, and memoirs. His works, both fiction and non-fiction, have been studied both in their original and translations. Studies were carried out in his native Poland and in anglophone countries. Milosz's *The Captive Mind* has been studied as a classic work against totalitarianism. Milosz wrote

exclusively in Polish. One of the major difficulties Milosz encountered in his exile was the lack of audience due to his choice of language. His works were translated into English primarily by Robert Hass under the direct supervision of the poet. This has resulted in a deluge of works on Milosz. *Cross-Roads. Polish Studies in Culture, Literary Theory*, *and History* is a series edited by Ryszard Nycz and Teresa Walas that deal with major Polish writers and the sixth volume of the series *Milosz Like the World: Poet in the Eyes of Polish Literary Critics* published in 2014 and edited by Zdzislaw Lapinski is dedicated to a number of critical enquiries into the works of Milosz. This book attempts to provide a glimpse of the verse structure or the genre tradition and the historical context of the poet to Anglophone readers. The book compiles the works of many Polish scholars on the poetry of Milosz. The articles shed light on the topographical and historical background of the poet. The life in exile and the memory of homeland feature in the works, and it also provides insights to the geographical features in Milosz's poetry. It looks at how forests, rivers, and other geographical features become a part of Milosz's poetic universe. It also provides the socio-historical context in which his poems were written. This book is of great importance to the thesis as it covers many scholars and a wide range of scholarship on the poetry of Milosz.

The dissertation by Joanna Mazurska titled *Making Sense of Czeslaw Milosz: A Poet's Formative Dialogue with his Transnational Audiences,* submitted in 2013*,* provides insights into the reception of Milosz in Poland and America. It delves in detail into the poet's life in his native country and America. The dissertation looks at how the political scenarios played out in the making and breaking of Milosz in Poland. The thesis also examines the biographical and literary experience of exile. The changing

fortunes of the poet over time have been well documented. It also provides information on the reception of his poetry to a wider audience. The working of the censor and the ideological restriction placed on him are looked into in the thesis. Many articles deal with the experience of exile. Milosz himself wrote about his exile in the article “Notes on Exile” published in 1976. The article “Lost in the “Earth Garden”: The Exile of Czeslaw Milosz”, published in 1999 by Louis Iribarne, discusses the poet’s exile in terms of the memory of the homeland and the images used to create it. It talks about how Milosz’s poetry is filled with a ‘visionary element’ that builds an imaginary homeland. The idea of homeland in Milosz shares a common feature in scholarly opinions: it is rather imagined than real. The geographical position of his place of birth played a crucial role in shaping his identity. The divided identity created by being on the borderlands of both a geographical and historical nation created an idea of a homeland that is far more imagined than real. Maria Berkan-Jabłońska, in the article “Poetic Lithuania of Milosz” published in 2016, discusses the poet’s long-term connection to his homeland and language. The memory and the idea of home in Milosz are complicated, and many critical enquiries have been made to understand and conceptualise home in Milosz’s poetry. The idea of homeland in Milosz is often associated with ceaseless wandering.

The impact of censorship and other ideological censoring has been studied by scholars in Milosz’s works. Jane Leftwich Curry’s The *Black Book of Polish Censorship*, published in 1984, is a seminal work that gives details of the working of the intricate censoring apparatus in Poland. It was a collection of documents that were smuggled out of Poland during the Cold War. Government surveillance, ideological

propaganda, and the banning and censoring of art and literature are documented in detail in the book. Marzena Woźniak-Łabieniec's article "Censorship Towards Czeslaw Milosz in Poland in the Fifties after Having Chosen the Emigration" discusses the impact of censorship on the literary output of the poet after his exile in the 1950s. Polish government tightened the censorship on Milosz after his exile, and his works were called back and banned from the public domain. The ramifications of exile and the discrediting process against the poet are studied in the article. Another article that studies the choice of language and readership is Mary Besemeres' "Rewriting One's Self into English: Milosz Translated by Milosz". This article discusses his decision to stick with the Polish language after choosing exile. The rationale behind his choice to write in Polish in a foreign country and the repercussions of the decision are discussed in the article. Witnessing is an important theme that runs in his poetry. As someone who has witnessed the two World Wars, the Cold War, the holocaust, and government persecution, the act of giving testimony becomes an important theme in his poetry. The act of witnessing is discussed in the article "Czeslaw Milosz: Examining the Witness" by Calvin Bedient. The poetry of Milosz attempts to do justice to the historical violence of the war and holocaust by giving accurate details of the events. He also says that even though the rhythm in the original Polish edition is lost in translations the attention to detail and force of perspective makes up for the loss.

1.6 My Contributions to the Study of Milosz's Poetry

The scope of my research is to bridge the gap in the existing literature. Though there has been an ample study on Milosz's poetry, there is a dearth of research in looking at his works through the lens of literary trauma theory. The thesis will attempt to look

at trauma using the framework of the revisionist model of trauma theory. The poetry of Milosz abounds with traumatic experience; witnessing the loss of his nationhood multiple times, the two world wars and the holocaust, dictatorship and exile have left huge traumatic blow to the poet. The poet's experience is not only personal but has a collective aspect to it. He acts as a representative of the collective trauma of the community. The victims of these atrocities form part of a collective group, and in witnessing these traumatic events, the poet finds a voice for the collective self.

The thesis will attempt to look at various social, cultural, and historical contexts in which the meaning of trauma can be understood. The thesis explores the trauma on the tangents of geography, myths and censorship. The traumatic experience in his poetry is intricately woven into the landscape. The cultural and social values of place play an important role in understanding the trauma. The combination of geographical features, myths and the working governmental apparatus greatly affected the life and works of the poet. Hence, looking at trauma from this perspective provides a unique lens to understand the trauma of the individual and, through him, the collective consciousness. The poetry of Milosz abounds with traumatic experiences, which include witnessing the loss of his nationhood multiple times, the two World Wars and the Holocaust, dictatorship and exile. These events left a huge traumatic impact on the poet. The poet's experience is not just personal but has a collective aspect to it. He acts as a representative of the collective trauma of the community. The victims of these atrocities form part of a collective group, and in witnessing these traumatic events the poet finds a voice for the collective self.

Another aspect of his poetry that received scant literary attention is the presence of mythologies. There are a few works that study the catholic influence and mysticism of the poet. Milosz uses mythic narrativization to bring out the traumatic experience. Greek, Eastern European and other mythologies and the creation of personal myths in the poetry of Milosz are not well-researched. This thesis will attempt to analyse the use of mythic narrativization in traumatic expression.

1.7 Chapterisation

The thesis consists of an introduction, three core chapters and a conclusion. The chapter titled "Geographical Implications of Trauma in Milosz's Poetry". It looks at how places, natural, mythological and imagined, play a role in traumatic representation. It also examines how geographical features like rivers and other landscapes, including the flora and fauna, open traumatic memories. The poems, "In Warsaw", "Rivers", "Throughout Our Lands", and "A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto" are examples that capture the geographical embeddedness of Milosz's poetry. Place functions as a repository of traumatic memory and analysing it would help in unravelling the meaning of trauma. The experience of trauma is deeply rooted in the historical and political landscape of Eastern Europe. The political divisions of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the erasure of the Polish Republic, the two world wars, post-war dictatorship, and forced exile are traumatic events that are unveiled in the region. These events are intricately connected to the spatiality of the region, and it would become fundamental to study the role of place and geographical features to understand the trauma. The geographic landscape the poet navigates is a repository of historical traumatic events, and the chapter analyses how various traumatic experiences manifest and realise in the varied

landscapes and geographical features that appear in Milosz's poetic universe. The traumatic elements that feature in the life and works of the poet are deeply rooted in the historical and political landscape of Eastern Europe. It would be challenging to understand the meaning of trauma without looking at how geography and the politics of the region play their role in the expression and realisation of trauma. This chapter looks at the way an idea of homeland is created in his poetry, the role of various historical traumatic events in the material landscapes of the poetic universe and the impact of displacement as portrayed through the images of various geographical features.

The next chapter titled "Trauma of Censorship in the Life and Works of Milosz" looks at the working of the Polish censoring apparatus, the internal censorship the poet has subjected himself to, and the methods employed to circumvent the censor. His language choice plays an important role in the poet's career. The very act of giving up an audience for his commitment to language itself is a rebellious act. The working of the external censoring systems and their effect on the poet's works are discussed in detail in the chapter. It examines the history of censorship in Eastern Europe and how various imperialist forces employed censorship to curtail nationalist aspirations. "Sentences", "Secretaries", "To My Faithful Mother Tongue", and "Hooks of a Corset" are representative poetic pieces that deal with the trauma of censorship in Milosz's poetry.

Polish literature developed under the shadow of censorship and developed a nuanced style to circumvent the censor. The chapter looks at the literary history of Poland, the working of the censor, internal censorship employed by the poet and the

techniques used to circumvent the censor. By shedding light on the act of witnessing, the chapter examines the intersection between the act of witnessing and the expression of trauma. As an individual who witnessed the horrors of war and governmental oppression, Milosz has written extensively on the act of witnessing.

Milosz's poetry delves deep into the profound impact of historical events, especially censorship under various political regimes. Various imperialist powers employed censorship as a tool to manipulate and create political opinion. His poetic endeavours stand as a witness to the interplay of personal and collective trauma of censorship. The nation had witnessed appalling violence during its history and the perpetrators made diligent attempts to conceal the truth from reaching the public. They effectively controlled the art and coerced artists not to speak the truth. Milosz's poetry stands out as a scathing criticism of the governmental repressive mechanisms. This chapter looks at the history of censoring in Poland at different periods in history, the techniques employed by the authors to circumvent the censorship, and how the trauma of censorship impacted the life and works of the poet. The chapter also looks at the biographical details of the poet to examine how the trauma of censorship has affected the poet.

In the final core chapter, "Mythologies and Trauma", the use of mythological narrativisation and the creation of personal myths in expressing the trauma are analysed in his poems. Mythical narrativisation is a method used to communicate traumatic experiences in literature. "Orpheus and Eurydice", "A Book in the Ruins", and "Bobo's Metamorphosis", to name a few, deal with mythical elements. Myths provide a narrative form for the expression of trauma and the underlying traumatic experience in myths can

be studied like language. The chapter looks at the creation of a communal bond through foundational myths. Milosz's poems fuse myth, history and fiction to create a mythical landscape. The horrors of the Second World War warrant a unique medium for communication, and the use of myths mitigates the perceived lack of authorial authority. The chapter also examines the mythical rivers in the poetry. Trauma exists outside linear time, and the use of mythical rivers that function against time helps to communicate the traumatic experience. Milosz's poems also create a parallel between the real and mythical narratives. The chapter also investigates the connection between the mythical retelling and real events. Milosz weaves in mythological narration into the tapestry of his poetic universe. Mythological narratives provide controlled frameworks to talk about the otherwise difficult traumatic experience. Milosz uses the collective narrative forms of myths to elucidate the enduring impact of trauma on individual and collective consciousness. This chapter looks at how myths formulate the origin of the people. It also examines the poet's use of mythical narratives to talk about the horrors of the world wars. The use of various other mythologies is also analysed in the chapter. In particular, mythical rivers are frequently featured in Milosz's poetry. They become channels that navigate the complexities of memory and history.

Finally, the thesis concludes the findings of the three chapters. The thesis examines the meaning of traumatic experiences through various cultural and social backgrounds. The thesis attempts to situate the traumatic experience in the larger cultural contexts of authoritarian regimes, exile, political censoring and ideological impositions. One of the significant difficulties in traumatic expression is communication. The magnitude of the event challenges the referential powers of

language, and the survivors struggle with the inadequacy of language in communicating the experience. Grounding the experience in the cultural and social contexts provides the necessary value to the events and makes them comprehensible to the audience. The thesis thus explores the implications of trauma in the broader social and cultural contexts.

Chapter 2

Geographical Implications of Trauma in the Poetry of Czeslaw Milosz

2.1 Introduction

The chapter explores the traumatic implications of the geographical features present in the poetry of Czeslaw Milosz. The geographic landscape the poet navigates is a repository of historical traumatic events, and the chapter analyses how various traumatic experiences manifest and realise in the varied landscapes and geographical features that appear in Milosz's poetic universe. The traumatic elements that feature in the life and works of the poet are deeply rooted in the historical and political landscape of Eastern Europe. The history of the geographical and political divisions of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the systematic erasure of the Polish nation and its identity, and the forced exile of the poet are the traumatic events that appear in his poetry. These traumatic events are intricately connected to the spatiality of the region. It would be challenging to understand the meaning of trauma without looking at how geography and the politics of the region play their role in the expression and realisation of the trauma. This chapter looks at the way an idea of homeland is created in his poetry, the role of various historical traumatic events in the material landscapes of the poetic universe, and the impact of displacement as portrayed through the images of various geographical features.

Place and geographical features hold an integral part in the life and works of Czeslaw Milosz. By not naming the place of his birth, Milosz introduces a non-traditional meaning to the idea of native land. The Polish-Lithuanian identity of the poet problematises the purity of the concept of homeland. Geographer Yi Fu Tuan defines

home in “A View of Geography” as a “unit of space organised mentally and materially to satisfy a people’s real and perceived basic biosocial needs and, beyond that, their higher aesthetic-political aspirations” (102). Ryszard Nycz talks about Milosz’s point of departure in “Thrown in the Geographically Shaky Position” from the traditional concept of “home as strictly determined, stable and enclosed space of a permanent order, walled off from the chaotic mobility and hybrid diversity of the outside world” (184). Physical displacement marked the childhood of Milosz. The fate of the nation was no less visible in the conflicted identity of the poet. The place of Milosz’s birth marked the geographical position of a crumbling empire. Milosz was born in Szetejnie, a small village bordering present-day Poland and Lithuania that was historically part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. According to Louis Iribarne, for the poet, homeland was something both the past lost but real and carrying a powerful yearning for the eternal. The constant companion of young Milosz was the recurrent physical displacement, which is evident in his memoir *Native Realm*: *“*Our home was often a covered wagon, sometimes an army railroad car” (41). The trauma of the loss of homeland is featured in the poetry in the recurrent repetition of many places and geographical features. Since homeland was something which was not immediately available to him as a tangible material presence, it is only imperative that the trauma finds expression through the experience of constant displacements.

2.2 The Idea of Homeland as a Constant Movement

“My native land was a virgin forest…beyond the compass of maps, it was more legendary than real” (Milosz, *Native Realm* 7)

The first memory of displacement came to Milosz at a very young age when the family had to relocate to Russia as part of his father's job. The "ceaseless wandering" (Milosz, *Native Realm* 41) is recounted in the prose poem "Kazia".

> A two-horse wagon was covered with tarpaulin stretched on boughs of hazel and in that manner we had been voyaging a couple of days, while my eyes kept starting out of my head from curiosity. Especially when we left the flat region of fields and woods for a country of hills and many lakes, of which I was to learn later that it was shaped thus by a glacier. That country revealed to me something not named, what might be called today a peaceful husbandry of man on the earth: the smoke of villages, cattle coming back from pasture, mowers with their scythes cutting oats and after-grasses, here and there a rowboat near the shore, rocked gently by a wave. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 570)

The wagons reappear in another poem, which was written during the period of World War II and in the wagon, the traveller is not the young Milosz, but a group of captive Jews transported to concentration camps. He uses the image of the wagon as a personal symbol not only of displacement but also of extermination. Wagon takes a disturbingly tragic image in this context. It not only displaces one from the place but instead erases one from the face of the earth. Thus, the journey in Milosz is not towards the comforts and permanence of a home. In the poem "Outskirts", we can see the wagons reappearing. The prospect of extermination compounds the idea of displacement. Thus, the symbol serves the purpose of Jewish displacement and the Holocaust. It is also worth noting that the Jews were not exterminated in their homes,

but rather, they were forced out in the guise of resettlement. The wagons are thus the image of the loss of home.

> Farther on, the city torn into red brick.
>
> A lone pine tree behind a Jewish house.
>
> Loose footprints and the plain up to the horizon.
>
> The dust of quicklime, wagons rolling,
>
> and in the wagons a whining lament. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 65)

The Tuanian idea of space as that which allows movement and place as pause espoused by Tuan in his work: *Space and Place: A Perspective of Experience* is disowned and the idea of place as a conditional permanence conceptualised by David Harvey, in his work *Justice, Nature and Geography of Difference* is accepted in the work of Milosz. The idea of home envisioned in the poetry of Milosz is of movements, shifting landscapes, the changing natural world, and the flowing rivers. The geographical and historical place of Milosz's origin does not warrant permanence but what we can see in the history of his nation is a palimpsest of redrawn and over-drawn boundaries. The idea of homeland becomes a contested place for many characters in Milosz's poetry. The historical circumstances of his places warranted a provincialised conception of the idea of homeland. After the dissolution of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, there were calls for independence, but it was a call for independent constituent nationalities rather than restoring the Duchy of Lithuania. It was during the interwar period that Poland emerged as an independent nation, only to be divided again by the German and Soviet Occupying forces. War created nations erasing their

homeland. Milosz, in the work “La Compe” published in1965, differentiates between nation and homeland.

> Vincenz knows that people miss their fatherland nowadays, but instead of it they are given only countries. Homeland is organic, grown into the past. It is always small, heart-warming, close as own body. Country is mechanical. Homeland is Wales, Brittany, Provence, Catalonia, Basque Country, Transylvania, Hucul land. (Jablonska 133)

According to Tomas Balkelis, the central tenant of the Soviet Union’s borderland integration into the Union was mass deportation. Around 48000 individuals were swept into the Soviet interior during the beginning of 1940. The wave of forced displacement continued after the war and ran well into the Stalinist rule. The end of the war resulted in an ensuing power struggle with the West and the Soviet Union. Poland came under the sphere of influence. The central committee of the Soviet communist party controlled the politics in Poland. The nation became a buffer between the two opposing forces. One of the strategies enforced was forced relocation. It was through this displacement and creating consent through propaganda that the Soviet Bloc controlled the Polish Republic.

Mass displacement, both forced and voluntary, became a norm in the 20th century. The advent of the steam engine and developments in the mass mode of transportation amplified the scale of migration, especially in the European context. The Trans-Siberian railway link appears repeatedly in Milosz's poetry. Milosz’s father, Aleksander Milosz, worked for the Imperial Army constructing roads and bridges, and the images of movements thus made a profound mark in the memory of young Milosz.

The travels made by the family are recounted in the long poem *LA BELLE EPOQUE*. The term denotes a beautiful era, a movement which spanned the 1880s to the beginning of the First World War. This period was marked by optimism, economic and colonial expansion and innovations in science, technology and culture.

> On the Trans-Siberian Railway, I traveled to Krasnoyarsk,
> With my Lithuanian nurse, with my mama; a two-year-old
> cosmopolitan,
> A participant in the promised European era.
> My dad hunted marals in the Sayan Mountains,
> Ela and Nina were running on the beach in Biarritz. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 473)

These lines embody the spirit of the times. The vision of the promised land and the hope for social change through scientific optimism resonate in the lines. According to Ryszard Nycz, for the 20th century man, mobility became one of the paradigmatic experiences, and in the related process, the bond with one's place of birth started vanishing (Lapinski 186). In "Poetic Lithuania of Milosz", Maria Berkan Jablonska accounts the idea of homeland and exile. She confirms the idea of universal migration, especially during the twentieth century, when people left settled lifestyles and embraced new land. This resettlement does not give up the idea of the homeland; "the awareness of being introduced into the rhythm of universal exile does not mean resignation from the attempt to define one's own place in the world, deliberately organising space to overcome the hopeless emptiness of the first movements in exile" (132). The image of lonely railway stations and crammed-up wagons appears sporadically in Milosz's

poetry. The railway station and wagons do not often portray a sojourn to the promised land but often to uncertainty and extermination. The sense of home and uprootedness is evident in the movements. Geographical space represented in the topography of places, relations and dislocations creates the destiny and the identity of the individual.

Mass displacement and loss of home portrayed in the wagons and "infernal stations" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 176) also correspond to the millions of Jews transported to the extermination camps. From a young age, Milosz had a multicultural upbringing. Vilnius was home to people from diverse backgrounds, including Poles, Slavs and Jews. Teresa Walas contends, this democratic, federal, and multi-ethnic setting referred to the tradition of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Lapinski 28). The master plan for the East resulted in millions of Polish Jews being deported from their homeland in crammed-up wagons. Loss of homeland can be equated with mass deportations and wagons bring forth the trauma of irretrievable loss. The loss of homeland had various shades of meaning different to the many subjects of Eastern Europe. For some, it meant the loss of their cultural identity as Poles, and for the Jews, it meant extermination. According to the "Masterplan for the East", the Nazis had decided to wipe out the Jews and the Slavic people, whom they considered inferior races. They secretly made a pact with the Red Army to attack Poland from both sides. Since Poland had a large Jewish and Slavic population, extermination camps were set up in parts of the country which Jews were rounded up from their homes. The trauma of loss is expressed in the uncertainties of the dispossessed. Jews were pushed out of their homes, their valuables confiscated and hurriedly deported in wagons to be sent to

extermination camps set in different parts of the country. The angst of the deportees is nowhere more visible than in the lines from the poem “Album of Dreams”.

> August 14
>
> They ordered us to pack our things, as the house was to be burned.
>
> There was time to write a letter, but that letter was with me.
>
> We laid down our bundles and sat against the wall.
>
> They looked when we placed a violin on the bundles.
>
> My little sons did not cry. Gravity and curiosity.
>
> One of the soldiers brought a can of gasoline. Others were tearing down curtains.
>
> …
>
> November 23
>
> A long train is standing in the station and the platform is empty.
>
> Winter, night, the frozen sky is flooded with red.
>
> Only a woman's weeping is heard. She is pleading for something from an officer in a stone coat. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 175-176)

“Album of Dreams” is a cycle of poems completed over a year. All the individual pieces in the cycle combine in the larger puzzle to make an intelligible image. The dream-like hallucinatory sequences of the poem fuse the last waking thought with fragments of distant or buried experience and foreshorten the space-time of the poem resulting in an ever-present now. The poem begins with the image of an ordinary household which is later turned upside down by the army. The sudden shift in the poem’s

pace and image suggests the swiftness in the military actions. The evictions happened overnight leaving the people with no time and means to make any arrangements for the journey. The sudden shifts in the style of the poem also leave the reader with no time to comprehend the actions. A poignant image in the poem is the crammed-up wagons escorting the people to their new destinations. The use of dates before each section stretches the experience. The two images in the above sections, the eviction and railway station, encapsulate the trauma of displacement. In the historical context of this poem, the Jews not only lose their homes but also their right to live. The trauma is captured in the content and through the style of the poem. The swift breaks in the linear narration followed by random fragmentary images are techniques employed to capture the essence of the experience. The poems capture the movement not only in the content but also in the form. The sudden change in the landscape is also characterised by the chaotic symmetry of the lyric.

Place is not just a fixed point in geography but an organic entity from which memories, feelings and meaning are organised and transmitted. Geographical space defines the trajectory of one's life and identity. Nycz argues that place is a weave of necessity and chance which determines the individual's self-knowledge, and physical and mental state (Lapinski 184). In the case of Milosz, the grace of chance and choice were less favourable. The political and social changes around the poet created a feeling of impermanence and instability. Life becomes a possibility of chance. In the poem "Fear-Dream", Milosz brings about the idea of movement through the images of wagons and railway stations and how they subject themselves to the grace of chance.

> Orsha is a bad station. In Orsha a train risks stopping for days.
> Thus perhaps in Orsha I, six years old, got lost
> And the repatriation train was starting, about to leave me behind,
> Forever.
> As if I grasped that I would have been somebody else,
> A poet of another language, of a different fate. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 487)

The poem recounts Milosz's childhood experience at the end of the First World War. Many Eastern European nations gained independence from the Russian empire, and young Milosz and his family had the opportunity to move back to Lithuania. The episode happened at the railway station in Orsha where young Milosz went missing for a short while. The intermittent geographical dislocations, which become a part of the poet, have created an identity that has been haunted by the sense of not belonging anywhere. Edward Mozejko, in his book *Between Anxiety and Hope: The Writings and Poetry of Czeslaw Milosz,* published in 1988, discusses how the individual relates to his culture and traditions. He says: "It places man into relation with his natural existence and at the same time considers him as a product of certain cultural, historical traditions" (154). The importance of the city will be discussed in the latter part of the chapter.

2.3 Organising Homeland Around the Image of The Rivers

The topography of place in Milosz constitutes not only geographical and cultural features but also encapsulates the bodily and emotional experience. Elżbieta Rybicka connects the idea of geopoetics with the poetry of Milosz: "the relationship between the particular and concrete experience of places and their entanglement in the cultural

archive, or the tension between the body, space and cultural cocoon" (198). The montage of landscapes appearing in the poem of Milosz evokes distinct emotions. Landscape is an intensively visual idea (Cresswell 10). Milosz's poetry offers a cinematographic visual presence of geographical features, such as rivers, forests, and gardens. These features do not appear just as visual entities inhabiting the space in the poetic universe of the poet. Place and memory are intertwined and the materiality of the place results in the inscription of memory in the landscape as public memory (Cresswell 85). The geographical features thus produce emotions and memories in poetry. The geographical features are not general in their nature, but they invoke particular memories. The rivers remind one of the lived experiences of the poet; so do the forests, terrains and gardens.

Rivers in the poetry of Milosz are real, imagined, and mythical. Flowing water in his poetry attests to an ever-present eternity: "While your endless flowing carries us on and on; And neither is nor was. The moment only, eternal" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 397). Rivers form a geographical permanence amongst the changing boundaries of the homeland. For the poet, it seems to be an anchoring point where he can revert to whilst everything else around him is changing. "You were my beginning and again I am with you, here, where I learned the four quarters of the globe" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 640). The constant presence of the flowing water and rivers attains the value of a chronicler. The political boundaries have changed, wars have been fought, and countries have emerged and disappeared from the face of the earth, but rivers remain, witnessing the course of history. Rivers remain as material signifiers pointing towards certain memories. In the poems, he talks about real and mythical

rivers. The displacement of the poet can be seen through the change in geographical features. The trauma of displacement becomes evident in the memory of the rivers. They open the wounds of a lost homeland. When the memory fades, the presence of the rivers and fixed geographical features remind the speaker of his past, his origin. The image of the river Vistula, the longest in Poland, appears in the poem "The Rivers", and the critic Marian Stala argues that, the poet turns Vistula into a witness, a symbol of the memory of the nation's tragic fate (Lapinski 137). Milosz talks about this witnessing character of the rivers in the poem titled "Rivers".

> "So lasting they are, the rivers!" Only think. Sources somewhere in the mountains pulsate and springs seep from a rock, join in a stream, in the current of a river, and the river flows through centuries, millennia. Tribes, nations pass, and the river is still there, and yet it is not, for water does not stay the same, only the place and the name persist, as a metaphor for a permanent form and changing matter. The same rivers flowed in Europe when none of today's countries existed and no languages known to us were spoken. It is in the names of rivers that traces of lost tribes survive. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 657)

The image of the river in Milosz's poetry can be understood from facets of space and time. They exist not only as physical entities present in the poetic landscape but also in the plane of time, myth and imagination. The image of the river is brought in as a witness by the poet to evoke a comparison between his act of witnessing through poetry and spectatorship of the flowing rivers. Like the act of observing the course of human history by the river, the poet chronicles the history through his poetry. In many

of his poems, Milosz calls on the river to give testimony to the events. Because of his recurring displacements, what remained a fixed point around which memory and trauma emanated were the geographical features. They function as signifiers of the memory of a cultural loss.

Rivers invoke the memories of the displacements the poet was subjected to. Edward Casey in his work *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, argues that place has the ability to produce and reproduce social memory. The constant movement in the life of the poet is visible in the changing landscape of the poems. One of the important geographic features that translates this trauma of change is the presence of various rivers. In *New and Collected Poems* Milosz discusses the importance of these rivers in his life: The rivers of his place of birth blue Niemen (615), the dark Niewiaża (669), Wilia (237) and Vistula switch their place for Vezere (137), Siene (393) and Rhine (142) finally culminating in Columbia (372), Rogue River (284) and Sacramento (363). Milosz is extremely particular when it comes to naming the rivers and the cities. He has given the real names of the cities, rivers, and other geographical features he has experienced. Iribarne in her article "Lost in the 'Earth-Garden': The Exile of Czeslaw Milosz", argues that the act of providing names for an exile acquires a talismanic power (638). The changing rivers follow the trajectory of the geographical disposition of the poet. The constant wandering of the poet through European and American landscapes takes the route of the various rivers meandering their paths through the continent. Milosz organises his memory around rivers. He documents the events from his childhood around the Polish rivers. He also draws inspiration and kinship from the many poets and predecessors who wrote in praise of the rivers. Later, when he chose exile,

rivers still featured in his writings. The loss of his native rivers was always replaced by rivers which inhabited his new territories. Milosz was forcibly, not just physical force but circumstantial forces, dislocated from his place of birth. His identity and upbringing oscillated because of the problematic geography of Eastern Europe. Milosz spent his time after exile from Poland in France which can be seen in the images of the rivers in France, and he finally settled down in the United States. The rivers from these three different locations feature in his poetry depicting the loss and longing of the homeland. The presence of rivers provided a sense of belonging to the poet as is evident in the lines, “Wherever I wandered, through whatever continents, my face was always turned to the river” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 640). This sense of returning to the banks of the river is a promise to the self to return to the homeland.

The rivers also provide an idea of the empire’s geographical ambitions. Rivers made natural boundaries and identifiers for nations. Civilisations sprung up on the banks of great rivers. The expansion of the empires and the suffering of smaller nations can be seen nowhere better than in the settlements on the rivers. The settlements near the rivers also remind one of the tribal origins of the Slavic people. Later in Milosz’s life, we can see he draws a comparison between the native tribes of America and the early settlements of the Slavic region. The rivers also shed light on the autochthonous beginnings of the people. They provide the necessary kinship to the ancestors and allude to the mythical origins of the people. Milosz, in his childhood journeys, survived various rivers of the empire, and sitting on the rail wagon, he ponders over the fate of the smaller nations under the yoke of empires. The clutches of the Russian empire were Dionysian sword over Eastern Europe. The military expansion surrounding empires

resulted in the division of the Lithuanian Duchy. Poland had historically been a battleground for many empires; the Russian, Austrian and Prussian empires fought over them during the 1700s and also became a battleground for Neapolitans. Moreover, the Second World War broke out in Poland and was fiercely contested on Polish grounds. The Westward expansion of the Russian empire and the plight of the Poles are portrayed in the poem "Fear-Dream".

> A trembling of the small before the great. Before the Empire.
> Which constantly marches westward, armed with bows, lariats, rifles,
> Riding in a troika, pummelling the driver's back,
> Or in a jeep, wearing fur hats, with a file full of conquered countries.
> And I just flee, for a hundred, three hundred years,
> On the ice, swimming across, by day, by night, on and on.
> Abandoning by my river a punctured cuirass and a coffer with king's grants.
> Beyond the Dnieper, then the Niemen, then the Bug and the Vistula.
> (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 487)

Vistula stands as a witness to the imperial aspirations of the empire. The poet has an ambivalent feeling towards the river. It does not inhabit the landscape of his poetic universe. Rather, it carries emotions and invokes memories. The image of the rivers in the previous poem shows the expansion of the empire. The image of the troika symbolises the three horsed wagons used by the empire and they are an image of the leadership triumvirate of the Soviet Union. Thus, the troika tramples over the lives for centuries. Vistula also acts as a witness of the nation. It functions as a natural monument

around which a legacy of the dislocated arranges itself. Jerzy Kwiatkowski, in "Milosz at the Brink of the Occupation: 'The River'", discusses how the river Vistula stands as a symbol of the Polish nation. Many poets used the image of Vistula as a replacement for the Poles. One of the poignant images of the river was in the depiction of the oppression of the Poles after the fall of the Polish state.

The rivers appearing in the poetry are not only real rivers; they are also mythological and imagined. The mythological rivers appearing in the poetry are associated with memory and change. The image of the river of forgetfulness, Lethe and the Heraclitean river depict mythologies and trauma that will be dealt with in detail in the coming chapters. There are many unnamed rivers in Milosz's poetry, and all of them reveal "fluidity, fluctuation and movement" (Lapinski 137). Gazing into that seamless current, we enter the course of many events, uncontrollable and unavoidable. Thus, the rivers symbolise movement and change and ultimately beg the question of our identity and position in this world. Rivers and other geographical features that appear in Milosz's poetry are as much a part of the poetic universe as his own identity. In Edward Mozejko's work *Between Anxiety and Hope: The Writings and Poetry of Czeslaw Milosz*, he talks about how the individual becomes part of the cultural product. The works of Milosz "place man into relation with his natural existence and at the same time him as a product of certain cultural, historical tradition" (154). The individual in his works becomes the product of his period's material and cultural milieu.

The landscape in Milosz's poetry is embedded in the cultural landscape of exile. The rivers, forests, and cities are grounded in the memory and imagination of the poet. Understanding the description and changes in the landscape helps the reader fathom the

sense of loss. Rivers bring in an ambivalent emotion in the poetry of Milosz. The poet finds comfort in the laps of the rivers from his childhood, and he arranges memories around the rivers. The childhood memory of the poet is deeply intertwined with the flow of the river.

> It was a riverside meadow, lush, from before the hay harvest,
> On an immaculate day in the sun of June.
> I searched for it, found it, recognised it.
> Grasses and flowers grew there familiar in my childhood. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 597)

Similar ideas of rivers and memories from childhood reappear in another poem. The poet feels extreme happiness and despair around rivers. We can see conflicting images of the poem in the works of Milosz.

> Yet, there, on that river, I experienced full happiness, a ravishment beyond any thought or concern, still lasting in my body.
> Just like the happiness by the small river of my childhood, in a park whose oaks and lindens were to be cut down by the will of barbarous conquerors.
> I bless you, rivers, I pronounce your names in the way my mother pronounced them, with respect yet tenderly. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 586)

We see contrasting images of the rivers in the poems “In Common” and “The Separate Notebooks”. The image of the river we see in the former is “In valleys of beautiful, though poisoned, rivers”, and in the latter, it is “Under the Wormwood star,

bitter rivers flowed" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 392). Thus, the image characterises the relationship he has with the rivers. They provide him with comfort, and at the same time, they invoke the memory of loss.

2.4 Flora and Fauna as Visual Motifs

The landscape of Milosz's poetic universe is inhabited by various flora and fauna, which are particular to the places that the poet has been through. The specificity of the species is related to memory and imagination. The trees inhabiting the landscape remind the poet of the displacement. Milosz was exiled from Poland due to political pressures, and he spent his time in France, finally reaching America. Milosz writes in "Notes on Exile" how the experience of exile creates two centres: "Exile displaces the centre or rather creates two centres. Imagination relates everything in one's own surrounding to "over there"- in my case, somewhere on the European continent" (283). Milosz, after the fall of the Soviet Union, frequented his house in California and Poland. We can see a similar alternation in his poetry. The images of his childhood in Europe are juxtaposed with the images of American life. The landscape opens the site for traumatic memory. They remind the speaker of his loss and let the reader imagine his divided self in exile. The unforgiving desert and canyons of the Californian landscape are often contrasted with the lush green forests of the European context, and so is the aristocratic nobility of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy to the modern capitalistic society of the United States. Marian Stala argues:

> In this peculiar plantation, created by memory and imagination, the most important trees are oaks, which – as the poet says –stand in summer splendour" (NC 268). Next to them, we find ones that are very typical of

> landscapes in the Masovia region or the borderlands: pines, firs, birches and apples trees. The poet's attention is also drawn, though less often, to chestnuts, maples, lindens and poplars. There are also trees which Milosz saw outside Poland and Europe: eucalyptuses, cedars, sequoias, magnolias and palms. (Lapinski 146)

Milosz's use of specific species that are native to certain geographies brings out the idea of exile. Their existence, which is specific to a certain area, shows a sense of belonging while the exile is plucked out from their natural order and planted in an alien garden. The mere act of existence and belonging to the place helps fulfil their purpose. In exile, the act of silence is also a rebellion. The act of being physically present shows defiance. Milosz was forced out of his country because of his opposition to cultural propaganda through socialist realism. The act of exile limited his audience and his chances of writing, but he chose to stand up against it rather than give in to ideological enslavement. As an exile writing in a foreign language to a non-existent audience, Milosz experiences the futility of his actions and existence. As portrayed in "The Thistle, The Nettle", pictures the thistle, the nettle, the burdock, and the belladonna as native to Europe, the first three being consumable and the latter poisonous. They fulfil their purpose in their place.

> "The thistle, the nettle, the burdock, and belladonna
> Have a future. Theirs are wastelands
> And rusty railroad tracks, the sky, silence". (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 524)

The existence of the plants is contrasted with the life of the speaker who is alien to the new land and has no purpose compared to the plants. The idea of indigenous flora and fauna highlights the dislocation of the individual. The image of different edible plants, some poisonous, shows that they fulfil a purpose. Their existence achieves meaning by the very act of presence in their landscape. The image of these plants juxtaposes the idea of the speaker in exile. Though some of these plants are poisonous, they have a purpose and position in the natural order of their environment, unlike the speaker, who stands out as an oddity in his new environment. Rachel Pain in her work "Geotrauma: Violence, place and repossession", argues that these environments become hardwired places of remembrance as these places carry the trauma of exile hardwired in the material, social and emotional ecologies of place. The presence of these indigenous plants opens the wounds of exile. In exile, the author looks back at his homeland, and the memory of it is occupied by many natural and man-made objects, and referring to them is an act of reclaiming those memories.

2.5 Traversing Barren and Green Landscapes in Memory

The presence of the trees brought about a change in the place. The American landscape is often devoid of vegetation. The landscape is inhabited by man-made objects or barren lands. In the poem "Throughout Our Lands", California is portrayed as "a city of eye-dazzling cements" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 182), and the barren plains of Nevada also come into the picture. He defines the spirit of the place as scorched emptiness. The geographical features, especially the contrast images, are material signifiers that point to the exiled identity of the poet. We can see the uneasiness of the speaker in the new landscape. The European landscape always features a sense

of yearning for home, a sense of return. Elzbieta Rybicka in the article “Homo Geographicus: The Topographies and Auto-Bio-Geographies of Czeslaw Milosz” explains how different landscapes permeate each other even though they are physically set apart.

> Milosz’s spatial imagination is not only localised, connected with places existing on the map, but also mobile, which – thanks to the “telescopic eye” and memory – allows the “here” and “there,” California and Lithuania, to permeate each other regardless of the fact that they remain separate. (Lapinski 196)

His poems offer a telescopic view of place and time as they wander off through different geographies and time frames. For Milosz, time is not a continuous, uninterrupted succession of events but often fragmented and intertwined. The long poems of Milosz often switch geographically and temporally. The poems structurally resemble an exiled landscape, shifting temporal and spatial plains. The topological space of the poem consists of spatio-temporal tangents moving in different directions. It takes the readers to a course of action that parallels the author’s displacement. The geographical features are markers in the movements. The trees in the poems help the reader navigate the landscapes the speaker traverses. We can see multiple landscapes and different time periods alternating in the poems.

> I did not choose California. It was given to me.
>
> What can the wet north say to this scorched emptiness?
>
> Grayish clay, dried-up creek beds,
>
> Hills the color of straw, and the rocks assembled

Like Jurassic reptiles: for me this is

The spirit of the place.

And the fog from the ocean creeping over it all,

Incubating the green in the arroyos

And the prickly oak and the thistles. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 364)

The contrasting images also evoke memories. With the passage of time, memories seem to fade, but the presence of geographical features tends to remind the speaker about his homeland. Milosz did not feel at home in the constant wandering during his life. The homeland, for him, was always that contested territory, a memory of the historical region. The trees that he witnesses in the foreign land, or rather the lack of trees, invoke the memories of his native land. In "A Magic Mountain", the speaker dreams about his homeland, reminding himself of the landscape; "I kept dreaming of how snow and birch forests. Where so little changes you hardly notice how time goes by. This is, you will see, a magic mountain" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 335). The presence of geographical features reminds one of what has been left off for the new.

The experience of exile is best captured in the poem "Throughout Our Lands". It was his first poem written in America in 1961. In both its English and French translations, the plural 'Lands' is used; the choice of the words affirms the idea of the brotherhood of man. The poem deals with the process of his integration into American culture and nature. The poem talks about the nostalgia of his previous abode, his encounters with the new land's literary culture, and the new society's lifestyle. Milosz was not only interested in the contemporary culture of America but was also influenced

by its literary history, his admiration for Walt Whitman, and the Enlightenment movement. The process of his eventual integration was not an easy undertaking. It was a long and painful struggle with exile, homelessness, and uprootedness. These difficulties forged his new identity as the modern man who has accepted his wobbling position in space and time. Milosz also found difficulties in choosing the medium of his writing. Unlike many immigrant writers who accepted the new language, Milosz was unable to write in English not because he was not proficient in the language but because he believed that his Polish language was the only medium that could put across his native experience. Milosz also found it challenging to find an audience for his writing as he was new and unheard to the English-speaking audience. This poem deals with Milosz's encounter with the new society, how he looked at its functioning and how it affected him as a newcomer.

> If I had to tell what the world is for me
> I would take a hamster or a hedgehog or a mole.
> and place him in a theatre seat one evening
> and, bringing my ear close to his humid snout,
> would listen to what he says about the spotlights,
> sounds of the music, and movements of the dance. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 182)

There is a sense of perplexity in the speaker, the uneasiness of a newcomer in a foreign land. Everything around seemed new and confusing to him; the landscapes, language, customs, and attitudes were different in the new surroundings. From the meadows of the European forests, the speaker is uprooted and planted in the "city of

eye-dazzling cement" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 182). For him, the new world feels like what "a hamster or a hedgehog or a mole" would feel about when they are brought to a theatre to watch the "spotlights, sounds of music and movements of the dance" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 182). The speaker feels alien to the new world. The sense of being out of place and the insecurity and confusion of confronting radically new things and surroundings are portrayed in the poem.

The separation and the loneliness are evident in the lines "Between the moment and the moment I lived through much in my sleep" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 183). He does not feel connected to the new surroundings and feels that "what was past still is, not was" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 183). The difficulties of integration and the longing and nostalgia of the past are evident in those lines. The difficulty in finding an audience and the sorrow of not being able to express in writing can be seen in the lines "my regret and great longing once to express one life, not for my glory, for a different splendour" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 183). The next part of the poem is about individual identities. The imagery used is that of different varieties of pear. The speaker names different varieties of pear, Jargonelle, Bosc, Bergamot and Comice, and even though all of them are pears, they are not the same. As evident in Milosz's poem "Magpeity": being "same and not quite same" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 156). Milosz likens these varieties to the people in the society, especially in a place like America. The author knows that America consists of different immigrants. All of them had come to this place at different points in time. Even though they all share the same immigrant status, the individual stories are different, and the experiences are different.

> Was Father Junipero an alien, when on mule-back
> he came here, wandering through the deserts of the south.
> He found redskin brothers. Their reason and memory
> were dimmed. They had been roaming very far
> from the Euphrates, the Pamirs, and the heights of Cathay,
> slowly, as far as any generation can
> pursuing its goal: good hunting grounds.
> And there, where later the land sank into the cold
> shallow sea, they had lived thousands of years,
> until they had almost completely forgotten the Garden of Eden and had not yet
> learned the reckoning of time.
> Father Junipero, born on the Mediterranean,
> brought them news about their first parents,
> about the signs, the promise, and the expectation. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 186)

The American experience is riddled with the experience of disposition. The natives were displaced and slaughtered in their own country. The Europeans left everything and reached the American shores, and they underwent harsh and undeveloped climates in the new land; this land was also home to castaways and vagabonds. The American continent progressed and flourished by the persistence and determination of the people. Milosz admires the dedication and commitment of the people, which is described in a short but entire section dedicated in the poem: “They

are so persistent, that give them a few stones and edible roots, and they will build the world" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 184). The poem takes on a different direction, and the gradual integration process of the poet begins. The integration was not an easy process. The structure and the positioning of various experiences substantiate this claim. The Polish-Lithuanian experience is intertwined with the American experience. The sections on both these experiences are placed in an intertwined manner. The memories of native Lithuania are followed by the history of integration into American society. The section eleven of the poem discusses his native Lithuania. The memory evoked here is about a woman named Paulina and the speaker's romantic relationship with her. The speaker had a romantic relationship with her. He also discusses her room filled with "crucifix and images of the saints" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 185) representing the religious background of the author. Paulina died long ago. The speaker "convinces" himself that she is gone. The image of death in the poem represents his memories of his native land that are slowly fading away. Immediately after this memory, the poet brings the images of integration into American society. Section twelve of the poem discusses the life of the catholic saint's father, Junipero. The idea of assimilation is explicit in the lines, "Wherever you are, you could never be an alien" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 186). After this statement, the speaker discusses the life of Father Junipero and his mission in California. Junipero was a Spanish catholic priest of the Franciscan order. He is credited with starting the Spanish mission in California. He began his missionary activities in Mexico and later moved to California. His works earned him the title "Apostle of California". The section discusses his works among the 'redskin', a term used to refer to the native Indians. The speaker

says it took a man from the Mediterranean to unite the tribes. The section abounds in the imagery of religious colonisation. The Christianisation process is deeply discussed in the poem. The resistance from the native population not to yield to the religious change is also portrayed. The speaker does not talk about the natives in a sympathetic manner; their defiance of the new religion is depicted as acts against salvation. The colonisation project is depicted in a fashion like that of the white man's burden to civilise the barbarians. Ultimately, the resistance of the natives could not withstand the colonial impositions, and the colonisation process was completed. The speaker in the lines implies that the process and the integration were not simple. The integration process is not exactly an easy alliance. Many people who came to this country had difficulties assimilating into the culture. It is also quite understandable that the elements of rootlessness and dislocation play an important role at the centre of the American identity.

2.6 Mythical Landscape

The poems written during the war expand the semantic range of the image. The poem "Earth" is a paradox where a fresh and beautiful object evokes the image of death. The image of the butterfly is contrasted with its stained wings from the blood from the flowers. What has been beautiful and elegant is contrasted with blood-stained images. Images of butterflies, flowers and tulips are stained with blood. "A butterfly lighting on your flowers stains its wings with blood/ Blood gathers in the mouths of tulips," (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 102). The poem then shifts from flowers to the people. There, too, the images of death haunt the lines. The speaker evokes the image of "funeral candles" warming the hands and "cannons ready to be fired" (Milosz, *New*

and Collected Poems 102). The shocking memories of cannon fire and unmarked graves continue to haunt the imagination of the Europeans. The image of flora and fauna escalates the meaning during the war. The images in the poem are an oxymoron which contrasts beauty with destruction.

The destruction during the world war is not limited to real cities and landscapes. Rather, it expands into the imagined landscape. In the poem "A Book in the Ruins", written during the Second World War in Warsaw, we see the rampage of the war destroying the material world, but to magnify the effect of the destruction, the violence is extended to an imagined world. The poem is set in the background of a destroyed library, "This could be the brick of the library" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 28) and the destruction is not constrained to the material world but reaches out to another world of books; "in a book picked up from the ruins, you see a world erupt And glitter with its distant sleepy past" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 28). The imaginary fictional universe of the book springs to life in the coming lines. The devastation is reflected in the lives of the characters in the books.

You pick a fragment
Of grenade which pierced the body of a song
On Daphnis and Chloe. And you long,
Ruefully, to have a talk with her,
As if it were what life prepared you for.
-How is it, Chloe, that your pretty skirt
Is torn so badly by the winds that hurt

Real people, you who, in eternity, sing

The hours, sun in your hair appearing

And disappearing? How is it that your breasts

Are pierced by shrapnel, and the oak groves burn,

While you, charmed, not caring at all, turn

To run through forests of machinery and concrete

And haunt us with the echoes of your feet? (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 28-29)

As evident in these lines, shells have penetrated the books lacerating the bodies of the characters. By bringing the characters to life and extending the destruction to their world the speaker successfully portrays the extent of penetration the violence has achieved. Libraries are not the only place destroyed in the works of Milosz. In the poem "Cafe", the setting is an everyday cafe frequented by ordinary masses. The destruction is portrayed in the image of "garden of frost" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 61) which destroyed the plants during the winter. The poem is riddled with the survivor's sense of guilt. Milosz took it upon himself the responsibility to speak for the masses who perished during the war. One of the major themes that run in his poetry is witnessing. In the poem "Dedication", Milosz talks about the purpose of poetry as witnessing.

They used to pour millet on graves or poppy seeds

To feed the dead who would come disguised as birds.

I put this book here for you, who once lived

So that you should visit us no more. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 77)

The image of trees foreshadows the possibilities of the survivors. The dissidents and political rivals during the period of Stalin were sent to the gulags in Siberia, which was in the North, and they had to do extreme manual labour in the cold. Most of the people sentenced to the gulags perished in the adverse winters. The first line reminds one of the possibility of ending up in one of those labour camps. The "fruits from the ocean" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 61) is a reference to the exile in the United States. The geographical features are associated with the fate of the individuals. The north implies the gulags, and the ocean island refers to the exile. Thus, in his poetry, geography is more than just material signifiers; it is part of the author's lived experience.

I may still cut trees in the woods of the far north,
I may speak from a platform or shoot a film
using techniques they never heard of.
I may learn the taste of fruits from ocean islands
and be photographed in attire from the second half of the century.
(Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 61)

The geographical features like the trees, forests, gardens, and rivers express emotion and a movement in time and space. In his interrelated collection of essays, *Visions From San Francisco Bay*, he talks about the European landscape: "Europe's landscape is a metaphor of its entire past, its emotional attachment to what is foolishly local, the slow build-up of towns and principalities" (Milosz 229). Milosz's poetry captures this idea, and we find a constant attachment rather a fidelity towards the

landscape. These landscapes recount history and bring out emotions, especially contrasting ones. The landscape of Europe emotes happiness and nostalgia tinted with laments of the war, while the landscape of America is barren, showing detachment and lethargy. In “Album of Dreams” the city of Sacramento and the barren lands of Nevada are juxtaposed with the lush green forest of Europe. The contrasting landscape is a recurring motif of displacement.

> It is a country on the edge of the Rudnicka Wilderness,
> for example, beside the sawmill at Jashuny, between the fir-forest of Kiejdzie
> and the villages of Czernica, Mariampol, Halina.
> Perhaps the river Yerres runs there
> between banks of anemones on marshy meadows.
> The inseminator-pines, footbridges, tall ferns.
> How the earth heaves! Not in order to burst,
> but it tells with a movement of its skin
> that it can make trees bow to one another and tumble down.
> For that reason joy. Such as people never
> have known before. Rejoice! Rejoice! (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 178)

The image of the tree is also used to express the extent of the destruction. Milosz uses trees as a metaphor to reflect the material harm inflicted during the war. The changing emotions are visible in the lushness of the trees. In the image of the trees recounting memories of their homeland, we can see flourishing trees and wildlife, but

when it comes to destruction, we can see leafless and torn trees and black rivers suffocating the living. The change in the material and emotional status of the author reflects directly on the external environment, in this case the tress. The picture of lifeless trees follows the destruction of the war. In the poem "A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto" written after witnessing the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto, the largest Jewish ghetto in Eastern Europe, the destruction is conveyed by the images of scattered remains of human flesh with random debris. The image of destruction peaks at the image of a lonely tree. "Now there is only the earth, sandy trodden down, with one leafless tree" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 63). The liquidation of the ghetto resulted in complete erasure leaving only a handful of survivors. The loneliness of the survivors finds a great expression in the image of the "leafless tree" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 63). The image of the destroyed trees is visible in many of the poems written during the war. In "Song on Porcelain" we see columns of armoured trucks returning after the end of the war through "A torn apple tree's shadow" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 81). The image of "sad black trees" thus brings out the emotions of the traumatised speaker.

The Polish Question was an important political and diplomatic issue throughout the 19th and 20th centuries that debated the Polish nation's independent existence. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania was divided among Russia, Prussia, and Austria. Though the boundaries were redrawn, the political aspirations of the Polish people for independence could not be satiated. This diplomatic nightmare was a key issue during the two world wars. Polish Question was a conundrum that could never be solved to the satisfaction of the main parties (Davies 208). The fate of many Eastern Europeans depended on the

diplomatic solution to the crisis. Joanna Mazurska writes, “National boundaries do not run through the metaphysical land of poetry; they certainly affect the lives of the poet” (168). The political events following the diplomatic and aggressive actions left a mark on the identity of many poles. In the poem “City Without a Name” Milosz talks about the Polish Question; “In the library, below a tower painted with the signs of the zodiac, /Kontrym would take a whiff from his snuffbox and smile//For despite Metternich all was not yet lost” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 214). Metternich was an Austrian diplomat who was prominent in the balance of power in Europe. He sat through the division of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and was instrumental in the later power struggles in Eastern Europe during the conquests among the various European nations, Russia, Austria, Germany, and France. The second character is Boleslaw Kontrym, a decorated soldier in the home army who fought and martyred for Poland. By juxtaposing the two conflicting characters the poet attempts to give a historical account of the history of Poland. The poem encapsulates a lot of historical events. The reference to the place, individuals and the historical events that took place provides the readers a cultural and social reference from which the trauma can be understood. The presence of Metternich is reminiscent of one of the historical divisions and the loss of nationhood, and it also alludes to the various occupations, reprisals and struggles of the Polish people. The image of Kontrym taking a whiff ultimately shows the victory of the people’s resistance. The historical references help the readers understand how the trauma permeates through generations. Situating Kontrym and Metternich in the same stanza shows the trans-generational transference of the trauma. The two characters belong to different historical eras, but their actions were responsible for the same events

with different effects; Metternich worked in favour of the division, while Kontrym worked for Polish independence.

The repercussions of the unsolved Polish question resulted in an identity crisis for the poet and many other Eastern Europeans. The constant erasure and redrawing of the national boundaries resulted in a divided identity of people. The idea of a home thus constituted more by an imaginary region than manmade boundaries. The human distinction of borders and nationalities created a sense of divided identity which Berkan-Jabłońska discusses in her essay, "Poetic Lithuania of Milosz", "the illness which affected him, the poet, Lithuanian and Pole in one person" (135). Joanna Mazurska talks about this duality in "Milosz quests for East-Central European identity by investigating his articulation of the in-between identity of a man with roots in the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth and his critical attitude toward narrow Polish nationalism" (163). Boundaries can be redrawn in the political maps, but one cannot take out the regional identities of a person. The longing for the European homeland is thus visible in his poetic universe.

The crisis of the Polish question manifests not only in the individual identity of the poet, but the ramifications of it extend beyond the individual and find an expression in the political aspiration of a nation. Political independence was a centuries-old yearning of the Polish people after the partition of the Duchy. Many Polish uprising was crushed by the occupying nations, but it did not quell the desire for an independent Poland. The poem "Song of a Citizen", written in 1943 during the German occupation of Poland, provides a picture of the struggles of the Polish nation. Poland as a nation witnessed its appearance and disappearance from the political map of Europe. Poland

was one of the largest nations in Europe during the Middle Ages, and by the end of the 18th century, the kingdom had declined, and its territories were divided among Austria, Prussia, and Russia. The Poles had to wait for two generations to regain their nationhood. It was after the Second World War that Poland re-emerged as a nation. The terms of the Treaty of Versailles stipulated an independent Polish republic. The long-sought nationhood did not last for long. The Germans and the Russians went behind their back and entered a treaty to divide Poland amongst themselves. Thus, by the beginning of the Second World War, Germany and Russia attacked Poland on both fronts. Soon, Warsaw fell, and the exploits were divided among the conquerors. The Polish government went into exile and operated from France. Poland regained its nationhood after the Second World War ended, but the situation did not change. Poland became a site for a power struggle. It was remotely controlled by the Soviet Union making it a satellite state. This poem is written in the background of this political upheaval.

A stone from the depths that has witnessed the seas drying up
and a million white fish leaping in agony,
I, poor man, see a multitude of white-bellied nations
without freedom. I see the crab feeding on their flesh.
I have seen the fall of States and the perdition of tribes,
the flight of kings and emperors, the power of tyrants.
I can say now, in this hour,
that l am, while everything expires,
that it is better to be a live dog than a dead lion,

as the Scripture says. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 57)

The stone has been a witness to various changes in the sea, it has witnessed the drying up of the water and the suffocation of millions of fishes. The speaker associates this image with the turmoil of a multitude of nations who have lost their freedom. A clear analogy is drawn between the war and loss of nationhood with the suffocation of fishes gasping for breath. The poet makes use of the image of a "crab feeding on their flesh" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 57). A crab is a sea animal that feeds on the dead remains of other sea organisms. The nations that have attacked and plundered other nations are equated to crabs that feed on other fellow animals. In the coming stanzas, the speaker says that he has witnessed the "perdition of tribes", "the flight of kings" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 57), and the power of tyrants. The images of power struggle remind one of the histories of political instability in the region. After witnessing all these events, the speaker still feels it is better to be alive than give up. There is still a glimmer of hope for the poet and the nation.

2.7 Cities as Sites of Remembrance

Cities are a recurring character in many of Milosz's works. The cities featured in his works act as focal points from which meaning and memory emanate. They also feature the feelings and turmoil of the poet as well. Milosz moved to many places on his wish and also due to external pressures. Thus, many different cities appear in his poems. The physical elements play an active role in piecing together memory. Hence, the appearance of cities is an effort by the author to actively remind him of the events and situations he has been through. Milosz took political asylum in France after he left Poland. The permission to stay in France was conditional and he had to renew the permit

every month in the mayor's office (Franaszek 314). In France, he started writing for the Polish literary journal *Kultura* and became acquainted with many literary figures. Milosz also got acquainted with Congress for Cultural Freedom, a Cold War-era group backed by America that worked against Soviet expansion to the West. Milosz's famous non-fiction work, *The Captive Mind*, was greatly celebrated by the group. The Milosz initially associated with the group but later expressed his displeasure for using his work and esteem for propaganda. Life in France was marked by a feeling of homelessness. It was almost like the life of a visitor than a resident. The poem "Whiteness" published in 1966 was written in Paris, a city that reappears in Milosz's poems. The poem recounts the melancholy tone of a traveller revisiting a city. Paris also reappears in "And the City Stood in Brightness" published in 1963.

> And the city stood in its brightness when years later I returned.
> And life was running out, Ruteboeuf's or Villon's.
> Descendants, already born, were dancing their dances.
> Women looked in their mirrors made from a new metal.
> What was it all for if I cannot speak.
> She stood above me, heavy, like the earth on its axis.
> My ashes were laid in a can under the bistro counter. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 201)

The poem discusses the mental process of an unnamed narrator retiring to his home country after a long period of time. The poem begins with the line "and the city stood in brightness to which years later I returned" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 201), which is repeated at the beginning of every stanza. The poem implies the temporal

and physical divide between the narrator and his native land, and the repetition also aggravates the feeling of separation and the ambiguity of coming back. The stanza contains elements from Parisian society; the narrator mentions the names of Ruteboeuf and Villon, who were French poets of the Middle Ages. The poems and narrative references point towards the burden of history. The stanza talks about historical figures and uses terms like descendants which may refer to the long relationship one has with the native land. The speaker also talks about the development of many things in the stanza where he mentions the mirrors made of steel. During the Renaissance, France was a pioneer in making mirrors. However, with all this development and the traditions, the speaker feels everything is futile as he cannot speak. France gave asylum to the author as he defected from the communist Polish regime, but a malignant invalidation process was put into action by his previous employers and peers, which put his writing career on a temporary halt. Also, it became difficult to find an audience in a new country where language, culture and society were alien to him. The narrator says he felt like "ashes in a can beneath the barroom counter" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 201). The sense of alienation and distance and ambiguous attitude towards the return can be explored in these lines.

Trauma has a complex relationship with space as the event happens in a place, but it also has the power to defy the logic of space and time. The geographer Rachel Pain differentiates place into seven typologies in relation to trauma. To understand the poetic universe of Milosz, two typological divisions of place, memorial places and retraumatizing places, are used. Memorial places are remembered sites of individual memorialisation that leave the past open to the present, to issues around collective

displacement and to the loss of place and its reformulation in traumatic memory. Retraumatising places are environments which include incidents, actions, images, sounds and smells that trigger the traumatic memory. Since traumatic memory is stored in a fragmentary way in the brain it could resurface under certain triggers. Thus, retraumatising places can flux the brain to such slippages where one can mentally and physically re-experience the event even when they are spatiotemporally displaced from the original event.

One of the recurring motifs in the poem is the use of the landscape of a city, especially Warsaw, the capital city of Poland. Warsaw witnessed one of the most heinous deeds of human cruelty during the two world wars. Milosz was present in Warsaw during its destruction. The place of destruction becomes a traumatic landscape for him. The city remains a site of remembrance and re-enactment. Cities remained the main battleground during the world war and as a direct victim of occupation. The ruins of devastated cities become the memorial place that engages the past with the present. The practice of situating the traumatic experience in the backdrop of a geographic place helps to situate the individual in relation to a layer of cultural signifiers. The destruction of the city during the Second World War is the material signifier from which the meaning of the trauma arises. Warsaw repeatedly appears as an anchor on which many experiences are centred. The city had gone through a tumultuous period: the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto, the destruction of the city by the Nazis and the red army. Warsaw stood as a symbol of Polish resilience and a foreign betrayal.

Warsaw is another city that appears in the poetry of Milosz, and it plays a crucial role in the life of Milosz. The Warsaw Uprising was one of the bloodiest events in

Jewish resistance during the German occupation of Poland. Milosz witnessed first-hand experience of the destruction of the Jewish ghetto. Milosz was living in Warsaw during the uprising. He could see the fire engulfing the ghetto from his window. The trauma of the survivor and the responsibility of witnessing reverberate in the poems featuring Warsaw. In many of the poems set in the city, we can see graphic images of the violence and also the trauma of the survivor. The poem "Campo Dei Fiori" provides a good understanding of human nature through the character of a city.

On this same square
they burned Giordano Bruno.
Henchmen kindled the pyre
close-pressed by the mob.
Before the flames had died
the taverns were full again,
baskets of olives and lemons
again on the vendors' shoulders.
I thought of the Campo dei Fiori
in Warsaw by the sky-carousel
one clear spring evening
to the strains of a carnival tune.
The bright melody drowned
the salvos from the ghetto wall,
and couples were flying
high in the cloudless sky. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 33)

The poet makes a historical connection between events, people and places of different periods in time. The poem talks about two major cities and two historical incidents. Campo Dei Fiori is an Italian city which means field of flowers. The square is famous for its commerce and street culture. Executions used to be held in public here. On 17th February 1600, the philosopher Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake for heresy at Campo Dei Fiori. The second city depicted in the poem is Warsaw, the capital of Poland. Warsaw was the largest Nazi ghetto during the second world war. The two incidents that are represented in the poem are the execution of Giordano Bruno and the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto. Giordano Bruno was a Dominican friar whose works extended on the Copernican model. He was tried by the catholic inquisition and burned at stakes at Campo Dei Fiori. Warsaw ghetto was the largest Jewish ghetto in Eastern Europe. Jews in and around Warsaw were rounded up here and were sent to the extermination camps. The ghetto was liquidated after a failed uprising by the Jews. The liquidation resulted in mass murder and destruction. The two stanzas above picture the day in both the cities when these historical events took place. The use of the two cities has a cultural connotation. The two cities are geographically apart, but both have a history of witnessing violence. The trauma becomes more fathomable in the cities' context and culture. Juxtaposing the violence and the nature of the city dwellers in the two locations provides the context in which the trauma finds its expression. There are a lot of similarities between the reaction of the people to these atrocities. Cities come back to normalcy immediately after the incident. What resounds most in the poem is the need for witnessing.

But that day I thought only
of the loneliness of the dying,
of how, when Giordano
climbed to his burning
he could not find
in any human tongue
words for mankind,
mankind who live on.

_____

Those dying here, the lonely
forgotten by the world,
our tongue becomes for them
the language of an ancient planet.
Until, when all is legend
and many years have passed,
on a new Campo dei Fiori
rage will kindle at a poet's word. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 34-35)

The complacent nature of the city dwellers is common ground in both cities. The poet is trying to make a comparison between the Italians and the Poles. The Poles were also influenced by Nazi ideologies and extreme nationalism which were based on racial purity and antisemitism. Poles were also collaborators in the German army. The sense of the survivor's guilt and the poet's responsibility to witness surface in the lines. The

need to witness and the survivor's guilt go hand in hand in many of the poems. One of the salient features of the traumatic experience is the constant repetition of the event. The repetitive action is evident in the recurring theme of the survivor's guilt. A similar theme runs in the poem "A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto". The Warsaw uprising and the destruction of the city are portrayed in a vivid visual canvas. What also echoes in the second poem is the guilt of the survivor and the need for witnessing. To Milosz poetry serves a purpose, "What is poetry which does not save / Nations or people?" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 77) Through his poetry, the speaker has given a voice to the people who have perished in the war and concentration camps.

> What are you doing here, poet, on the ruins
> Of St. John's Cathedral this sunny
> Day in spring?
> What are you thinking here, where the wind
> Blowing from the Vistula scatters
> The red dust of the rubble?
> You swore never to be
> A ritual mourner.
> You swore never to touch
> The deep wounds of your nation
> So you would not make them holy
> With the accursed holiness that pursues
> Descendants for many centuries. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 75)

The poem “In Warsaw” talks about the predicament of the poet and the calamities that happened during the war in 1945. The dilemma of the poet is the conflict between what he wishes for and what he receives. As a poet, he wanted to write about happy things, but what he and his country are going through is not happiness but horrific realities; hence, as a poet, it becomes his responsibility to witness and ease the wounds of his country. In the face of such calamities, desires and wishes do not hold any value, and duties become responsibilities. The poem is in a dialogue format where the lyrical subject is in a conversation with himself. The setting of the poem is Warsaw ruined by the war. The speaker in the poem addresses the other voice as the poet. The two are met in the ravages of a cathedral symbolising both material and spiritual destruction. He asks the poet multiple questions about what he is doing in these ruins. “What are you thinking here?” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 75) The lines are also filled with geographical images. The Vistula is the longest river in Poland. Warsaw is the capital and the largest city in Poland, and it was destroyed by the German forces during the Second World War. The destruction of Warsaw was a systematic process which started in 1939 and was completed in 1945 with the razing of the city by the German forces. The Jews were rounded up in Warsaw and housed in ghettos, and these were later burned down. With the advancement of the Red Army, the Germans bombarded the remainder of the city. The images are devastating; the poet shows churches dismantled and the winds scattering the “red dust” of the rubbles.

In its style and content, the poem tries to talk about war, poetry and poetic vocation. The poem is about the dilemma of the poet to write about what he wants to do against his responsibility as a poet. The poet did not want to write about martyrdom nor

about national defeats. Unfortunately, the nation has been through a brutal tragedy and the poet cannot neglect that fact. It becomes impossible for a poet to write about happy and joyful things in a country where every footstep leads to unburied bones. This leads to a dramatic dilemma: the poetic duties versus the poetic desires. The dilemma itself stems from an external reality created by the atrocities of war. War creates a situation where the individual is no longer in hold of his fate; it leaves him with choices from which he cannot shy away.

Place holds the key to the unravelling of the traumatic experience. The shocking experience renders the human psyche speechless, and it becomes a challenging task to puzzle together the pieces to make sense of the experience. Personal and cultural histories are embedded in the physical environment and analysing them would help in piecing together the shambles of shattered memory (Balaev 160). Place, both material and imagined, provides a cultural backdrop from which the meaning of the traumatic events can be pieced together. Events in the material world fail to happen in isolation. Place thus becomes not just a fixed point in geography but an organic entity from which memories, feelings and meaning are organised and transmitted. It becomes a point where culture and individual experience intersect. In *Rescue*, Milosz organises and transmits memories around Warsaw and other imagined cities. Places and objects are the threads by which the poet weaves the fabric of traumatic experience.

The trauma experienced by the speaker is that of identity, exile and political oppression. Describing places and geography helps the reader situate the traumatic experience in the larger cultural context. Description of places and geographic features of traumatic experience provides a cultural context to which individuals can relate and

produce identity and meaning (Balaev 160). The presence of different cities and the cultural values they embed help in understanding the trauma. We can see the rapid succession of different cities in Milosz's poetry. The poetic universe oscillates between the city of California and Warsaw many times. We can also witness many cities that are nameless and the speaker wandering through like a traveller. The trauma of exile becomes evident through these constant wanderings. The sense of not being at home and always on the run has created an identity that is fragmented. The idea of home for the poet, thus, is more of a product of imagination than of reality. The sense of homelessness and uprootedness was a recurring trope in the life of twentieth-century man. Mass migration in search of better living conditions created a sense of uprootedness, and thus, for Milosz, homeland is both the past, lost but real, and carries a yearning for the eternal (Iribarne 640). Czeslaw Milosz writes about the loss of homeland when analysing Polish poetry, especially the works of his uncle Oscar Milosz, who was a Polish expatriate. He writes about the idea of homeland in *The Land of Ulro.*

> Note that in reflecting on his life he discovered a symbolic equivalence of his vision and his ancestry. Homelessness, in the tribal as well as geographical sense, became a correspondence of the spiritual exile of modern man, and his own quest for a homeland, for place, acquired a double meaning. That the notion of homeland is born of the same realm as myth and fable we (Poles) above all, can appreciate- we as readers of (Mickiewicz's) Pan Tadeusz. . .. Even as a schoolboy in sympathy with the "regionalists," I understood that a homeland was both very much a need and a product of the imagination. (76-77)

Exile also meant for the speaker not just a shift in places but a complete revamp of the writing career. Milosz wrote exclusively in Polish and found it extremely difficult to find an audience in a foreign land. Exile and choosing to write in a different language meant a lot more to the Polish people because of the special circumstances of Polish history. Milosz was discredited by many of the Eastern and Western intelligentsia. The betrayal of the Polish nation and language seems extreme because of the historical circumstances of a nation that has been subject to foreign rule multiple times (Besemeres 417). Thus, Milosz's exile was marked not just by the feeling of the loss of homeland but also by a feeling of banishment from the memory of his country. In the essay "Notes on Exile", Milosz talks about the lost solidarity between the poet and his people: "Exile is morally suspect because it breaks one's solidarity with a group, i.e., it sets apart an individual who ceases to share the experience of colleagues left behind" (282). The forced exile of Milosz disrupts the connection he has with his nation and people.

2.8 Conclusion

The presence of place and geography in Milosz's poetry helps us understand the trauma of exile, war, and homelessness. Physical and imagined cities and landscapes are pointers in the cultural web through which we can understand trauma. The presence of rivers reminds one of the close connection the individual has to his roots and the many wandering through different cities helps us understand what it means not to have a place to call home. The material value in place helps the readers unravel the hidden wounds of trauma.

The major difficulty in talking about trauma is the unspeakability of the original event. The unavailability of knowledge of the event, even to the victim, leaves the individual puzzled. Though trauma challenges the referential limits of language, it is only through language that the experience finds its redemption. The revisionist school of trauma tries to understand trauma by situating it through the framework of cultural models, and in the poetry of Milosz, it becomes evident that the trauma of a nation viz a viz the poet. Geography and geographical features are important material signifiers in understanding trauma. Places are endowed with values as they open various historical, cultural, and social memories. In Milosz's poetry various cities function as anchors around which meanings are formed. The cities are memorial sites that open the wounds of exile, memory of home, and sites of violence. The trauma of the holocaust cannot be understood without reference to the city of Warsaw, exile, and its role in creating the self is evident in the recurring image of Paris, California and other Polish cities. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania stands as the beacon of Polish-Lithuanian identity, and on the recourse to its history, we understand the transgenerational trauma of the loss of homeland.

Geographical features appearing in the poetic landscape function as mnemonic triggers that bring out the traumatic memory. In the life of Milosz, the homeland was an assemblage of places, people, memories, and geographical features. Hence, their presence in the works functions as a layered place where the traumatic memory is sedimented. The sense of loss can only be understood when one identifies with the forests, animals, rivers and myths. The speaker's deep connection with the land and the tragic dispossession become evident in the nostalgic memory of the geographical

features. The contrasting landscape of the exile shows the reader that the author cannot find peace in the new surroundings and wishes to go back to their native land.

Chapter 3

Trauma and Censorship in the Poetry of Czeslaw Milosz

3.1 Introduction

Milosz's poetry delves deep into the profound impact of historical events, especially censorship under various political regimes. Various imperialist powers employed censorship as a tool to manipulate and create political opinion. His poetic endeavours stand as a witness to the interplay of personal and collective trauma of censorship. The nation had witnessed appalling violence during its history and the perpetrators made diligent attempts to conceal the truth from reaching the public. They effectively controlled the art and coerced artists not to speak the truth. Milosz's poetry stands out as a scathing criticism of the working of the governmental repressive mechanisms. This chapter looks at the history of censoring in Poland at different periods in history, the techniques employed by the authors to circumvent the censorship, and how the trauma of censorship impacted the life and works of the poet. The chapter also looks at the biographical details of the poet to examine how the trauma of censorship has impacted him.

3.2 History of Polish Censorship

Eastern Europe used censorship as a political tool as early as the 1700's. Polish literature developed under the watchful eye of the church and later the state. The diplomatic conundrum of the Polish question resulted from the political division of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania amongst Russia, Prussia, and Germany, which ushered the way for the political silencing of the empire. The empire held a tight grip over the people to contain the nationalist aspirations. They believed in the power of written materials to

stir up the masses against the imperial powers. The romantic tradition in Polish literary tradition looked at writers with a messianic aura, and they took it upon themselves to impart nationalistic aspirations to the masses. The subject matter and the style employed by these writers upheld the morale of the society. They wrote to inspire and to instil pride and patriotic feelings in the masses. Therefore, systematic erasure and censoring of materials were a part of the governing bodies. In the article "Innercensorship in Polish Literature", Jerzy Pietrkiewicz talks about the history of censorship. Censorship existed at different levels in Russian-controlled Warsaw, Prussian-controlled Poznan and national autonomy in the Austrian part of Poland. The censor worked with varying standards at these locations (295). The use of pseudonyms and crafty narration thus dates to the division of the Duchy. The writers from those periods attacked the imperial occupation and wrote about Polish nationalism. The works of Zeromski and Karazsewski are examples from the 1800s (Pietrkiewicz 305). The trend continued to follow in the working of the censor and the evasive techniques employed by the writers. The Russian Revolution of 1905 and the successive political powers that ruled after Eastern Europe used this technique more effectively.

Censorship continued to be put in place with even greater impact during the twentieth century. Poland as a nation re-emerged after the end of the First World War. The new government, though short-lived, did not shy away from silencing its critics. The Polish Question resurfaced yet again as a tipping point during the Second World War. The war began when the German forces attacked the Polish port of Danzig. Germany and the Soviet Union agreed to attack Poland from both sides under the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. The division of Poland happened yet again, and this time, the

old imperial culprits were replaced by the red army and the Nazis. The authorities severely censored the information passing through both German and Russian borders. The German authorities used to black out pages that caught the censor's attention. Censorship had to be employed in Poland because of the continued resentment of the people towards the people in power. The constant divisions and takeovers of the country by various states created an atmosphere of rebellious fervour amongst the people. The same continued after the end of the Second World War. The imminent power vacuum in Poland after the World War led to a power struggle between the communists and the Polish home army in exile. The Polish novel turned movie *Ashes and Diamonds* (1958) brilliantly depicts the struggle. Poland became a buffer zone between the east and the west and both parties tried desperately to take control over it. Though the Polish Home Army fought alongside the Allied forces after the end of the war, they were not considered the legitimate successors of the Polish Republic. The mass shooting of Polish army officials and bureaucrats in the Katyn forests was kept secret under the Stalinist government. The illegitimacy followed the changing governments, leading them to take fierce action to restrict and manipulate the narratives around them. The circulation of information and the creation of acceptable narration were necessary for governments, especially when the political machinery needed legitimacy.

3.3 Censorship in Post-War Polish Republic

Post-war Poland saw a rapid increase in the number of censored articles. The Main Office for the Control of Press, Publications and Public Performances (GUKPPiW) was set up in 1946 to examine matters regarding censorship in Poland. The office was responsible for the contents of written materials and propaganda and for

controlling the press. The office had far-reaching effects and very little was known to the Western media about the existence and functioning of it. The gravity and the reach of censorship in Poland came to be known in the Western world after the publishing of *The Black Book of Polish Censorship* in 1977, which contained guidelines and rules related to censorship. The book was translated and published by Jane Leftwich Curry from the documents smuggled out from Poland by a defector who worked in the censorship office. According to Curry, the censors intervened more than 10000 times a year in all the printed materials in Poland (8). The practice of censorship in itself was taboo as its existence was an open secret; "any revelation or allusion to the existence of censorship in Poland had to be censored, and even the instructions given to the censors were secret" (Curry 8). Censorship had dark shadows on ordinary Polish citizens' political and literary lives.

Censorship adversely affected Polish literature. Ryszard Nycz, in "Polish Literature in the Shadow of Censorship. A Lecture", talks about the historical influence of censorship and the navigations the writers used to elude the censor. Polish literature developed under the shadow of censorship, or it was deliberately situated beyond the reach of censorship (84). Nycz discusses the presence and the impact of the office of the control of the press.

> It has affected Polish literature in its historical entirety and specificity (instead of just 45 post-war years). At the very least, it has also affected the appreciation and evaluation of Polish literature because it has essentially nullified the *raison d'être* (reason for being) of a substantial

> portion of the literature and called the variety of techniques and conventions it employed into question. (84)

Nycz also talks about how censorship has had a defining impact on Polish literature. Polish literature had been forced to develop in the shadow of censorship or had adjusted itself to navigate the reaches of censorship (84). Censorship became a part of the subconsciousness of the writer. The writers maintained the strict discipline of inner censorship. Sigmund Freud also discusses the concept of inner censorship in *The Interpretation of Dreams,* which was published in 1899. The concept of deliria is the incoherent utterances created by omissions. Freud formulated and connected this inner censorship with the political current during the time. The German and Russian occupation interfered with his publications. In *The Interpretation of Dreams,* Freud talks about the emergence of inner censorship among writers.

> A similar difficulty confronts the political writer who has disagreeable truths to tell those in authority. If he presents them undisguised, the authorities will suppress his words - after they have been spoken, if his pronouncement was an oral one, but beforehand, if he had intended to make it in print. A writer must beware of the censorship, and on its account he must soften and distort the expression of his opinion. (529)

The internal censorship mechanism imposed by the writers worked on two planes. It controlled the urge to express oneself fully and protected against disruptive external factors (Pietrkiewicz 303). Under the censors' watchful eyes, the writers began to employ different strategic mechanisms to convey their message to the readers. The strategies employed were the use of the Aesopian language and reverting to the classics.

The difficulty arising from these crafty uses of language is discussed by J.M. Coetzee in *Giving Offense* published in 1996 and Ryszard Nycz's "Polish Literature in the Shadow of Censorship: A Lecture".

> The Aesopian language that dominated Polish literature has no definite and formal shape or form; it did not become a fully formed allegorical code, utilized in accordance with an "agreement" concluded between the authors and their audience, but remained fragmented in nature, partial, fickle (due to its dependence on historical, political, and cultural conditions of a given literary environment), and parasitical towards the tropological nature of language and traditional cultural connotations. For this reason, it generally cannot be fully "translated" or "deciphered" into coherent and complete allegoric meanings. In consequence, however, it has become something more than just a technical and historical measure of indirect communication and bypassing institutions of control; it has become a permanent and enduring component of individual poetics. (Nycz 96)

In *Giving Offense*, J.M Coetzee also raises similar concerns regarding the use of figurative language to conceal the truth.

> Censorship may indeed "mobilize a writer to create ways of by-passing censorship, (forcing) the writer to employ metaphors which raise the piece of writing to a higher level." Yet, in time, the hyper-subtle forms born out of the game with the censors themselves become conventions. "The secret language becomes public, and the censor will ban it too. So new, more

> subtle forms are devised. And so it goes, on and on, the literature becoming increasingly more obscure, eventually losing all traces of life." (149)

Thus, the use of language and the influence of censorship impacted the development of literary culture. Michelle Balaev in his article "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory" explains how external influences the expression of trauma: "to what degree traumatic experience disrupts memory, self and relation to others is mediated by cultural values and narrative forms rooted in a place that allows or disallows certain emotions to be expressed" (156). The censoring mechanisms, both external and internal, result in the outward presentation of trauma.

3.4 Milosz's Literary Career as part of the Polish Republic

Czeslaw Milosz experienced censorship early on in his writing career. He was part of a left-leaning literary group named 'Zagary', which parted ways with romantic poetic traditions of Polish poetry. Milosz rose to prominence within popular circles. The first major stroke of censorship started to affect the poet during the political turmoil of the Second World War. The occupation of Poland and his political difference with the left started to hinder the artistic output. Andrzej Franaszek, the biographer of Milosz, delves deep into the times of occupation of Poland and the underground press in Milosz: A Biography. Milosz had a love-hate relationship with underground political and literary life. The passages from the biography provide a picture of the spirit of the underground literary activity.

> During the occupation years cultural life did not merely survive; on the contrary, it strengthened in importance, manifesting how vital its role was

> within society and Polish identity. Through the courage of creative artists and with the support of the well-structured Underground State, cultural events continued on an impressive scale. Examples of this are the series of thirteen poetry readings which were held, drawing an audience of over seven thousand, and the clandestine training course for filmmakers, who were later to document both German atrocities and the acts of defiance with which Poles responded. (196)

The attitude of the poet changed over time towards the underground press. Milosz had a different outlook towards bravery and revolution. He was against reckless bravery which resulted in the death of many promising young writers. His disagreement with the press is evident in his prose essay "With Coloured Ink" published in 1945:

> In the first year of the war, I read the underground press with great enthusiasm, and in the second, with interest, but later, I hardly ever touched it. The immensity of nonsense which anonymous journalists wrote was depressing for the reader, and even today, the thought of it comes back as sad memories, especially when one thinks how many human lives were lost because of those bulletins. (1)

Milosz favoured another choice of opposition. He believed that he was destined for things that are greater than himself and held the view that he needed to stay alive to carry them out. His calling for poetry outweighed his revolutionary fervour. For Milosz, thus, the testing times came later in his life when the Soviet dictates began to take over the Polish state. Milosz did not hide under the guise of self-preservation. He was actively involved in publications during the occupation. Zbigniew Mitzner's satirical

magazine *Szpilki* published works of Milosz, “Legends of the Present” (Essays), “The World” (Poems) and previously published poems under the pseudonym Edward Malisz and B.B Kozka (Franaszek 195).

For Milosz, the commitment to poetry was paramount, and his dedication to Polish poetry is commendable. He lived through the atrocities of the war and committed to writing honestly about the experience. More than the war and dislocation, censorship affected the poet. The trauma of censorship for him was unbearable and crept in gradually after the end of the Second World War. Milosz was appointed as the cultural attaché of the newly found Polish Republic. Even though he was not a communist party member, Milosz was given the position because of his literary standing. In Joanna Mazurska’s PhD dissertation *Making Sense of Milosz: A Formative Dialogue with Transitional Audience* she writes about Milosz’s choice to work for the government: “For Milosz paradoxically, the only way to escape the immediate pressure of politics in literature and negotiate a higher level of independence was to yield to the political circumstances and cut a deal with Polish socialist government” (43). The first blow of the censor came on the fourth General Congress of Polish Writers, which was held from the 20th to the 23rd of January of 1949, where socialist realism was adopted as the only literary trope for the Eastern Bloc. Milosz was present during the Congress and wrote about his predicament in a letter to Melchior Wańkowicz; Milosz wrote I “became an inner émigré . . . restricted so much that on the chess board there was no room for manoeuvre” (Franaszek 272). The artistic liberty with which Milosz conducted himself was far more relaxed as he was not a party member and did not believe in the dictates of any ideologies. The censor not only came in the form of the pen, it also manifested

in the form of the guns. Milosz gives a picture of the fate of the writers not confirming the state's edicts in *The Captive Mind*: "And yet still we lived, and because we were writers, we tried to write. Admittedly one of us disappeared from time to time, taken away to concentration camps or shot. We couldn't help it. We were like people on an ice floe, which was melting" (84-85). The poet had to be either an instrument of the government or an enemy.

The literary output of the writer came down to a complete halt at this point. While working as a cultural attaché in the United States of America, Milosz organised cultural events and published regularly. Milosz's publications came down from fifty poems and articles in 1945 to five in 1949 and six in 1950. The inability to write and publish rattled the sanity of the author whose sole purpose was writing. Milosz was nearing a mental breakdown, a situation which, for him, was way more difficult than the periods of war and occupation. He contrasts the two situations in a letter written to Anna Kowalska: "As you know, I was writing systematically, even during the war in Warsaw, now in 1950 it is hard for me because, to tell the truth, I have nowhere to publish" (Franazseka 238). The mental state of the poet is described in a letter by Natalia Modzelewska, wife of the foreign minister, who helped Milosz leave Poland. She talks about this in an article in *Kultura,* an emigree magazine based in Paris which later published the works of Milosz while he was in Paris, titled "Milosz in Poland in Winter 1950".

> He became mentally unstable and suffered from bouts of depression which gradually got worse. I met him every day because he telephoned me every day, and from his voice, it was easy to discern that he was close to a nervous breakdown. He needed me because somehow I managed to

> turn the conversation to different subjects. After having reported about his latest failures from the previous day, his attention moved on to other things. I was saying goodbye not to a sick man, but to someone who was recovering. Unfortunately, that recovery period did not last long, and relapses recurred after shorter and shorter periods of time. One day he ended up calling me again after a few hours. I found him in such a state that I had no doubt that his immunity was getting weaker and the moment of his final fall was imminent. (Modzelewska 3)

This period was one of the most difficult times in the poet's life and career. The time had come for the poet to choose between artistic freedom and self-preservation. The relative safety and opportunity given by working for the government reached its tipping point and the poet had to make his decision to either work for the government and surrender his craft or to leave the country for good.

3.5 Milosz's Defection to the West and Life in Exile

One of the defining moments in the life of the poet was his defection to the West. Milosz was called back from the United States when the authorities suspected him of straying away from the communist path. Milosz returned to Warsaw on 20th December 1949, and the next day, he was asked to surrender his passport. Milosz was committed to the Polish nation and language even when it meant sacrificing so much. In "Moral Treatise" he reiterates his commitment: "I choose to live in the service of Polish poetry// Even if I were to remain meaningless dust" (Franaszek 272). Milosz was wiped out of the Polish literary sphere soon after his defection. His books were taken out of print,

and even the mention of his name was forbidden from the public sphere. The directive around defected writers were clear in *The Black Book of Polish Censorship:*

> It emerged that cultural figures of whom the regime disapproved were treated according to closely defined rules. In the most extreme cases -like that of the philosopher Leszek Kolakowski- no mention of the offender's name was allowed, nor any favourable comment on his or her work. In a second category (in which Czeslaw Milosz and Aleksandr Wat figured), no mention might be made without prior and specific approval of the ministry; in the popular media (radio, television, the press), the ban was to be total. A third and more lenient category limited mention to scholarly publications. In 1976, Zbigniew Herbert, along with thirty-six other intellectuals who had protested against amendments to the constitution, was blacklisted: his name was not to be mentioned without approval from head office. (Curry 75)

Life in exile was not easy for the poet as he was condemned, and a series of news propaganda was sent out against Milosz. The choice to write in Polish resulted in a dearth of readership. While in exile in Paris, Milosz sustained himself by writing articles for *Kultura*. Milosz wrote articles under the pseudonym Mr. Kwitkowski. Life in Paris was difficult as he could not find the audience and the scathing criticism he received from different nationalist and propaganda groups.

The conformity towards a particular ideology and how it impacts artistic freedom is expressed beautifully in the short poem "Secretaries". The poem is a personalised expression of the poet, who begins in the first person and calls out for solidarity of the

like-minded. The speaker associates his vocation with that of a secretary who follows the dictates of an "invisible thing" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 343). In the first line, he introduces himself and his vocation and then moves on to describe the collective group of secretaries. He defines secretaries as "mutually unknown" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 343) but almost doing the same job. The job of secretaries is to follow the dictates accurately. It does not matter whether they "start the phrase in the middle or end it with a comma" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 343) as it is not up to them how they look when it is completed. The poem describes the poetic vocation in a trivialised mockery. The insistence of socialist realism curtailed the free spirit of the speaker and he became a mere instrument of the authority. The analogy to that of a secretary is more fitting in the case of the poet as the ministry also employed him. As a cultural attaché, Milosz was even more limited in expressing himself, and during his time in New York, he followed the dictates of the ministry by organising events and filing reports.

> I am no more than a secretary of the invisible thing
> That is dictated to me and a few others.
> Secretaries, mutually unknown, we walk the earth
> Without much comprehension. Beginning a phrase in the middle
> Or ending it with a comma. And how it all looks when completed Is not up to us to inquire, we won't read it anyway. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 343)

The impact of an ideology on poetry is nowhere more visible than in the poem "Sentences". The process of conceiving a poem and the mental and physical process by

which it goes through is beautifully crafted in the poem. Many of these poems came out after he left Poland. “Sentences” is a group of three interconnected yet independent verses on the craft of poetry. The first section talks about the writing process and the mental and physical activity involved in it. The second section deals with the image created in the process and the dilemma of the writer regarding the effectiveness and the truthfulness of the image. The final stanza talks about the idea put forth in the lines, the writer’s responsibility in presenting the world with an idea, and also the responsibility towards the subject and how it is presented to the world. Though each section stands independent, the ideas presented in them are coherently progressive and connected.

> What constitutes the training of the hand?
> I shall tell what constitutes the training of the hand.
> One suspects something is wrong with transcribing signs
> But the hand transcribes only the signs it has learned.
> Then it is sent to the school of blots and scrawls
> Till it forgets what is graceful. For even the sign of a butterfly
> Is a well with coiled poisonous smoke inside. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 206)

The poem begins by posing a direct question to the reader. “What constitutes the training of the hand?” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 206) The section then deals with answering this question. The section follows the style of a conversational monologue. The process of writing constitutes the training of the hand in transcribing the signs. The hand acts as a tool performing the act of transcribing the signs that are already out there. The section also reminds the readers of the internal censorship process

involved in writing. The author's choice of words invokes in the reader the subtle manifestation of the censorship mechanism. The word used by the speaker is 'training' (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 206) which involves certain self-fashioning that amounts to an external pressure working on the mind of the writer. The mental mechanism is well represented in the lines "the school of blots and scrawls till it forgets what is graceful" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 206). The ideas in the mind undergo the process of filtering and come out in socially accepted terms. Milosz, as a writer, is more aware of this phenomenon as he was haunted in his career by communist regimes and McCarthyism. The author's mind has a self-imposed censorship mechanism, which is always alert to external situations. The first act of censorship occurs in the mind of the author before it undergoes the external process of filtering by the authorities.

The poem deals also with the images created in writing. The signs conjure up images, and the writer holds responsibility for the created images. Looking at the creation of the images from different signs from a Saussurean perspective, the meaning of the image is derived from the difference of each sign in the signification chain. The meaning emanates not from the image that is present in the lines but rather from the absence of different images. The section talks about the dilemma of representing: "We should have represented him otherwise than in the form of a dove" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 206). There are different images the speaker talks about that could portray the person, like the dove, fire, green or air, but he is constantly reminded of the absence in the chain of difference while he comes up with different images. The images are not stand-alone entities. They create a series of other images related to it.

The responsibility of the act of writing is also discussed in the poem. The speaker equates the work of the author to that of a creator. The author categorises and fixes an idea into a set of rules. The idea of categorically describing an idea or character is explained in the lines: “To imprison them within either-or: male sex, female sex” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 206). The final section is relatively small compared to the other two and talks about the writer’s responsibility in luring the souls into life. The speaker feels that there is a trap, a need to categorise and label everything in language. By giving life to an image, by creating an idea in the form of language the speaker narrows it down and brings it into a dimension that is validated by certain rules and conditions. Thus, the poem is a critique of the process of writing and looks at the difficulty of bringing life through writing.

The poem is a critique of language and a critique of the writing process at large. The poem deals with the difficulties in portraying an idea. Since the production of meaning in language has a social and political dimension, it is not devoid of biases and prejudices. The speaker attempts to look at the inner functioning of the poet’s mind and the internal functioning of the system of signs. Both processes are heavily influenced by external circumstances. The system of language and the cultural and political circumstances influence the bringing of ideas into the public domain. The internal censoring mechanism of the mind and the ways it attempts to find suitable ways in which the ideas can find an outlet through writing can be seen in the poem.

It is not only government censorship that hinders artistic freedom. Polish romanticism was the norm for writing in Poland. It was dictated by strong nationalistic aspirations. The movement’s major goal was to instil a Polish cultural identity rooted in

the Polish language and folk traditions. “The Spirit of History” begins with the depiction of the writing process. The initial lines talk about how Polish poetry was written and the romantic rules that still governed the writing of the period. The lines state that “books were still governed by old rules” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 132) and the romantic belief of visible beauty in the mirror of the beauty of being. The old Aristotelian notion of mimesis and the task of poetry imitating metaphysical order. The lines are a critique of the Polish romantic style which fails to account for the reality while lingering onto the old romantic rules. The next lines show a sudden transition where “survivors escaping from themselves” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 132). These survivors are dissidents who go against the norms of poetic diction. The stigma and separation for such people are evident in the lines “knowing they wouldn’t return for a hundred years” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 132). For them, the Aristotelian mimetic tradition breaks down the imitation of perfect nature is absent from the writers. The change rattling the foundations of conventional writers is beautifully depicted in the lines “the golden house of ‘is’” collapses and the word “becoming” ascends” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 132). In the unchanging stage of being, presence makes way for the process of becoming. The author welcomes change rather than sticking to a static being.

Milosz talks about the synthesis of the new movement from the old for which he details the norms of the old movement. He calls the followers of the old order cowards who did not dare to change the old ways. In the second stage, the author questions the power of tradition and the promise of comfort. The old order promised comfort in unchanging norms and protection in tradition and used its privileges to thwart change.

The desire for change in new writers is thwarted by censorship. In the two coming stanzas, the poet criticises the existing poetic movement. The romantic movement in Poland occupied a privileged position for a long time, and it crippled other movements. The authoritative voice of the old movement is visible in these two stanzas. The poem's last part talks about the new movement's fate. For a moment, this new movement could look at the anguish of the century and believe that an antithesis leading to synthesis is possible with the old rules. But this suddenly shifts, and the speaker is now begging for forgiveness, understanding the power of their law. He begs for the old rule to accept his devotion. A strong connection can be made here between the artistic production and the political ideologies of the time. The powerful political ideologies mandated a strict code of law in artistic and poetic productions. Since Poland was heavily under the supervision of Stalinist Soviet Union, socialist realism was the central pillar of literary production, an ideology which often conflicted with the author. Many instances in Milosz's life correspond to the prohibition from the government. The ideological control and the politics of writing are explicit towards the final stanzas "when they put a rope around my neck when they choke off my breath with a rope// turn around once, and what will I be" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 133). The injection of ideology is contrasted with the venom in the last lines, where "the injection of phenol" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 133) numbs the nerves and shuts down the minds. The poem concludes with a lament over the loss of personal and artistic freedom. The poem is a critique of the poetic style which was in vogue during those times.

Life in Paris was difficult both financially and artistically. The coordinated attempt to discredit the poet had an immediate effect on his work. Publishers refused to

publish his works, and the publication of *The Captive Mind* earned him a reputation as a political writer. This designation became too much to bear for the poet as he saw himself primarily as a poet. The West attempted to parade him as a crusader against the Eastern Bloc, especially with Congress for Cultural Freedom, a propaganda group funded and supported by the CIA. The initial experience of living in France and talking about the Polish Republic is brought out in the poem "Mittelbergheim".

> I keep my eyes closed. Do not rush me,
> You, fire, power, might, for it is too early.
> I have lived through many years and, as in this half-dream,
> I felt I was attaining the moving frontier
> Beyond which colour and sound come true
> And the things of this earth are united.
> Do not yet force me to open my lips.
> Let me trust and believe I will attain.
> Let me linger here in Mittelbergheim. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 104)

The poem was written during one of the most difficult times in Milosz's life. Milosz was in exile in France in the 1950s. Mittelbergheim is a municipality in France in the Alsace cultural region, a place close to German boundaries. It was to this region that Milosz was transferred from Poland. He was working in the Polish embassy, and from there, he escaped and took refuge in the office of the Kultura magazine. Mittelbergheim is famous for its Alsatian wine. The stanza is a deliberation on his present condition. For over a year, Milosz was stuck in Poland, and it is only recently

that he has been out of the communist government's clutches. Even though the warmth and the newfound freedom make him resume his fight against totalitarianism, the speaker is a little cautious and pauses for a while before beginning to write. The speaker feels the time he had spent as "many years", and he still cannot believe the newfound freedom; he calls it "half-dream" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 104). Mittelberghiem represents an idea of freedom that the speaker wants to accustom and begin to believe. The period during which he was under the government's monitoring was so harsh that Milosz grew despondent and now he needs some time to release from his personal trauma. There is a sense of hesitation in his articulation. The trauma of not being able to write or, rather, to achieve his fulfilment is far beyond comprehension. The suspicion and the fear of the previous experience help the poet to maintain inner censorship and curtail the flow of his emotions. The poet is trying to heal himself and recuperate the energy needed to speak the truth.

The poem is a fine example of inner censorship. It also demonstrates how "cultural values and narrative forms accumulated in a place allow or disallow certain emotions to be expressed" (Balaev 156). The political current of censorship holds the writer back from expressing himself, and in this poem, even though the poet is out of the country, he is still haunted by the experience of the past. It is evident from the lines that the poet wants to talk about the truth, but the past remains to haunt him as a waking dream. The poem also sheds light on hope as the poet is trying to acclimatise to the new environment. Lawrence Kirmayer, in his article "Landscapes of Memory: Trauma, Narrative and Dislocation" discusses "what is socially possible to speak of and what must remain hidden and unacknowledged" (191). The society achieves this through

both internal and external censorship. The poet heeds the inhibitions and self-preservation and censors himself from fully expressing his emotions; external censors curtail the truth from reaching the masses. “Mittelbergheim” presents an instance of the workings of inner censorship and how the political mechanism of external censors leads to this sort of inner censorship.

3.6 The Use of Aesopian Language

One of the tools used by writers to circumvent censors was the use of the Aesopian language. Milosz experimented with language and style. With the censor clamping down on freedom of expression, many of his poetic styles used prose poetry. Another important aspect was the use of concealment through the use of language. The evocative use of language was intriguing as well as innovative. The subtle criticism infused in the lyric escapes the lens of the censor but is still discernible to the reader. The criticism towards the Soviet social order is subtly imprinted in the lines of the poem “Ballad of Levallois”. Milosz in *Native Realm,* published in 1959, offers a veiled dig at the soviet version of communist ideology through the poem. “Ballad of Levallois” was published in the underground press during the German occupation. In its naivety, the poem attacks the religious communism practised by a group of Jesuits in Paraguay. It points the fingers at an invisible creator for the inequalities of the world (Franzesk 133). The classical Marxian edicts of historical determinism and the practical functioning of communism in its hierarchy are questioned in the poem. Though it is not featured directly in the poem, what comes out through the lines is a social criticism of the communist order.

> Oh God, have mercy on Levallois,
>
> Look under these chestnut trees poisoned with smoke,
>
> Give a moment of joy to the weak and the drunk,
>
> Oh God, have mercy on Levallois.
>
> All day long they stole and cursed,
>
> Now they lie in their bunks and lick their wounds,
>
> And while the darkness thickens over Paris
>
> They hide their faces in their thieving hands.
>
> Oh God, have mercy on Levallois . . .
>
> Darkness. Silence. A bridge hums in the distance.
>
> The wind streams through Cain's trees.
>
> On the void of the earth, on the human tribe
>
> No mercy, no mercy on Levallois. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 25–26)

The difficulty in publishing the truth behind the Iron Curtain is evident from the vast number of books that were smuggled out from the Eastern European nations. Milosz wrote the introduction to one of those books, *On Socialist Realism,* published in 1960. It was a critique of the Soviet Union that was sent out to publishers in Paris by an anonymous Russian writer. In the introduction to the book, Milosz sheds light on the mental process of the contributors who risk their lives and careers to bring out the truth.

> We need have no doubt as to its authenticity. We do not know the writer's name, nor would there be any point in trying to discover it. All the evidence goes to show, however, that he belongs to the younger

> generation of Russian writers, educated entirely under the postrevolutionary system. The fact that he has decided to have his work published abroad shows his belief in the importance of what he has to say. Let us consider this step: here we have a man with ample talent for attaining popularity in his own country, but who secretly writes something intended at best for reading by a small group of intimates. He then goes to a great deal of trouble to place his manuscript in reliable keeping, and in this way it is brought across the frontiers. He knows full well the risk he runs should the authorities identify him as the author, while at the same time, the preservation of his anonymity means that he can acquire neither fame nor money, even if his work is translated into many languages. At the same time, he must also face the thorny problem of his loyalty as a citizen, for he lives in a state which forbids writers to publish without permission and which regards violation of this rule as tantamount to violation of a citizen's duties, i.e., treason. This man has chosen to do what is condemned by the existing institutions and by the community formed by these institutions, for he sees no other way to voice his beliefs. (Tertz 7-8)

Milosz also made bold attempts in his poetry. Some of his works slipped the watchful eyes of the sensor and made it to public light. One of the important pieces that came out was titled the “Mid-Twentieth-Century Portrait”. The poem, written after the end of the Second World War, is a scathing criticism of the communist regimes and Marxist ideologues. The advancement of the Soviet Red Army and its Marxist one-party

politics was invading the eastern European nation-states. Poland, which had regained its nationhood, was going through a power struggle that resulted in the Soviets instating a puppet communist government. Poland became a satellite state of the USSR, to whom the nation turned for advice and instructions.

> Hidden behind his smile of brotherly regard,
>
> He despises the newspaper reader, the victim of the dialectic power.
>
> Says: Democracy, with a wink.
>
> …
>
> Keeping one hand on Marx's writings, he reads the Bible in private.
>
> His mocking eye on processions leaving burned-out churches.
>
> His backdrop: a horseflesh-coloured city in ruins
>
> In his hand: a memento of a boy fascist killed in the Uprising. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 88)

What we can visualise in the poem is the regular workings of the communist republic during the Cold War. Rampant nepotism and vengeful public officials are very common in the Polish Republic. Communist revolutions started by declaring power to the common people and promising representation to the people. Democracy and the call for democratic revolution are the cornerstones of revolutionary movements, but after the revolution, the party becomes absolute power, cutting down all democratic processes. The mockery towards democratic forms is visible in the line that says: “democracy with a wink” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 88). The prospect of individual actualisation is given little interest, as seen in the lines: “hates psychological pleasures of mankind” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 88). People in power do not

take into account the spiritual and other needs of people; their sole focus is on material aspects. Another important aspect is ‘dialectical materialism’, which they abbreviate as diamat. They claim their powers come from this historical logic. The stanza concludes by saying that those who protest for their needs are slaughtered and the political distress is suppressed by “dances and garden parties” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 88). The government throws cultural events and party get-togethers to divert public attention.

The next single line stanza is a powerful and moving one:“ shouts: culture and art but means circus games really” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 88). Historically, writers and artists held an important role in Eastern European societies. The Polish romantic tradition idolised artisans and revered them with great respect. Polish poetry was also confined to excessive nationalism heralded by messianic poets. Milosz, in the introduction to On *Socialist Realism* (1960) by Abram Tertz, talks about how the Stalinist government gave prime importance to keeping the intelligencia and writers on their side. In the Stalinist government, the only mode of art and culture allowed was socialist realism, “whose task is to portray the state’s power as the greatest good and to scorn suffering of the individual. It is thus an effective anaesthetic” (10). The works of art and literature were heavily scrutinised and censored. The republic despised religions and gods, but they practised religion in their solitude and private moments. Even when they call themselves progressive and reformed, they still cling to superstitions and paranoiac fears.

The hypocrisy of the ideology becomes more evident in the concluding stanza. The line begins as follows, “Keeping one hand on Marx’s writings, he reads the bible

in private" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 88). The hypocrisy becomes more visible in the lines where he speaks of how religion, economy and personal freedom are curtailed while they promise to uphold them. Andrzej Franaszek talks about the poem in Milosz's biography: "A splendid concentration of hints at things, portrayed with Orwellian irony, it juxtaposes the newspeak ('brotherly', 'dialectic', 'fascist') and new cynicism of the present with painful mementoes from the past" (275). The reference is to the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto, and the event is the rebellion brutally put down by fascist Germany. Even though they hold memories of these horrific events, what they do is no different. It later turns out that the communist government in the Soviet Union and Poland killed millions in gulags, and the Nazi concentration camps were replaced with Stalinist labour camps.

3.7 The Price of Writing in Polish

Milosz left his native land but he did not give up his language. He wrote exclusively in Polish, causing much hardship for the poet. Polish language and culture underwent systematic suppression. The volatile political climate in Poland resulted in a series of measures taken to erase Polishness from the region.

> Both the name "Poland" and the adjective "Polish" were rigorously scrubbed from public discourse and replaced with terms like "domestic" or "ours." During periods when censor control was particularly tight (e.g. 1867, 1873), the list of prohibited words was expanded to include any instance of the words "homeland" or "motherland." The censors also removed distinctively Polish honours, references to traditional garb, customs, musical elements ("confederate cap," "kontusz," a type of split-

> sleeve overcoat, or "karabela," a type of Polish sabre), and replaced the word "king" with "prince." It can be said that the strategic goal of these efforts was to scrub the language (and, as a result, the public consciousness) of any trace of Polishness; careful removal of the term "Poland" from print was intended to result in the breakdown of the very notion of a free and independent Poland, and eventually in the complete disappearance of Polish national identity. Thus, language regulations and policies were adapted to the political status quo. (Nycz 87)

The insistence of Milosz on the use of the polish language thus can be traced back to these historical necessities. The importance of his mother tongue is discussed in the collection of essays "Private Obligations" (1972) and in the poem "My Faithful Mother Tongue". The poem deals with the complex identity of the poet and the immigrant status. As the title suggests language has been the centre of the poet's complex identity. Milosz was born in Lithuania to Polish parents, and he grew up around Lithuanians who spoke a different language. Milosz grew up speaking Polish at home and always held it dear in life. Milosz, in the latter half of his life, shuttled between the two nations. Irrespective of these turbulent movements in his life, Polish language and writing in his mother tongue have been an unwavering passion for the author. In fact, in his entire career, Milosz has written only one poem in English. This poem talks about his dedication to his mother tongue and the importance of writing in Polish.

> Faithful mother tongue,
>
> I have been serving you.
>
> Every night, I used to set before you little bowls of colors

so you could have your birch, your cricket, your finch

as preserved in my memory.

This lasted many years.

You were my native land; I lacked any other.

I believed that you would also be a messenger

between me and some good people

even if they were few, twenty, ten

or not born, as yet.

Now, I confess my doubt.

There are moments when it seems to me I have squandered my life.

For you are a tongue of the debased,

of the unreasonable, hating themselves

even more than they hate other nations,

a tongue of informers,

a tongue of the confused,

ill with their own innocence. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 245)

The poem begins by directly addressing the speaker's mother tongue as faithful. The speaker reciprocates the same faithfulness of the language with his commitment. His creative imagination and the repertoire of his memories serve as the tools that introduce and sustain the language in the foreign land. It is through memory and language that the images are created. The spatial transposition in the speaker's life severed its direct relationship with his homeland; hence, he says that language is his only homeland now. The lines state that years have passed by since his departure from

his homeland, but he continues to serve in his mother tongue. Though the use of a different language has inhibited the popularity of his works in the new land, it has acted as a messenger between him and his native land. The number of followers in his native land were not many but he had contact with a few interested people. Language connects not only with the ones who are living but also with the ones who are to be born. Thus, in language, he creates a solidarity with the generations of the past and the present.

The affirmation in the language is not devoid of doubts or scepticism. In the coming stanzas, he talks about his doubts about the language. He says that his mother tongue is not devoid of blemishes. It has been used by dictators and informers who reported on their fellow brothers. Serving such a language has led the speaker to question his own choice. He laments that he squandered away his life in the service of such language. This cynicism gives way to affirmation in the next stanza. The identity of the speaker is intrinsically connected to his language and he believes that a new identity devoid of his mother tongue would be fragmentary. Without his mother tongue, he would be just another philosopher or a scholar in a distant land.

In the penultimate stanza the speakers refer to the characteristics of morality play. Fortune spreads its benevolence before the character, but in the backdrop, one can see the images of human and Divine torture. The possibilities of a new audience and the appreciation of a different society are drawn before the speaker, but he can always see the commitment and responsibility towards his native language in his background. The poem concludes by reiterating the beginning lines. The speaker has put forth bowls of colours before his native language so that she can paint the marvellous images of her past, present and future.

The poem contains many biographical elements from the poet's life. Milosz spent much of his time in exile and has been to many places, but the common feature that remained in his poetry was the choice of his language. Milosz wrote exclusively in Polish with a single exception to one poem, "To Raja Rao" which is his only English work. Being an emigre writer in a country that did not have any cultural or geographical connection to Eastern Europe, he found it difficult to find an audience for his poems. Milosz was relatively popular and read while he was a budding new poet in Poland but all of it changed with his life in exile. The lack of an audience and the lack of communication with his readers took a huge toll on his literary career. All these hardships and difficulties did not lead him to abandon his mother tongue. He held onto it forever and finally got the recognition he deserved.

The elements in the poem that deserve a further look at are the choice of language, the importance of memory, life in exile and references to his native country. Memory and language are intertwined in the poem. Language finds its meaningful expression in the memories of the poet. The landscape, culture and history of the land reside in the memory of the speaker, and language acts as a vehicle for its articulation. The poem also discusses the difficulties of exile. It is tormenting for the speaker to choose between devotion and fame. Had he chosen to write in English, he could have had a wider audience, but he remained faithful to his mother tongue throughout his career. The poem also subtly references the authoritarian regime in his native land. Poland was a satellite state of the Soviet Union after the Second World War. It employed widespread surveillance and censorship to control its population. Informing about neighbours and fellow citizens was a common thing in the republic. The mention of

'confused tongue' refers to the intellectuals who were mesmerised by the romantic notions of communism. The poem attempts to look into an immigrant's difficulty and the problems of divided identity.

The censorship towards Milosz was tightened after the defection. The authorities devised elaborate plans to erase the poet from the historical and cultural sphere of the nation. Milosz's works were banned, and the existing works were called back from the public domain. There were only three ways one could access the works of Milosz in Poland during the Cold War: the remaining copies from the pre-war or early post-war period, the second way through books and magazines smuggled into Poland, and finally, starting in the mid-1970s, the underground press started publishing the works of Milosz in secret. The record regarding the erasure of the works of Milosz can be found in the *Book of Records and Recommendations of the Central Press Control Office* published in 1981:

> In academic and specialist work, diaries, monographs, one can without consultations leave surnames, quotations, report on the output and activity (...) of people" [among those the instruction listed Milosz – footnote by M.W.Ł.] (...) a) one should not allow an overestimation of the work by the above-mentioned persons or show them in a too favourable a light.
>
> In publications directly discussing the life and work of one of the above-mentioned people, if it has not been made in the same text – one should abide by the rule that in the preface, afterword or footnote they should give a short profile of the person specifying their position in the past or at present regarding our political system.

> In specialist, cultural, literary, and social-political press, one can leave articles, essays, and studies on the mentioned people adhering to the above-mentionedrules. One should, however, eliminate their names and work titles from daily papers, radio, and TV, with the exception of critical information. (53-54)

Though his works were banned and recalled, his poems and articles were circulated amongst the literary group through clandestine publications. The governmental measures were not adequate enough to contain the artistic powers of the poet.

3.8 Strategies to Circumvent the Censor

The strategies used by authors under the censorship to circumvent the censors were the use of historical subject matter, prose writing, and figurative language. One of the finest examples of such writing by Milosz is the poem “The Hooks of a Corset”. The poem contains extracts from writers and critics which are placed alternatively with the prose part. The alternating prose pieces are carefully placed as their connection is explicit. Milosz is trying to draw a parallel between history and fashion in vogue during the time. The time frame of the poem is the twentieth century, and the speaker is looking at the change in the century by looking at the fashion symbols and contemporary works. It is change that the speaker is trying to comprehend in the poem. The alternating parts are divided with a subtitle inscript and the quote is placed. The poem’s title refers to the female fashion garment, which attained its highest popularity in the early part of the twentieth century and fell out of vogue, and the poet uses this image to signify the

change happening in society with images of fashion. The poet carefully uses the subject matter to mask the underlying criticism of society.

The poem's first section is in prose, and it is situated in a big city, possibly France, as it is the centre of fashion and culture in the twentieth century. The setting is the early part of the twentieth century and gradually moving to the twenty-first century. The speaker has an ambiguous relationship with the people around him as he feels part of the century and also as an outsider. The twentieth century witnessed mass extinction due to the two world wars, and the speaker feels the guilt of surviving the deaths as his fellow men did not survive it. The speaker also feels a responsibility to be a witness for the dead as he imagines solidarity with the dead. The human race is one large group to which all of us are related and the speaker deems it his responsibility to be a mouthpiece for those who could not survive the century. The ambiguity is visible in the lines "I am one of them… I, replacing them, bearing a different name yet their own because the five senses are ours in common" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 408). The speaker then talks about fashion at the time, how people dressed and how they fashioned their hair to make a semblance of society. The poem also works in opposition to oblivion as the speaker says he creates stories, and the impermanence is tackled by the posterity of language. The next section of the poem is a quote from the famous work "The Painter of Modern Life" by Charles Baudelaire. "The Painter of Modern Life" talks about the life of the French war correspondent who wrote about the Crimean War. French society was undergoing tremendous changes in its art, fashion, and culture during that period. At this age, the scandalous painting of Manet emerged and Baudelaire considered Constantin an outsider and a bohemian hero, a true embodiment of the changing times.

He is addressed as Mr.G in the essay. The section borrowed by the poet is titled “In Praise of Cosmetics” which pays attention to art and feminine decorations. There are talks about war and genocide, but it makes references to other regions and historical events to conceal the criticism aimed at the government. The use of texts from other famous works also helps to get around the censor. A criticism of the war and the functioning of the Soviet sphere of influence are present in the lines.

A few sections of the poem are written in verse form. The setting of the poem changes to an aristocratic noble house in the countryside of Eastern Europe. A table is set before a family gathering and the speaker pauses for a moment amidst the chatter and laughs of friends and family to ponder over the meaning of change. Though the speaker is happy amongst the group, the question seems to haunt him. The transition of the century and the speaker cannot dismiss the elephant in the room: what is the truth about the century? Even though he engages in the activities around the question keeps him occupied. The section mainly deals with the lifestyle of the Polish gentry in the nearby countries. The quote borrowed following the section is from the work of Polish critic Jerzy Stempowski, who wrote under the pseudonym Paweł Hostowiec, and the work mentioned in the text is “In the Valley of the Dniester”. The section talks about the lifestyle of the Ukrainian nobility after the fall of the commonwealth. The last section of the poem concludes with the speaker expressing his disappointment. The speaker says he wanted to convey to the audience what the real is but has failed to do it. The poem concludes with the realisation that man’s feelings and thoughts cannot be fully expressed. The poet attempts to make a parallel between art and fashion during the twentieth century, and by looking at the changing trends in both disciplines, he tries to

answer the fundamental question regarding change. The structure and style of the poem are also innovative, as it does not stick to a single style. The poem uses both verse and prose and also borrows lengthy quotes from contemporary figures.

"Incantation" is a poem that looks at the craft of poetry, especially the power of language. The poem puts forth a complex yet hopeful worldview. The poem's meaning and intention seem to be deceiving many of the readers. The poem's idea postulated can be seen as irony or innocent naivety. After enduring the atrocities of war then, the authoritarian regimes and life in exile did not leave the author bitter towards the world. The catholic imagination of the poet often offers a catastrophic outlook of the universe, yet it does not stoop into despair but often ignites glimmers of hope. "Incantation" is one such poem that pulsates with hope. Many readers and academics criticise the poem for being entirely ironic and call it a bitter joke. As the title suggests the poem talks about the magical redeeming feature of language. The poet attempts to portray language as the quintessential channel for the expression of human reason. As a survivor of both the world wars and the Cold War, one can suspect a sense of irony in the poet's unwavering belief in the potential of language and the goodness it can bring out. It is rather an optimistic outlook amidst the chaos of the flawed universe.

> Human reason is beautiful and invincible.
> No bars, no barbed wire, no pulping of books,
> No sentence of banishment can prevail against it.
> It establishes the universal ideas in language,
> And guides our hand so we write Truth and Justice
> With capital letters, lie and oppression with small.

It puts what should be above things as they are,

Is an enemy of despair and a friend of hope.

It does not know Jew from Greek or slave from master,

Giving us the estate of the world to manage.

It saves austere and transparent phrases

From the filthy discord of tortured words.

It says that everything is new under the sun,

Opens the congealed fist of the past.

Beautiful and very young are Philo-Sophia

And poetry, her ally in the service of the good. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 239)

The first part of the poem can be considered an oxymoron. It begins by praising human reason. The first line is a declarative sentence that says human reason is beautiful and imperative. The following lines talk about the apparent human brutalities both material and mental. There is a subtle sense of mockery in the juxtaposition of the beauty of human reason and the unspeakable cruelties that it is capable of committing. The kind of atrocities in the lines that prevail against the intellectual and literary population in the society. Repressive regimes attempt to subjugate human reason by means of detaining, barring them into the public sphere, burning and censoring publications and banishing them from the state. The speaker points out all these methods and still states that these attempts are futile against the ability of human reason. The experiences depicted in the lines are not mere words but lived realities of the poet, and

hence, one could not help but wonder at the innocent naivety the poet holds towards the harsh realities of the world.

The next line introduces an important ally in the service of human reason, language. The poem then looks at how language orders and constructs reality. The speaker says the language "establishes universal ideas" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 239). Language does not merely engage in the act of naming the realities for us, but it constructs the reality. An idea is formed in the consciousness with the help of language. The speaker talks about how language creates reality. The image of language guiding the hands to write about truth and justice reflects the fact that the human mind is a vehicle by which language constructs reality. It is in language that order, and hierarchy are created. The speaker says truth and justice are written in capital letters and lies and oppression in small letters. The idea of inner censorship works here; how the mind uses deception and withholding of information in the crafting of ideas. Idea is a formless entity that is given shape by language. The order of things and the hierarchy of it is a creation of language. The poem says language puts "what should be above things as they are" (*Milosz, New and Collected Poems* 239). The entities exterior to human minds are formless; however, it is the value in language that we attribute to them that creates the reality for us. For instance, in the poem, the speaker says language does not differentiate between the Jew or the Greek nor between the slave and the master. For language they are only human beings, but it is the human mind that makes the distinction among humans. According to the poem what language offers is an estate of the world to manage. With the assistance of language, human reason distinguishes and uses "austere and transparent phrases" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 239) from

“filthy discord and tortured words” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 239). They manage our present and keep a record of our past.

Poetry and philosophy are the two allies in language in the service of reason. The speaker says that both philosophy and poetry are of recent origin and are in the service of the good. The speaker says, “As late as yesterday, nature celebrated their birth” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 239). Poetry, for the speaker, is not a mere expression of feeling, but it also entails traditions and reason. The influence of T.S Eliot on the poet cannot be overlooked. Eliot emphasised the importance of reason over emotions in his poetry, and likewise, Milosz also attempted to find a common ground between the two in his poems. The poem concludes on a very pessimistic note. The speaker believes that the union of philosophy and poetry would liberate the world from its enemies. Philosophy and poetry are the two ways in which language can be used to heighten the effect of it and a combination of it would lead to a more drastic effect on the society. The poet believes that human reason, with the help of language, can have a positive impact on society.

The poem talks about the radical effect language has on society. It has the power to chronicle events, analyse the actions and persuade the masses. The poet looks at language as an ideal expression of human reason. He also chooses the two best modes in language to do the same, philosophy and poetry. In Milosz’s Nobel lecture, he talks about the character of language and the craft of poetry. The poem and the lecture can be read in tandem.

> The exile of a poet is today a simple function of a relatively recent discovery: that whoever wields power is also able to control language and

> not only with the prohibitions of censorship, but also by changing the meaning of words. A peculiar phenomenon makes its appearance: the language of a captive community acquires certain durable habits; whole zones of reality cease to exist simply because they have no name. There is, it seems, a hidden link between theories of literature as Écriture, of speech feeding on itself, and the growth of the totalitarian state. In any case, there is no reason why the state should not tolerate an activity that consists of creating (experimental) poems and prose, if these are conceived as autonomous systems of reference, enclosed within their own boundaries. Only if we assume that a poet constantly strives to liberate himself from borrowed styles in search for reality, is he dangerous. In a room where people unanimously maintain a conspiracy of silence, one word of truth sounds like a pistol shot. And, alas, a temptation to pronounce it, similar to an acute itching, becomes an obsession which doesn't allow one to think of anything else. That is why a poet chooses internal or external exile. It is not certain, however, that he is motivated exclusively by his concern with actuality. He may also desire to free himself from it and elsewhere, in other countries, on other shores, to recover, at least for short moments, his true vocation - which is to contemplate Being. (Milosz)

The choice of his language thus had a politics of its own. Milosz believed in the power of language to create favourable narratives. His works are a revolt against the powers of the governments to control language and narratives.

3.9 Literary Style and Form

One of the features of Milosz's poetry is self-referentiality. The introspection he has towards the craft can be traced back to the background in which Milosz has written the poem. The Stalinist regime and the communist witch hunts in America have affected the writing of the poet. The constant need to refrain and escape the censor while also experiencing the need to be real and truthful leaves the poet to contemplate his vocation. The foray of the censor into the consciousness of the poet becomes evident in the self-referentiality of the poem. Self-referentiality arises from the inner censorship. The constant need to be on guard to not offend the censor leads to being self-referential. The introspection in the craft is based on the inner censorship of the poet. Milosz, in the poem "Ars Poetica?" outlines the craft of writing poetry. The use of classical text and mythologies outmanoeuvres the censor. The use of mythologies to circumvent the censor will be discussed in detail in the fourth chapter. He challenges the treatise by bringing in a question mark to the classical Greek title. The influence of ideologies and dictates are stumbling blocks in the path of creating unbiased poetry. The question that reverberates in the poetry of Milosz is "How to tell it all?" ("Six Lectures on Verse") The conflict arises in the poet's need to be sincere and, at the same time, to be able to elude the censor.

> I have always aspired to a more spacious form
> that would be free from the claims of poetry or prose
> and would let us understand each other without exposing
> the author or reader to sublime agonies.
> In the very essence of poetry there is something indecent:

> a thing is brought forth which we didn't know we had in us,
> so we blink our eyes, as if a tiger had sprung out
> and stood in the light, lashing his tail. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 240)

The title of the poem refers to the classical work of Horace. “Ars Poetica, or the Art of Poetry”, was a poem written by Horace. It deals with the craft of writing poetry and drama. The poem uses numerous maxims to dictate the various rules of writing literature. The poem was written in the form of a letter. The treatise dictates the terms for a good poem, including poetic unity, wise choice of subject, eloquent subject matter, meter and style, and also talks about the author. Even though the titles of both the poems are the same the difference is in the use of the question mark by Milosz. The poem then questions the fundamental assumptions about the craft of poetry put forth by Horace. Both poems are self-referential, and they talk about the process of writing poetry in the form of a poem. Milosz reflects upon the definite structure of the poem and is critical of the status of the poetic design at his time.

The poem begins by talking about the limitation that has come about to writing because of the strict insistence on form. The speaker says he wishes for a more “spacious form” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 240) free from the “claims of poetry or prose” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 240). The speaker believes that the development and dictates of poetic tradition have limited the scope of writing to a handful of carefully arranged forms. The speaker calls for a more “spacious form” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 240) of writing that is not limited by the rules and will not restrict the writer from communicating to the reader with uncompromising form. The immense

range of human experience is difficult to be constrained to limited forms and would require a rather wider scope and medium to communicate with the readers. The insistence of socialist realism as the only literary trope during the Stalinist period resulted in many writers giving up their artistic freedom for political pressures. Socialist realism restricted the freedom of subject matter and style. It reduced social interaction to material aspects alone. The call for a spacious form is a demand for repealing the poetic restriction.

The poem discusses the mental process involved in the creation of poems. The speaker believes that in the essence of poetry "there is something indecent" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 240). Poetry brings out something within us that we thought did not exist in us. It has the ability to bring out something that eludes the meaning attributed to it. The speaker says that writing poetry is like being possessed by Daimonion. This claim reiterates the ancient Platonic argument of poets being possessed souls. Daimonions are beings in ancient Greek religion and mythologies who are equivalent to lesser spirits whose character can be good or evil. The forthcoming stanzas of the poem remind one about the dialectical difference of argument between the Platonic school and the Aristotelian school. While the former argued for censoring and banishing poetry, the latter called for a catharsis of human emotions through literature. The initial part of the poem formulates poetry as the act of someone possessed. The speaker looks down upon such poetic creativity and says that no "reasonable man would like to be a city of demons" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 240). The speaker's voice is opinionated and attempts to create a dichotomy between the good and the bad. One can observe an appreciation for tradition and disdain for the

contemporary. This becomes even more evident in the coming stanza, where it says, "There was a time when only wise books were read" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 240), and one could find solace in the great lines. The speaker also compares these classics to the modern works which he feels are like works "fresh from psychiatric clinics" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 240). The working of both internal and external censors is visible here. The social pressure dictates that the writer to be cautious in his craft and the power of the political tool can erase the writers and discredit and silence them.

The poem concludes with the speaker outlining the purpose of poetry. He states that the purpose of poetry "is to remind us how difficult it is to remain just one person" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 241). Since the speaker opines that poetry is the product of Divine possession and the human mind is susceptible to influences, one should be careful and reluctant to write poetry, for it may be influenced by evil spirits. He compares the human mind to a house with open doors where "invisible guests come in and out at will" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 241). Poetry is a vehicle in which the human mind finds its expression and carries both what it intended and elements completely unaware to the consciousness.

The title of the poem is of significance in understanding the poem. In the didactic style of Horace, we can see strict guidelines dictated for future generations in the craft of poetry. By bringing in the question mark in the title Milosz brilliantly undermines the agency of the treatise. Artistic endeavours should be beyond the clutches of political dictums. They should have the ability to be critical, innovative, and free from external pressures. He is sceptical about the idea of scribbling down the art of poetry in a single

document. Using a single question mark efficiently, the poet deconstructs the epic. poem opines that the poet is not completely in charge of the meaning or the intention of the poem and a written work is open to a number of interpretations. It also talks about the multiple personas an individual carries within himself throughout life. The poet is cynical about the many reflections of those personas that may be seen in the poem. The poem also offers the idea that one cannot shy away from the responsibility as a creator and should try to emulate good poetry.

What prompts a poet to write in the face of such brutal adversities? Milosz was heavily censored, had to maintain an inner decorum in writing, was erased from the poetic sphere and deprived of an audience, but endured all this suffering, Milosz wrote great poems. The answer is present in the poem "Dedication" written, in 1945, immediately after the destruction of Poland by the German forces. The poem has multiple tones, beginning with helplessness moving to angry indignation and culminating in an inner composure. The poem is a homage to the millions of people who perished during the war. A recurring motif in Milosz's poem is the theme of witnessing and making peace through writing. Milosz believed that poetry had a dual function of aesthetically appealing and, at the same time, accounting for historical reality. Milosz also talks about his guilt of having survived and living to tell the tales of the horrendous atrocities. The poem begins by directly addressing the audience who perished in the war. There is a sense of immediacy and sorrow for not having been able to save them. The poet addresses them as if they are present before him, "you who I could not save listen to me" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 77). He also confesses

that he does not possess the skills nor the "wizardry for words" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 77) to speak for them.

> You whom I could not save
>
> Listen to me.
>
> Try to understand this simple speech as I would be ashamed of another.
>
> I swear, there is in me no wizardry of words.
>
> I speak to you with silence like a cloud or a tree
>
> …
>
> What is poetry which does not save
>
> Nations or people?
>
> A connivance with official lies,
>
> A song of drunkards whose throats will be cut in a moment,
>
> Readings for sophomore girls.
>
> …
>
> They used to pour millet on graves or poppy seeds
>
> To feed the dead who would come disguised as birds.
>
> I put this book here for you, who once lived
>
> So that you should visit us no more. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 77)

The poem pictures the historical invasion of Poland from both sides. During the peak of the war, the German and the soviet forces, according to the Soviet non-aggression pact, attacked Poland from both fronts. Both the nations went behind Poland's back and entered a treaty to salvage Poland in war. The "broken city", in the

poem is Poland, “the valley” and the “immense bridge going into white fog” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 77) refer to the geographical boundaries. The Soviets did nothing from across the Polish rivers while the country was ransacked by the German forces “what is poetry which does not save nations or people?” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 77) The answer is given immediately by the poet himself “connivance of official lies”, “a song of drunkards” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 77). In Soviet-controlled Poland, poetry and literature became the mouthpiece of the communist regimes. The use of the term “official” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 77) holds special significance because in the communist state, poets became “officials” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 77) of the state, and their works were extremely scrutinised by the authorities.

The line “I wanted good poetry without knowing it” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 77) describes his ideals of writing. The mental conflict of ideological imposition, especially that of socialist realism, comes to light here. For him, poetry served a purpose rather than imposed by ideologies and institutions. As he was never a member of the communist party his career was often obstructed by the dictates of the party. He was often believed to be a dissident, culminating in his defection to the West. The last line is a reminder of the rituals of the dead. It is a reiteration of the Lithuanian folk custom of pouring millet or poppy seeds on the graves which become food for the souls who come back disguised as birds. Milosz dedicates the poem to the people who once lived. He hopes that the dead might find their salvation in those lines and would not come back haunting. In poetry, does one find hope and salvation.

3.10 Conclusion

Censorship, both external and internal, functions as a thematic and structural struggle in Milosz's poetry. The ideological and political impositions of the oppressive governments and the unconscious inner censorship the poet subjects himself to are the causes of his traumatic experience. The traumatic violence is the result of the dedication with which the poet approaches his craft and the prohibition meted out to him. Milosz's poetry encapsulates the profound impact censorship had on artistic expression. His poetry is a testimony to the struggles against authoritarian regimes and ideological impositions. Witnessing the horrors of the two World Wars, Nazism and Fascist occupations, Milosz's poetry becomes a beacon of resilience.

Chapter 4

Mythologies and Trauma in Czeslaw Milosz's Poetry

4.1 Introduction

Milosz weaves in mythological narration into the tapestry of his poetic universe. Mythological narratives provide controlled frameworks to talk about the otherwise difficult traumatic experience. Milosz uses the collective narrative forms of myths to elucidate the enduring impact of trauma on individual and collective consciousness. Myths function as narrative forms through which the unspeakable experience of trauma finds its expression. This chapter looks at how myths formulate the origin of the people. It also looks at examines the poet's use of mythical narratives to talk about the horrors of the world wars. The use of various mythologies is also analysed in the chapter. In particular, mythical rivers are frequently featured in Milosz's poetry. They become channels that navigate the complexities of memory and history.

Milosz has mythicised his homeland and experience owing to the region's political instability and ceaseless wanderings. Mythologising is a common trope involved in literary trauma narratives. In her work *Words of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* published in 1996, Kali Tal discusses how "mythologisation works by reducing the traumatic event into a set of standardised narratives, turning it from a frightening and uncontrollable event into a contained and predictable narrative" (6). Cathy Caruth, a pioneer in the field of trauma studies, defined trauma as the experience that defies expression and tests the referential limits of language. The Caruthian model of trauma states that trauma is not locatable in the original event in the past. Instead, it is the very unassimilable nature of trauma, the way it was not known in

the first instance, that haunts the survivor. The original event obscured by traumatic shock can only be reclaimed through narrativisation. Since myths are essentially narrative forms, they can be vehicles for traumatic expression. Richard Chase, in "Notes on The Study of Myth" writes that "myth performs the cathartic function of dramatising the clashes and harmonies of life in a social and natural environment" (75). In many of Milosz's long poems, he creates a mythical landscape which reflects his homeland. Myth is also employed to create a bond between the individual and the community. Jacob Arlow, in his article "Ego Psychology and the Study of Myth" published in 1961, explains the development of individual and communal experience through myth:

> The myth is a particular kind of communal experience. It is a special form of shared fantasy, and it serves to bring the individual into relationship with members of his cultural group on the basis of certain common needs. Accordingly, the myth can be studied from the point of view of its function in psychic integration: how it plays a role in warding off feelings of guilt and anxiety, how it constitutes a form of adaptation to reality and to the group in which the individual lives, and how it influences the crystallisation of the individual identity and the formation of the superego. (375)

Myths function as a cultural narrative that connect individuals across generations, nurturing a shared identity and sense of belonging. Mythical narratives are transferred down generations, fostering a connection between the past and the present.

4.2 Foundation Myths and Origins of the Society

Myths have often been associated with the concept of origin. They provide answers to the questions that sometimes, rationally, cannot be fathomed. In this chapter, I will analyse how Milosz employs personal myths to conceptualise the trauma of loss. In addition, I will also examine his use of numerous prevalent Greek and Eastern European myths to portray traumatic experiences. Milosz's personal mythology is constructed around the idea of the multi-ethnic Eastern European homeland. The exceptional circumstances into which Milosz was born and the region's troubled history play an important role in forming his personal myths. For many Slavs of his generation, the idea of a homeland is more imagined than experienced. The history of an independent Polish nation has been severely censored, and the people looked up to the artists and writers to create a nation that resembled the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. One of the techniques employed by Milosz to construct this homeland is the use of myths.

The homeland Milosz envisions in his writings is more imaginary than real. The idea of an independent Polish nation was wiped out of European politics through various occupations and divisions, and regressive censoring measures were put in place not to resuscitate the idea. Political and historical understandings of the region are necessary to comprehend the concept of homeland. Milosz is not confined by the political and nationalist thoughts of the twentieth century. For him, his nation's history does not begin with the turn of the century but begins from the classical period of Eastern Europe. He thinks of himself as a citizen of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and distances himself from the petty politics of modern nations. By employing the literary device of personal mythologies Milosz creates the idea of a homeland devoid of political boundaries. In

his writings, virgin forests and rivers make up his native land. What is unique about this mythic universe is that it transcends the restraints of modern-day political divisions. It is also used as a technique to circumvent the watchful eyes of the censor. The idea of an undivided Poland has significantly been censored in the public sphere and literature. By resorting to a mythical universe, the poet bypasses the restriction placed on him.

Myths have often been associated with origins and are called origin myths. Origin myths explain the beginning of a natural order or the social aspect of the world. A particular feature of Milosz's personal mythologies is that they are employed to describe the origins and social order of Eastern European societies. In the preface to his work *Writing History, Writing Trauma* published in 2001, Dominik LaCapra discusses crisis/catastrophe at the centre of community formation: "A crisis/catastrophe that disorients the collectivity or the individual may miraculously become the origin or renewed origin of the myth and serve an ideological function in authorising acts or policies that appeal to it for justification" (xi). The people of Poland and Lithuania carried an intergenerational transfer of trauma. The trauma of loss of nationhood has been passed down from generation to generation amongst the Slavs. Since the fall of the Grand Duchy, the people have always fought for their homeland and in the Polish romantic tradition, it was the responsibility of the writers to keep the flames kindled amongst the people.

4.3 Mythical Rivers Meandering the Poetic Landscape

Civilisations have sprung up on the banks of great rivers, and in the works of Milosz, rivers, real, imagined, and mythical features sporadically. The association between rivers and the people has been dealt with in detail in the previous chapter. The

memory of the rivers is often associated with the idea of returning. What is unique about the rivers in Milosz's poetry is that they transcend national boundaries, social divisions, and political erasures. They stand as a beacon of permanent order in the chaotic political universe of the speaker. Milosz ignited the fire of this patriotic fervour in the personal mythology of return. Rivers thus stand in his personal myths as a symbol of origin and community. In the origin myths, life and society originate from the riverbanks and possess the character of giving life. Milosz celebrates this character of rivers in his poetry. The rivers also create solidarity between generations. Milosz develops a sense of community through the nurturing forces of the rivers. The personal mythology also helps in building a tribal community of the people who share the waters of the river. Though the trajectory of the river changes, their presence is enduring, and they create a kinship among the people. In the poem "Rivers", Milosz discusses these characters of rivers.

> Under various names, it was only you I praised, Rivers.
> You are milk and honey, and love, and death and dance.
> From a source in secret grottoes, beating among mossy rocks,
> From sparkling springs on meadows, beneath which rustle rills,
> Your turn and my run begin, rupture, and transience. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 396)

The trauma of the loss of nationhood is a defining feature of the Polish national identity. The trauma has been transferred down from generation to generation and the best way to portray this trauma is none other than through the myths. Due to stringent censorship measures established by various imperialistic powers throughout the

nation's history, which made it difficult even to utter the name Poland, the writers had to improvise and find alternatives to convey nationalist aspirations. One of the first choices used for it was the use of the various rivers. In the case of Milosz, the use of rivers thus conveys the origin myth of a collective Polish identity. In Milosz's poetry, the rivers become a symbol of an origin, a source to which the speaker returns to find inspiration and kinship. The constant revisit to the riverbanks is associated with the autochthonous origin of the Slavic community. Myths are an accepted narrative form of a culture or a speech community that serves the purpose of its foundation or self-conception (Heehs 3). Autochthonous origin is associated with life springing up from fertile lands and the association this fertility has with the life-giving force of the waters is exploited by the writer to develop the tribal commonality of the masses and the nation's history.

The widely used mythology in Milosz's works is borrowed from classical Greek literature. Rivers carry multiple meanings in his poems. His poetic universe consists of real, imagined and mythological rivers. Greek mythical river Lethe appears sporadically in his poetry. Lethe is one of the five rivers of the underworld and people who drink from it experience forgetfulness. In many of his poems, we can see that the poet always returns to the rivers as a source of origin, memory and inspiration. Lethe not only functions on a spatial axis but it expands to the temporal axis. Stala argues that the quest of the speaker venturing to the shores of the mythical river is akin to "wandering to the end of time and beyond it. In more precise terms, this image poses a question regarding that which lies outside time, on its other side" (Lapinski 140). The answer to what exists outside time or beyond the shores of the Lethe is found in the poem "Notes": "Not to

know. Not to remember. With this one hope:/ that beyond the river Lethe, there is memory, healed" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 353). Beyond the shores of Lethe, time comes to a halt to an eternal moment. The temporal function of the river seeks to portray the timeless feature of trauma. Traumatic memory of a past experience comes to haunt the victim in the present, and this element of trauma tends to provide a timeless feature to the experience, earning it a status outside time.

Lethe appears in two other poems of Milosz. In "1913" the river appears as a beacon for a wandering traveller. The poem is an autobiographical piece where the narrator recounts his travels as a young man. Later in life, the poet travelled around the world as an exile. Rivers, as natural geographical signifiers, point towards his memory of his homeland. Lethe functions as a symbol of traumatic memory, and the image of the river brings out the memory of loss.

> I recollected the high bridge over the Niemen
> As the train wound out of an Alpine pass.
> And I woke up by the waters, greyish blue
> In the radiance of the pearly lagoon,
> In the city where a traveller forgets who he is.
> By the waters of Lethe I saw the future.
> Is this my century? (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 424)

Lethe, a powerful imagery about memory is also used in the poem "In Salem". The image is an oxymoron where, in many places, the image of the river is used as a reminder of childhood memories and a symbol of homeland. By contrasting the image of the river with Lethe, a river of forgetfulness, the poet brings out the traumatic

character of memory. “In Salem”, the poet proclaims that “My river Lethe is the Wilia” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 423)”. Wilia is a river which originates from Belarus and flows around the capital of Lithuania, Wilno. The river acts as an image of homeland in many of his poems. The juxtaposition of real river with the mythical river of forgetting established the idea of a vanishing homeland.

Another mythical river that appears in Milosz is the Heraclitan River. In the fifth section, “A Short Recess” from the poem “From the Rising of the Sun”, the Heraclitan River makes an appearance. The poet uses the imagery of the Heraclitan River to postulate the impossibility of permanence and to show that the world is constantly changing, and no two situations are exactly the same. The speaker then imagines how his life would have been had his wishes come true. He imagined living until old age in his country, becoming a village elder, and making alliances with the distant city of Ferrara. The first subsection of the fifth part concludes with the lines “I was not, I was, I am not, I do not desire” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 315), an in-between state where the speaker is not certain about what to be. As the poem moves forward, the speaker confesses that he wants more glory, fame, and power, and he travels far from his native land. He thought that opportunities in his native land were limited and that travelling to far-off larger cities would bring him the fame and glory he hoped for. Thus, he travelled from his “city of modest renown” (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 317) to countries whose capitals had lustrous boulevards and iconic columns. This meaningless wandering did not lead to any satisfaction, and he kept searching for more in the megalopolis for the centre of fame and glory only to realise that there was no centre and that he had been caught in a delusion. By the time the speaker realises that

all of that was a grand illusion, it is too late for the speaker to have drowned in the depths of an unwinding gyre.

4.4 Mythological Narration in the Expression of Trauma

Milosz also employs a mythological background to talk about traumatic experiences. Heloise LeCompte, in the article "From "dead saint" to "lyreless Orpheus": Post-traumatic Narrativization of Myths and Fairy Tales in John Banville's *The Sea* and Anne Enright's *The Gathering*" states that mythical narrativization provides an indirect means to recover the past in an otherwise distorted traumatic memory (160). It is difficult to portray the enormity of the traumatic experience and the poet often resorts to mythical narratives to convey the weight of trauma. The poem "A Book in the Ruins", written in 1941 at the heights of the Second World War, gives graphic details of the war and destruction. The desolation is not limited to the material world, but it further extends to a metaphysical realm. The poem is built into two layers; the first layer discusses material destruction, and in the second layer, in order to magnify the extent of the damage, the lines show how the damage extends to the lives of the characters.

You pick a fragment
Of grenade which pierced the body of a song
On Daphnis and Chloe. And you long,
Ruefully, to have a talk with her,
As if it were what life prepared you for.
-How is it, Chloe, that your pretty skirt
Is torn so badly by the winds that hurt

Real people, you who, in eternity, sing
The hours, sun in your hair appearing
And disappearing? How is it that your breasts
Are pierced by shrapnel, and the oak groves burn,
While you, charmed, not caring at all, turn
To run through forests of machinery and concrete
And haunt us with the echoes of your feet? (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 28-29)

The poem is written in the background of the Second World War and the event described in the poem has a biographical element. During the war, Milosz helped restore the damaged books from a Warsaw library that was bombarded. The speaker not only talks about the destruction that happened to the library building and the books but extends the damage further into the lives of the characters in the damaged books. The mythological background of the poem provides the framework from which the trauma can be understood. The images of the shrapnel piercing the books and the laceration extending to the body of the characters in the book are powerful symbols to depict the extent of the destruction. Daphnis and Chloe are characters from a classical Greek novel. Their love story is immortalised in art by various artists. The idea of immortality in art and literature is called into question. Great works stand the test of time, and their stories are preserved in writings. Libraries hold an important role in the cultural life of a society. In the poem, the destruction of the library and the wounds inflicted on the characters portray the intensity of the traumatic event. LeComte writes, “The disenchanted mythological background becomes part and parcel of narrators’ poetics of

trauma as they use it to compose a mimetic portrayal of their grief" (159). The mythological universe provides the narrative framework in which the discussion of the traumatic experience can take place.

Mythic narrativization is employed in poetry when the speaker discusses difficult subject matter. Milosz survived two world wars, and he took it upon himself to talk about it to the world. Milosz was present in Warsaw when the ghetto was liquidated; he witnessed the flames engulfing the ghetto from his apartment, which left a mark on his life and career. Milosz strongly upheld the multicultural and tolerant attitude of the erstwhile Grand Duchy in his life. He vehemently opposed antisemitism during his time in college and helped many Jews during the holocaust. The Germans rounded up the Jews during the Second World War into the ghetto and they were transported to the concentration camps. The ghetto uprising was the largest resistance against the Nazis, which was brutally put down by the army, and the ghetto was burnt to ashes. "In Warsaw" was written during the aftermath of the uprising.

> What are you thinking here, where the wind
> Blowing from the Vistula scatters
> The red dust of the rubble?
> ……
> But the lament of Antigone
> Searching for her brother
> Is indeed beyond the power
> Of endurance. And the heart
> Is a stone in which is enclosed,

Like an insect, the dark love

Of a most unhappy land. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 75)

Warsaw is the capital and the largest city in Poland, and the German forces destroyed it during the Second World War. The destruction of Warsaw was a systematic process which started in 1939 and was completed in 1945 with the razing of the city by the German forces. Anna Hunter, in her article "Tales from Over There: The Uses and Meanings of Fairy-Tales in Contemporary Holocaust Narrative", talks about the use of myth and folklore in the writings about the Holocaust. Authority is a contested factor when people write about events of magnitude such as the Holocaust. The writers who have not experienced first-hand exposure to the events are contested by society in their testimonies in their writings. Milosz, though, had experienced the horrors of the war and did not have the authority that comes from being a Jew. Hence, he uses fiction to uncover the past.

In this poem, Milosz resorts to mythologies as he "cannot rely upon the perceived authority of the narrator in order to underpin their narrative: the authority of the text must come from within the narrative itself" (Hunter 61). The use of the myth of Antigone lamenting the death of her brother has a universal character. In the Theban myth, Antigone is faced with the death of both her brothers; while one is honoured in death, the other is condemned to shame even in death. The speaker laments the death of her unburied brother. Milosz considers Jews as his kin and in the Master Plan for the East, the Germans decided to exterminate both the Jews and the Slavs, both races that the poet considers his kin. Thus, the poet's lament becomes similar to that of Antigone,

as both have lost their brothers. The mythical narrativisation in the poem shoulders the burden of authority and allows the speaker to talk about the experience of the war.

"Orpheus and Eurydice" is a modern retelling of the Greek story in a Californian setting. The myth of Orpheus and Eurydice has become a resource for western writers. The myth covers a wide range of human emotions, including joy, sorrow, loss, and mourning. The myth parallels the historical and biographical details of the poet. Lyndon Davies discusses the parallel between the myth and the modern man in his article "Orpheus, Eurydice, Blanchot: some thoughts on the nature of myth and literature":

> The responses to all these might be similar and contradictory: horror at a disjunction between world and self; despair at one's own powerlessness in the face of it; but also, an illogical conviction that redemption might still be possible, if not in this case then in some perhaps related one, by means of audacious action: persuasion, translation, rendition from the lower place to the upper. (Burnett et.al 214)

The highly autobiographical poem makes use of mythological narrativization. The poet's loss of an audience, nation, and people contrasts with Orpheus's loss of Eurydice and his exile in a foreign land, which is akin to Orpheus' wanderings in Hades. In the Greek tale of the lovers, Eurydice dies of a snake bite and is taken to the underworld and the heartbroken Orpheus goes about looking for her playing his lyre. He reaches the underworld and is granted the wish to return to her lover with the only condition that he cannot look back until both reach the human world. Orpheus fails this condition and loses Eurydice forever.

In Milosz's retelling of the story, the setting and the background overlap with an organic unity. The parallel between the story of the mythical Orpheus and the poet himself is evident from the first stanza. There are many correlations between the lives of the poet and Orpheus. Both of them experience the loss of their loved ones, Eurydice for Orpheus and for Milosz his nation and audience. They resort to art for solace, and finally, both wander off to a foreign land. The poem begins with Orpheus at the gates of Hades and the poet beautifully superimposes the Californian landscape to the underworld.

> Standing on flagstones of the sidewalk at the entrance to Hades
> Orpheus hunched in a gust of wind
> That tore at his coat, rolled past in waves of fog,
> Tossed the leaves of the trees. The headlights of cars
> Flared and dimmed in each succeeding wave. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 260)

Milosz's exile comes with a gravity similar to that of the wanderings of Orpheus. Milosz was committed to Poland and wanted to dedicate his artistic prowess to the Republic even though he was not part of the communist party. While working as a cultural attaché in the United States, he tried to promote Polish culture, but after defecting, he sought refuge in America, a place he was not really fond of. At the beginning of the poem, we can see the landscape of California with its surging traffic superimposed on the mythical landscape of Hades. The parallels are not limited to the landscape. The gates to the underworld and the Cerberus guarding the gates in the poem transposed from the mythical universe to modern-day California.

> He pushed open the door and found himself walking in a labyrinth.
>
> Corridors, elevators. The livid light was not light but the dark of the earth.
>
> Electronic dogs passed him noiselessly.
>
> He descended many floors, a hundred, three hundred, down. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 260)

The mythical universe provides the backdrop from which the poet can talk about his traumatic experience. The use of myths provides both the standardised narratives for the experience and also displaces the question of authority from the speaker. The story of Orpheus and Eurydice provides the audience with the background of loss. The story has elements of grief arising from an irretrievable loss, the wailing hero resorting to art for solace, an exile and wandering in a foreign land. The mythical narrative helps to circumvent the existential aporia at the centre of the traumatic experience which prevents literary representation.

4.5 Mythological Universe of the Poems

The mythological universe of Milosz is found especially in the long poems. The character of this universe can be better understood by William H McNeill's definition of 'mythistory' in his work "Mythistory, or Truth, Myth, History and Historians". Milosz attempts to present historical facts which are credible and intelligible to a given audience with a "historiographical balance between truth, truths, and myth" (McNeill 4). "Bobo's Metamorphosis" and "With Trumpets and Zithers" are two poems that fuse together mythical and historical landscapes. In "Bobo's Metamorphosis", the

mythological narrative fuses together two aspects from the author's biography: the constant wandering as an exile and the longing for independent nationhood.

It's incredible that there were so many unrecorded voices

Between a toothpaste and a rusted blade,

Just over my table in Wilno, Warsaw, Brie, Montgeron, California.

It's incredible that I die before I attain.

……..

Consciousness hikes through bay and hibiscus thickets

Gathering specimens of the Earth into a green box.

Above it, the red bark of *Sequoia sempervirens*

And jays, different from those beyond the Bering Strait,

Open their wings of indigo colour.

……

Stars of Philemon, stars of Baucis,

Above their house entangled by the roots of an oak.

And a wandering god, soundly asleep on a thong-strung bed, His fist for a pillow.

…….

Let there be an island-and an island crops out of the deep.

The pale rose of its cliffs is tinged with violet.

Seeds sprout, on the hills, presto, chestnuts and cedars,

A spring waves a fern just above the harbor.

……

> The only daughter of a sorcerer, Miranda,
>
> Rides a donkey in the direction of the grotto
>
> By a path strewn with creaking leaves.
>
> She sees a tripod, a kettle, and bundles of dry twigs.
>
> Vanish, island! Or stronger: go away! (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 193-195)

"Bobo's Metamorphosis" is a cycle of poems divided into eight sections. The poem deals with different forms, styles, and subject matter. As the title suggests, each section is a transformation, a change from the previous, yet retaining the essence. The stanzas deal with a different subject matter but attempt to maintain a metaphorical connection with the previous one. The subject matter is both literal and figurative. The poet beautifully weaves together elements of the mythic with the natural. The poem is also sprinkled with autobiographical elements from the poet's life. The poem's structure also goes in tandem with the title as it makes sudden shifts and abrupt breaks in the sentences; there are fragmentary yet conjoined ideas in the poem. The poet attempts to create a cinematographic and mythic framework that violates the general temporal frame and creates a continuity in the otherwise discontinuous cycle.

The poem introduces the wandering solitary consciousness in what appears to be California. The relative continuity of the poetic cycle disrupts, and the poem takes on a metaphorical wandering through the uncharted mental and geographical landscape. The section has elements borrowed from the poet's life. The landscape changes from eastern Europe to the American subcontinent. This change is evident in the reference to the depiction of landscape 'beyond the Bering Strait'. The Bering Strait divides the Russian

Empire and the United States. The solitary hiking of the consciousness takes a mythical turn in the fourth section. The section begins with a reference to the story of Philemon and Baucis from Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, the good hosts who serve Zeus and Hermes. It is also highly fantastical and has elements from mythology, fantasy, and literary texts. The first part deals with the mythological story of Baucis and Philemon, which is recounted in a jumbled order. The idea of temporal displacement and the philosophy of life as unattainable also recurs in this section. Immediately after the mythical recount, we encounter the two individuals instantly getting younger and older. The two characters engage in immoral pleasures, and the speaker says that after the encounter, the girl immediately transforms into old age: "Then departs without delay" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 194). The conclusion of the line, "Where all the maidens go" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 194) foreshadows the inevitable end and echoes the philosophy of life being unattainable. The mythical gives way to literary figures. The speaker invokes the characters from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The magical invocation disrupts the mythical flow, creating an island out of nowhere. The speaker then introduces Miranda from *The Tempest* riding on a donkey. The island which popped up instantaneously is destroyed instantly by another vocal command. The introduction of Miranda and the creation of the island are analogies to the romantic notion of the poet. The major tenant of Polish romanticism was the messianic quality of the poet. The poet had the responsibility to be the saviour in the society. By bringing in the wizardry of Miranda and the creation, a parallel can be drawn between the creative powers of artistry. It is through the poet's imagination that the memory of the independent Polish nation is retained in the public consciousness. The appearance of the island at the whim

of the wizard and its instant disappearance are symbolic of the political status of the Polish nation as its fate had hugely been dependent on the whims and fancies of politicians, tyrants, and diplomats.

The two poetic tensions arising from the poem are those of history and myth. The allusion to Ovid's *Metamorphosis* allows the poet to borrow the mythical framework. Ovid opens the poem with, "I intend to speak of forms changed into new entities" (1). *Metamorphosis* chronicles the history of the world from its creation to the period of Julius Caesar in a mythic-historical framework. The major idea running through the poetry is that of metamorphosis. Hence, the idea of nation envisaged by the poet is constantly evolving, and the use of metamorphosis becomes quite appropriate. The Polish nation has often been erased and occupied. There has been a constant transformation to the idea of the nation. The appearance of Miranda from *The Tempest* also reverberates with a similar idea about the nation. Polish nation was wiped out and re-emerged in the opinion of many European diplomats. The introduction of an omniscient creator, Miranda, alludes to the idea of the many dictatorial powers that ruled over the nation. The creation of the island by the vocal command and its instant destruction by yet another command is a reference to the fragile nature of the country. Poland became independent with the shrewd political motives of the many rulers, but they were short-lived as the fate of the nation often resided with the dictates of the rulers.

Milosz's mythological universe serves the purpose of producing a pseudo-historical origin. Lyndon Davies in the essay "Orpheus, Eurydice, Blanchot: Some Thoughts on the Nature of Myth and Literature", discusses the power of mythology in

creating an origin story: “The pictorial energy of myth coupled with the irresistible dream of the authentic remains still, as it has done throughout history, one of the prime motivational drivers of human behaviour both mischievous and sage” (Burnett et.al 213). Mythical power holds a prime role in the creation of a community. Joanna Wawrzyniak, in her book *Veterans, Victims, and Memory: The Politics of the Second World War in Communist Poland*, published in 2015, states that “myth serves cognitive, integrative, communicative, and legitimising functions, and in modern times is often advanced by the state” (22). In politically contested states, successful governments attempt to create a vision of the past in which they are portrayed as legitimate leaders.

“The Separate Notebooks” is a long poem which attempts to formulate a mythical origin to the personal experience of the poet. The historical lines blur in this poem where myths and fiction take over the narration. The poem is divided into two parts: “A Mirrored Galley” and “The Wormwood Star”. The poem fuses together verse and prose. One of the recurring features in the long poems of Milosz is the dialectical tension in theme and style and between different places, especially his native homeland and his adopted nation, inward and outward poetry and prose and verse. “The Separate Notebook” is a highly autobiographical work, yet the poem elevates the biographical material to the universal rank of the vision of human existence. The poem also features accounts of many historical figures, but their lives are fictionalised, blurring the dimension of history and myth. The poem is an attempt to go back to the roots. The temporal disjuncture and primordial depictions are narrative tools to achieve this effect. J.P Vernant in “Mythical Aspects of Memory in Greece” states that “recollection does not seek to situate events in a temporal frame but to reach the depths of being, to discover

the original, the primordial reality from which the cosmos issued and which makes it possible to understand becoming as a whole" (1). The mythic universe created in the poem is an attempt to reclaim the past.

The long descriptive prose section of the poem introduces two historical characters. The lives of these individuals coincide with the historical events of the poet's life. The poet mythicises the historical account. The section deals with a historical chronicle the speaker has found in his childhood home. The chronicle details the personal history of a Polish pianist and his sister, and it talks about how the space, time and politics of the place are intertwined with the lives of the people. The two are Pan Eugene and Mrs Jadwiga Izycka. The speaker uses the phrase 'barely legible' to describe the chronicle symbolising the difficulty of finding the roots of the speaker. The two characters are the Polish nobility living in the then-Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which today forms part of Poland, Lithuania, and other Eastern European countries. The location of the two characters is the Russian border in Belarus. The section deals with the issue of identity, and it talks about how religion, language, and geographical boundaries help create one's identity. The first conflict the pianist, Eugene, encounters is the issue of his divided self as a Polish-speaking Lithuanian from Belarus, which is part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, in St Petersburg, Russia. He works as a lawyer in the country, but his divided background comes into question in Russia and therefore, he comes back to his native country and lives a hermit's life. Religion also plays an important role for the character as Russia is predominantly orthodox, and he comes from a catholic background, and life in Petersburg conflicted with his religious identity. The most important aspect of his identity is the choice of language. He vowed not to

use the Russian language ever again and conversed with the locals and family in Byelorussian and Polish. With his Russian friends, he communicated in French.

From the prose chronicle, the poem then makes a sudden shift in space and time and reaches the Californian shores in the present day. The landscape appears to be grim and desolate. Castles and green landscapes occupied the landscape in the previous section. However, the Californian landscape is featured by "greyish clay, dried up creek beds, rocks assembled like Jurassic reptiles" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 364). The speaker also says that he did not choose California; rather, it was given to him. He defines the spirit of the place in the section and the spirit is scorched emptiness. The next section is again in the prose format, and it moves back to the chronicle of Pan Eugene and his sister. After Eugene's death, his ghost continues to haunt the castle and the people around it.

"The Separate Notebook" is a chronicle that is not exclusive to the biography of the poet. The poem also deals with the history of the power struggles of Europe. The poet is not a chronicler of the events but he fuses together history with myth. In the final sections of the poem's first part, we can see an amalgamation of biography and history in the guise of mythology.

> His name was Sam Hill and he was a millionaire. On the windy heights where the Columbia River, flowing down out of the Rocky Mountains, had carved canyons for itself in volcanic layers from the time of the Pliocene, and where, a little later, men traced a border between central Washington and central Oregon, he started to build an edifice in 1914 which was to serve as a museum honouring his friend Maria of

> Romania. A beauty on the throne, eldest daughter of the Duke of Edinburgh and Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and of the Great Princess of Russia, Mary, thus cousin to both King George and Czar Nicholas II, she was eighteen when, in 1893, she married Prince Ferdinand Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, the Romanian Crown Prince. It was rumoured that she had *une cuisse Iegere,* i.e., a light thigh. Whatever the truth was, Sam Hill named his building Maryhill, uniting her name to his, and the inauguration of the museum in 1926 took place with the active participation of the royal guest".
>
> ……
>
> Here is the island Kauai, an emerald set among white clouds,
> Warm wind in the palm leaves, and I think of snow
> In my distant province where things happened
> That belong to another, inconceivable life. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 373-374)

The section, which is in both verse and prose, talks about the life of Queen Marie of Romania and the museum in Maryhill dedicated to her memory. Queen Marie was born to the Duke of Edinburgh and Grand Duchess of Russia. She was married to the prince of Romania, thus culminating in an alliance that brokered political connections between different prominent houses in the entirety of Europe. After the demise of her husband, she maintained strong political authority in the turbulent times of the world wars. The connections do not end in Europe but rekindle in the American continent with the building of a museum in her memory in Maryhill, a location on the border between

Washington and central Oregon. The museum contains artefacts and portraits predominantly from the Czar's family. The next section of the poem details the difficulties of displacement. The section takes place in the United States and the speaker discusses the difficulty of talking about the sufferings he has endured. The speaker juxtaposes his present-day reality in the new country with the memory of his past. The speaker can recollect the landscape of his past in the line "I think of snow in my distant province" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 374), but he cannot translate the experience into words which can be inferred in the lines "where things happened that belong to another, inconceivable life" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 374). The spatial disconnect that occurred in the life of the speaker created a break in memory or, rather, a feeling of unspeakability.

The poetic universe of Milosz functions to create a mythological foundation for the Slavic people. Since the Grand Duchy was an empire of the past, it became the poet's responsibility to work against historical amnesia. The conquering forces have worked to divide the people on ethnic, linguistic and social backgrounds, and the repressive acts of the imperial powers have worked to crush down the unity of the people. It became imperative for the poet to chronicle a lineage for the people that encompasses myth, imagination and history. The mythological universe of Milosz works against forgetting. One of the finest examples of this mythological landscape is found in "From the Rising of the Sun". The poem refers to many cultural, historical and religious concepts and the progression of time and space is highly manipulative. The complex intertwining of verse and prose makes the poem even more ambiguous. The time in the poem is fluid as it oscillates between the past, present and future. There is a

constant shift in time as the poet retreats to memory and regains awareness of his presence. The space in the poem is also quite enchanting as if captivated by a magic spell of memory and recollection. The poetic universe encompasses his native Lithuanian reality coupled with imagination and landscape from folk stories and the present state of exile in California. The poem creates a fluid space-time in which the speaker navigates between different spaces and time. The poem begins in verse form, and prose soon overlaps many sections. The verse format makes way for factual descriptions and documental records. In many places in the poem, the prose part gives commentary and description for the verse part. The poem borrows from historical documents, encyclopaedias, and other texts.

"Diary of a Naturalist" is an excursion into nature searching for the lost self. The forest is a mirror image of the Garden of Eden and at the centre of it is the Tree of Knowledge. The primordial sense of the original sin is established in the lines and the expulsion from the garden can be equated both to the loss of the childlike innocence and the long exile of the poet. The section juxtaposes two landscapes that played an important role in the life of the speaker, the Lithuanian landscape and the North American landscape. The entire section is written in the form of a lucid dream. The first part of the poem, narrated in the first-person plural, shifts to the singular first-person when the speaker starts describing the American landscape. The 'we' and 'our' of the Lithuanian experience changes the individual's experience of America.

The third section is titled "Lauda", and it has the longest prose portion in the poem. The section deals with the biographical details of the speaker and his native land of Lithuania. The speaker spends a good amount of time digging up the etymological

details of the title of the section. The poem begins with the depiction of the Lithuanian landscape and moves forward with the memory of the speaker's baptism. The speaker gives fine details of the places and the socio-economic conditions of his native land in the verse part of the poem. Lush green pastures characterise the landscape and follow a rustic lifestyle, with church and religion playing an important role. The class division and hierarchy are visible in the lines where the speaker talks about his lineage to the nobility. The short verse part gives way to the longest prose part of the poem. The prose section begins by detailing the various meanings of the term, and the speaker concludes that in the poem, Lauda means nothing of that sort but is used to refer to the noble class of Lithuania. In order to substantiate his claim he furnishes documents that are written in Cyrillic script and go back centuries. He also provides the genealogy of his parents and an inventory of possessions. The poem then moves to a classroom setting where the speaker is a subject. The section also contains a poem "The Last Poor Bard of the Grand Duchee", by another Polish poet named Theodor Bujnicki. The poem talks about the Lithuanian land; though the land seems unpromising and hostile, the people hold an unbreakable connection towards it. The poem concludes by paying homage to a few important personalities who have worked for the development of Lithuanian literature and society. The poem is thus a detailed description, both in prose and verse, of his native land. It is a complex landscape created by both fictional and factual details. The poet creates a meta-realistic landscape that is neither completely real nor completely fictional.

The sixth part of the poem is "The Accuser". It is composed as a single long prose. The section begins with a reference to several poets. Chairomonte was an Italian

poet; Miomandre was a famous French novelist and translator; Petofi was a Hungarian poet and considered the national poet of the country; and Mickiewicz was a Polish poet and is considered a national poet in Poland, Lithuania and Belarus. The association with different poets from different countries forms the basis for a solidarity for a poetic identity. Milosz fuses together these historical figures into one poetic persona in the mythological narration. He also states that the younger generations are not interested in what has happened in the past. The poet hopes for a ritualistic purification that can cleanse the world of its sins, but he concludes the poem with a series of rhetorical questions, "a ritual of purification? Where? When? For whom?" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 325). The speaker and the world at large are disillusioned to the point that even the hope of a ritual that can cleanse them seems far-fetched.

The concluding section of the poem is titled "Bells in Winter". It is in a lengthy verse format that uses Latin quotes in it. The section begins in a dream-like landscape where the speaker imagines travelling through Transylvania's mountainous regions. At night, the speaker has a dream where he encounters a messenger of God cloaked in a Greek raiment; he promises the speaker the hope of salvation from the mercy of God for the entire human race. The speaker wakes up from the sleep and comes to his senses. He has never been to Transylvania nor received any message of deliverance from God. The speaker, now following the dream and the message, creates an invented story where he settles down in a literary lane with books and artefacts and meets the old woman named Lisbeth. The section then introduces the concept of apokatastasis. The concept literally means restoration and implies that salvation and returning to early spiritual innocence is possible for everyone. The speaker believes in the idea of apokatastasis

and names a few of the important people who believed in the same. Thus, the speaker believes that everything has two existences in time and one in which time does not exist. With this understanding of existence, the speaker talks about the bells on a frosty winter morning. The bells toll in the distance together with a series of many bells from different churches, which he names in the poem, and Lisbeth is on her way to mass and is seen in the communion of saints. The other members of the Communion of Saints are witches who were ducked and broken under the wheel till they confessed. The illusion concludes with the choirmaster singing the hymn in Latin. The poem then takes a turn and moves in time and space to the present day in San Francisco. The speaker is then reminded of the apocalypse even though he is unaware of when it would happen. He says it would happen "perhaps in some other year or the sixth millennium or maybe even next week" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 331) but the only thing that can save him is the reverence he has exhibited in his life. The poet does not endorse the possibility of redemption in the poem, which ends on a grim note. He states that he will be judged for his despair as he cannot understand the truth of restoration.

"With Trumpets and Zithers" is a long poem written by Milosz. It is divided into eleven sections. The poem is an inquiry into the unconscious. Robert A Segal, in the article "Freudian and Jungian Approaches to Myth: The Similarities" says, "Myth, like other aspects of culture, serves at once to reveal and to hide its unconscious contents" (107). He also argues that myth serves not only to release the repressed but also helps to sublimate those drives; thus, it serves not just the ego and superego but also the id. In the poem we can see the working of the unconscious. The poem does not have a singular coherent voice, and each section deals with seemingly unrelated topics. The

poetic universe created in the poem features a chaotic organisation of historical, contemporary, physical, metaphysical and mystical landscapes. The poem does not feature any singular subjects, nor does the subject matter carry forward to the next section. The poem does not follow a clear path nor describe the progression of a distinct argument. Even in the same section or in the same sentence the meaning is often disjunctive or dialectical. It is more of a spiritual frenzy that can be observed in the grand scheme of the poem.

The poem begins with the mention of a "gift", which is not named. They are naming categories and presenting them to the world in a limited scope of language. The first line consists of two sentences which stand drastically unrelated. The poet then creates a chaotic universe that consists of natural, mythological and historical elements. The speaker attempts to catalogue all these elements, including natural elements like rivers and valleys and historical elements like conch shells of Celts and Norman boats; he also talks about the Elysium, the island of Calypso.

> I address you, my consciousness, when in a sultry night shot with lightnings the plane is landing at Beauvais or Kalamazoo.
>
> And a stewardess moves about quietly so not to wake anyone while the cellular wax of cities glimmers beneath.
>
> I believed I would understand but it is late and I know nothing except laughter and weeping. (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 225)

The second section deals with the subject "I", a passenger on a flight. The passenger has an aerial view of the city; from that distant viewpoint, all the cities seem the same. There can also be a biographical element in the lines as the two cities hinted

in the section are Kalamazoo and Beauvais, one in the U.S. and one in France. These are the two countries in which the author sought asylum while fleeing from the communist regime in Poland. The section is addressed to the speaker's own consciousness as it is mentioned at the beginning of the lines. The panoramic perspective established in the beginning by offering a viewpoint from the sky symbolises the detached view of consciousness. In the following lines, the speaker says he knows "nothing except laughter and weeping" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 225), which is complementary to the primal feelings of pleasure and pain. Then, the speaker is brought into a timeless framework where beginning and end disappear and time traps into an everlasting presence. We can also see the ego disappearing in "architectural spirals, lines of a crystal and in the sounds of instruments" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 225). In the section, the poetic ego returns to the background, and the consciousness takes centre stage.

The third section revolves around an amorous encounter. The setting of the section is the historical civilisation of Mesopotamia, which the presence of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers can deduce. The section presents an erotic image of a beautiful young girl surrounded by people with animalistic desires. The scene is a pure depiction of an epicurean feast with men "drinking wine in from a traveller's goblet, fingers ripping at meat and juice trickles on greying beard" (Milosz, *New and Collected Poems* 226). The beautiful maiden is presented amidst this savage feast. The section presents a contrast of innocent beauty against the savage desires of the flesh. The perverse feast continues in the next section. The decadence and the desires of the flesh carry forward in the section. The poet introduces the reader to a group of Slavic devils

in the lines, and the animalistic vigour and the decadent fervour of the place fill up the lines. One element that binds together the two sections is the presence of music. The two sections echo the music of debauchery, and the speaker involves himself in the musical frenzy. The animalistic pleasure of the Id is unleashed in the two sections. The fourth section has sensual imagery of sexual perversions. Robert A Segal discusses the functioning of myths as a medium for realising repressed drives in "Freudian and Jungian Approaches to Myth: The Similarities."

> Because the Freudian unconscious is composed of repressed, antisocial drives, myth releases those drives in a disguised way, so that neither the myth maker nor the reader of the myth ever confronts its meaning and thereby the myth maker's or the reader's own true nature. Myth, like other aspects of culture, serves at once to reveal and to hide its unconscious contents. (107)

The fifth section is the shortest in the poem. The section deals with childhood. The memory in the section deals with images from childhood, the encampments of crickets, wooden carts and homeland. The penultimate section of the poem welcomes the readers into a dream space. The space is inhabited by hairy four-legged animals and resembles a vast dense forest. The first part of the section talks about the animalistic lifestyle where people roam around all four at night. The later part of the section deals with the primal call to return to the bipedal. One is reminded of evolution and psychology in the section on the evolution from quadrupeds to bipedal and the primal call of consciousness. The final section begins with the image of a coelenterate, a common term for coral animals, true jellies, sea anemones, sea pens, and their allies—

the subject I frequently make an appearance in the section. There is a strict divide between the “I” and what is outside of him and there is a spiritual attempt to reconcile between this self and the transcendental. This attempt is ongoing, and the speaker feels that “it would be done better one day”. The speaker acknowledges his inability to do that in the poem.

“With Trumpets and Zithers” presents a chaotic ecstatic shadowed by a tinge of sorrow. We see incoherently distributed voices of animalistic pleasure echoing with a sense of loss. There is an underlying duality in the poem that reflects the chaos and the despair. One of the underlying themes that I could discern in this long poem is the Freudian working of the human mind. The driving pleasure principle of the Id, the attempts of the ego, and the navigation of the super-ego are apparent in the lines. The many animalistic desires and the search for perverse pleasure are evident in many of the lines. There is also a dialectical force acting in the poem that attempts to reconcile this pleasure with the reality principle. The many allusions to animalistic desires can symbolise the primal instinct of human nature. Many primordial features run throughout the lines: the music that echoes in many sections, the mythical and magical imprints and the presence of ancient civilisations. The poem does not have a linear progression or a coherent voice. It does feel like a circular structure where the beginning and the end could be more evidently discernible.

4.6 Conclusion

Milosz uses mythologies as a narrative technique to discuss the traumatic experience of the Polish people. It provides the cultural background and narrative form in which the experience finds an expression. The creation of the mythical universe in

Milosz functions to create an origin for the Polish people. The multiple erasures of the nation by the various occupying powers resulted in the need to create a history of the people. The use of myths also is used as a narrative structure in which the trauma is expressed. The use of mythological narratives gives the cultural context in which the speaker can talk about the traumatic past. The blending of historical and mythical elements provides depth to the portrayal of trauma.

The mythical landscape of Milosz's poetic universe expands beyond the conventional, transcending temporal and spatial boundaries. Many mythical rivers cascade his poetic landscape. They perform the function of depicting the complicated understanding of time and memory. Crisis/ catastrophe is often the foundation of societies, and by using the idea of foundational myths, Milosz discusses the origins and kinship of the people. Milosz's use of mythologies in the expression of trauma provides a unique lens to interpret the workings of traumatic experience on the individual and the collective.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1 Exploration of Trauma through Geography, Censorship and Mythologies

Literary trauma manifests in Milosz's poetry through a profound reflection on geography, censorship, and mythologies. The thesis brings out the traumatic experience in the poetry through a detailed analysis of the impact of geography, censorship and myths. The geographic and mental landscape that the poet navigated became the centre stage on which the historical traumatic events unfolded. Censorship, both external and internal, informs the social and cultural contexts of his poetry. It also reveals the poet's self-censorship in the face of oppressive regimes. Milosz also weaves together mythological narratives to elucidate the enduring impact of trauma on the individual and societal consciousness. The thesis makes sense of the traumatic experience by situating these three tangents on the cultural landscape of the region.

Places function as metaphors for historical wounds. Milosz's poetry is deeply rooted in his experience of devastating historical events. Places and geographical features appearing in Milosz's poetry remind one of the losses. The geographic landscape in his poetry is a symbolic stage for the scars of historical events. The overarching traumatic experience in Milosz's poetry is the loss of nationhood, exile, and the horrors of the world war. This trauma is well established in connection to places. Milosz creates his homeland through the memory of various geographical features. His idea of homeland goes beyond political and historical context and returns to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. However, the Duchy does not exist today, and the only way to

reclaim it is through the geographical remnants. Thus, in his poems, the homeland accessible through a connection with forests, rivers and other geographical features. In the ever-changing political and historical landscape, these features remain as singular constants, and reverting to them helps the readers understand the trauma of loss. The trauma of exile is also depicted in the poems with a reference to the landscape. The constant displacement of the poet is visible in the marked change in geography. The readers encounter shifting landscapes in the poetic universe, and they open the wounds of displacement. The changing landscape becomes the lens through which the impacts of the trauma of the individual and the community are observed. The use of various geographic features, unique to certain landscapes, reiterates the trauma of forced movements. The often-contrasting juxtaposition of native and foreign landscapes establishes the traumatic experience of displacement. Traversing the lush forests of Europe and the barren lands of Californian deserts, the poetic persona communicates the trauma of exile to the audience. The constant movements in the poet's life are reflected in the changing landscapes of the poetic universe.

Place appears in Milosz's poetry in the form of various cities. Cities, both real and imagined, appear repeatedly in his poetry. Cities harbour the trauma of historical violence unfolding in their territories. The material destruction of the war and the trauma associated with it is brought out in the images of the city. Cities function as reference points to unravel the trauma in Milosz's poetry. The material destruction of the city extends to the lives of the people. In his poems, the place becomes a traumatic landscape, a site of remembrance and re-enactment. Cities are anchoring points in Milosz's poetic universe, which function as material signifiers which aid in depicting

the traumatic experience. They bear the scars of historical upheavals. The appearance of Warsaw, Paris, Wilno, and Sacramento has significant importance. Warsaw and Wilno stand as memorials of the World Wars. These two cities were ravaged by the war, and the poet uses them as central characters to express the trauma of destruction. The cities also make a close connection to the idea of home. Milosz has spent considerable time at these places, and they become a repository of memories.

Thus, in the poetry of Milosz, the place becomes a repository of memories of past atrocities. The physical environment speaks about the personal and cultural histories embedded in the landscape. Place functions as a vehicle for the expression of the traumatic experience. Traumatic events do not happen in isolation, and place and geographical features provide the cultural backdrop in which the meaning of the experience can be unravelled. Reading Milosz's poems through the lens of place and geographical features thus offers a unique perspective on the trauma embedded in the material landscape. Milosz creates an idea of homeland, the trauma of loss, exile, and wars around the spatiality of the region, and by reading the poems against this background, the readers can better understand the traumatic experience. Though the place carries the memory of the scars, it also offers space for reconciliation.

Censorship, both internal and external, runs as a thematic and structural undercurrent in Milosz's poetry. The long history of censorship in the region had a remarkable influence on the development and working of Polish literature which developed a very nuanced language and literary techniques to communicate with the audience. Polish identity and nationalism were seen as detrimental forces that would undermine the authority of the occupying forces. The resilience of the Polish people

became visible through arts, literature, and politics. Milosz addresses the trauma of censorship through his works. The working of the governmental censoring mechanism, the techniques employed by the writers to circumvent the censor, and the constant inner censorship the writers had to adhere to are visible in the works of Milosz.

The trauma of censorship encountered in the life and works of Milosz emanates from the external censoring and banning of his works and the internal repression the authoritative regimes subjected to the self. The historical and political context of censorship in the region provides an understanding of the traumatic experience of the poet. The political divisions of the Grand Duchy and the subsequent attempts to quell the rebellious fervour in art and politics resulted in the implementation of censorship. This history of censorship, coupled with the surveillance and artistic oppression of the post-war Polish Republic, is the political and cultural background in which Milosz wrote his poems. The insistence of socialist realism as the only literary trope had a detrimental effect on the poet. This meant the death of artistic freedom. The chapter brings out the ramifications of standing up against the oppressive regimes and its impact on literary output. The trauma of censorship in Milosz's works can be better understood when it is read against this historical background.

One of the distinguishing features of traumatic knowledge is the inherent difficulty in communicating it; by imposing censorship over artistic endeavours, the traumatic expression is inhibited on a deeper layer. The invisible yet omnipresent grip of the censor creates the internal censoring mechanism in the writer. Thus, censorship creates a multi-layered hindrance to the expression of traumatic experiences. The working of inner censorship comes out with a close reading of the poetry. The struggle

of the poet to communicate his experience to the readers and the prohibition, both internal and external, becomes the driving force in the poems. It is this struggle, the labour to grapple with the traumatic knowledge and communicate it using language, that the chapter unfolds. This conflict is deeply grounded in the material landscape of the subject. The cultural value of the place determines whether certain emotions are allowed or disallowed to be expressed. Censorship and trauma work on the plane of what is socially allowed to be expressed and what is not. The censoring mechanism curtails the free movement of emotions. Milosz's poetry is a tremendous display of courage against repressive regimes; it reveals the workings of inner censorship, defies authoritarian powers and showcases a brilliant display of the effects of censorship on the individual and society. Milosz's work, with the help of the Aesopian language, navigates the external restrictions. The subversive potential of language functions not only to echo the trauma of the external censor but also to speak about the internal censor. The chapter unravels the trauma of the deeply personal struggle of inner censorship and the forced silencing of voices under an oppressive regime.

Milosz's life and works are a testimony of the time. The working of the trauma of censorship becomes visible when the poetry is situated in the cultural landscape of the authoritarian regime. The ideological conditioning, the forced censoring and the fear of self-preservation are the tools of violence meted out to the poet. Moreover, by locating the trauma in the larger cultural contexts of artistic interference and governmental oppression the meaning of the trauma can be examined. This chapter intertwines with the biographical and publication details as censorship delves deeply into the life and writings of the poet.

Mythological narration, a prominent feature in Milosz's poetry has been employed to express the traumatic experience. In Milosz's poetry, myths are a vehicle of traumatic expression, a foundation story, and a testimony against forgetting. Milosz's poetry intertwines myth and literary trauma and creates a profound exploration of the human experience. Myth is the lens through which the poet examines the collective human consciousness. The timeless feature of myths and their linguistic structure make them a suitable vehicle for traumatic representation.

Milosz employs mythical narration as a tool for the expression of profound personal and collective wounds. The traumatic experience shatters ordinary speech and calls for a specialised medium of language to communicate to the audience. Milosz's poetry brilliantly uses myths to communicate the experience to the reader. Myths act as a structural and cultural medium through which the meaning of trauma becomes comprehensible. Milosz's poetry creates a unique parallel between mythological narratives and his contemporary reality. The experience of war and the holocaust are events of great magnitude and warrant a detailed narration. Resorting to a mythical narrative is a technique employed by authors to communicate the experience of the Holocaust. Myths compensate for the perceived lack of authorial authority. Milosz, in his poetry, employs different mythical stories to provide a narrative for the experience of the World War. The laments of Antigone, Daphne and Chloe echo the horrors of the war. The use of mythical narratives eases the difficulty in the expression of trauma.

Homeland as an imagination appears frequently in his poetry. The repeated erasure of his nation forced the writers to create linguistic and cultural bonds for the people. Milosz's poems perform the task of a foundation myth. Poetry creates a mythic

historical universe which fuses together elements of myth, fiction and history. A crisis or catastrophe of the community surrounds the origin or the renewal of the myth. For generations, the crisis of the Polish question has been the focal point for the Polish people. Milosz, in his attempt to create a foundational myth, addresses the loss of homeland. Weaving together myths, history and fiction becomes a conscious attempt by the poet to communicate the trauma of the loss. Myths provide the access to bring together a communal solidarity. With the aid of mythical narration, Milosz marks the people's deep relationship with the nation and the trauma associated with the loss of nationhood. The poetry of Milosz performs the function of myth-making.

Milosz juxtaposes real cities with mythical landscapes, thereby creating a mythological universe where the horrors of the war find an outlet. He also creates a mythical universe in which the mythical figures and events correspond to the lived experience of the people. His poetry weaves together the material and mythical universe. Rivers, mythical and real, make a repeated appearance in the poems. Rivers have been used as an image of home, a tool to circumvent the sensor, and a remainder against forgetting. Lethe features repeatedly in the poem and this mythical river of forgetting situates the traumatic experience outside the framework of linear time. According to Mircea Eliade, in Greek mythology, Lethe is powerless against certain individuals even when they drink from it, and they succeed in recovering the past (335). Lethe performs the function of retrieving the traumatic knowledge. The timeless presence of traumatic knowledge is brought out in the image of the mythical rivers that exist outside the linear function of time. The idea of a homeland is created around the image of various rivers.

The thesis reads trauma in Milosz's poetry from the unique perspective of geography, censorship and mythologies. Since these three tangents are deeply connected to the cultural background of the poet analysing them can help the readers to understand the traumatic experience better. The loss of homeland, exile, World War, and ideological oppression are traumatic experiences in the poet's life, and they are directly visible in the tangents of the study. Milosz's poems are deeply immersed in the geographical features of the region and reading them in association with trauma can provide a better understanding of its meaning. Likewise, censorship as personal experience followed Milosz in his career, his choice of language, ideological differences, and the working of the repressive governments played traumatic part in his life and career. Mythological narration is an important part of his poetry. Studying the presence of various myths also helps the reader understand the trauma conveyed. Thus, the thesis provides a unique understanding of trauma in Milosz's poetry.

5.2 Challenges of Reading Poetry in Translation

Poetic style and form are essential tools for communicating with the audience. The choice of diction, syntax, and figurative language participate in the transfer of the meaning. The individual's voice resonates in the poetic style. The poetic form also participates in communicating the experience. The structural arrangement and breaks in the forms are essential elements in traumatic expression. Thus, reading the poems in translation was a significant challenge for this thesis. The meaning and gravity of the words alter when they are translated into a different language. Since the thesis attempts to situate the experience in the cultural context of the region, reading in translation was the most significant challenge. The availability of works on the style and form of the

works by Polish scholars has been extremely helpful in situating the poems. The narrative gaps and breaks created by the use of syntax and structure are important in the expression of the traumatic experience and reading of the poems in translation limits the scope of the thesis. Many studies on Milosz were in Polish, and there, too, the issues of translation persist.

5.3 Scopes of Future Engagements

There are unexplored terrains in Milosz's works. The thesis is focused primarily on the author's poetic pieces. Milosz has penned verse novels, articles and nonfiction. Milosz revived the interest in verse novels. They exhibit a profound fascination with images. They also carry significant biographical elements. A future study on the non-poetic pieces would help in understanding how these texts explore the theme of trauma through geography, censorship and mythologies. Milosz experimented greatly with style and verse novels are a testimony to it. A future project in the style and form of Milosz's works would unravel how it is employed in communicating traumatic experiences with the audience.

The thesis, in its exploration of the trauma, captures the engagement of individual experience with the collective through the medium of poetry. The poetic persona performs the task of bridging the individual experience to the communal. The personal loss of homeland and exile, the atrocities of the world war and the violence of the state are craft fully connected to the collective experience of the nation. The trauma is intricately woven into the fabric of geography, censorship and mythologies. These literary registers become the repository of traumatic experiences. By situating the

trauma in the cultural landscapes, the thesis unravels its profound impact on the individual and the community.

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