THE CRITICAL RECEPTION OF CZESŁAW MIŁOSZ
AND JOSIF BRODSKY IN ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

by

BOŻENA KARMOWSKA

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Department of \textit{Slavonic Studies}

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

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ABSTRACT

The study describes and analyses the process of critical reception of Czesław Milosz and Joseph Brodsky in English-speaking countries. The approach of the first five chapters, while theoretically informed, is primarily narrative and descriptive. The first two chapters present the reception processes in their chronological development, focusing on the evolution of critical interest, categories of description and contextual factors and show that the reception of the two poets has been substantial and of considerable intrinsic interest. While contextual elements played a crucial role in the early stages of the reception, the text gradually became the main focus of critical interest. This development was, however, complicated by the problem of translation described in the fourth chapter. The study also shows that using a variety of techniques, examined in the third chapter, Milosz and Brodsky influenced the reception of their works. Outlined in the fifth chapter growing interest in the East European poetry, and connected with it descriptive formulas based on the experience of the poet, provided a significant literary context for the reception of Milosz and Brodsky and allowed to examine the rising interest in the text of their literary works.

The analytical part examines the mediating role of translators and critics, treating them as an interpretive community. The analysis shows that the aesthetic response to literary works was based for years on the contexts. However, in the later stages artistic features of the text came more frequently to the critical
attention and the literary text began to play a controlling role over the critical descriptions. Finally, in the conclusion, Fish’s concept of interpretive community and Jauss’s concept of horizon of expectations, the notions of the reader-response and reception theories used in the course of the study, are examined from the point of view of their heuristic value for the description and analysis of the actual process of reception. The conclusion also outlines some indication of combining them with the notions of aesthetics object (Mukarovsky), common memory (Lotman), semiotics of culture (Lotman and Uspensky) and Tomashevsky’s view of the role of "the legend of the author".
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ................................................................. ii

Acknowledgements ...................................................... iv

INTRODUCTION ............................................................ 1

Chapter 1. THE CRITICAL RECEPTION OF CZESŁAW MIŁOSZ .......... 9

Chapter 2. THE CRITICAL RECEPTION OF JOSIF BRODSKY .......... 87

Chapter 3. METHODS OF SELF-PRESENTATION ...................... 147

Chapter 4. TRANSLATION AND THE RECEPTION PROCESS ........ 187

Chapter 5. MIŁOSZ AND BRODSKY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE
             RECEPTION OF EAST EUROPEAN POETRY ............... 234

Chapter 6. ANALYSIS OF THE RECEPTION
             OF MIŁOSZ AND BRODSKY ................................ 263

CONCLUSION ............................................................... 320

WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED ........................................ 335
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INTRODUCTION

The post World War II division of the world along political, ideological and economic lines resulted in a considerable politicization of Western responses to cultural developments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, including developments in the sphere of literature. Interest in Russian and East European writers was often (at least initially) the result of political factors, especially in the case of writers who had incurred the displeasure of their governments and suffered persecution for their political activity or views (such as imprisonment or exile). Political factors and circumstances often obscured the intrinsic literary and philosophical interest of a writer's work, resulting in a one-sided, superficial, or distorted reception. At the same time the political motivation did help to stimulate interest in East European literature to a degree unprecedented in the history of cultural relations between the Western world and its East European periphery. By analyzing the reception of the works of Czesław Miłosz and Josif Brodsky this study deals, in effect, with the general problematics of the Western reception of East European and Russian writers in the postwar period. Recent political changes in Eastern Europe provide an especially suitable context for this kind of analytical study and underline its importance.

Miłosz and Brodsky have been chosen for several reasons. Both have been political exiles from their homelands; both are
major poets; both have received the Nobel Prize for literature; both have been extensively translated into English; and both have reflected acutely on the problems facing the writer in exile. There are, however, significant differences between them, which make the comparative study of their reception particularly fruitful. Of significance are differences in their poetics, in their major thematic preoccupations, in their understanding of the role of the poet in the contemporary world and in their treatment of mass media. Furthermore, they entered the West at different points in time (1951 and 1972 respectively) and their work was presented in different ways to English-speaking readers. Finally, one should mention the incomparably greater degree of knowledge in the English-speaking world of Russian, as compared with Polish literature.

Among the penalties incurred by the two poets at the hands of their respective governements, one of the most painful was the banning of their works in their homelands. The banishment, obviously, extended also to critical works devoted to their writings and in effect made Anglo-American criticism dealing with their writings not only of special significance but also quite challenging. The role Anglo-American criticism played in the development of each of the two poets constitutes another important difference between Miłosz and Brodsky. Since Miłosz had gained recognition in Poland as a major poet before his defection to the West, there was a continuing interest among Polish critics in his writings, not only abroad, but also in Poland where, even
after 1951, critical works devoted to him appeared in print during periods of relaxation of censorship or, later, in the publications not controlled by the state. Moreover, at the time of his defection Miłosz was already a mature poet of considerable achievement.

Brodsky, at the time of his expulsion from the Soviet Union was at the beginning of his poetic career, and although he was already recognized as a promising young poet, his poetic achievements were not yet substantial. No collection of Brodsky's poems appeared in print in the Soviet Union before his exile (in fact, not until the late 1980s), and his work did not evoke an active interest among Russian critics for a considerable period of time.

Western (primarily Anglo-American) criticism played a somewhat different role for Brodsky than it did for Miłosz. In the late 1970s a number of critical works by Polish critics appeared in translation in English-speaking countries; also articles by critics of Polish origin living in the West, which were published occasionally in 1970s and 1980s in English-language periodicals, had an impact on the Western reception of Miłosz's works. Brodsky's works, in contrast, were promoted in the West almost exclusively by non-Russian critics and until the early 1990s the Western reception of his works developed independently of the reception by Russian readers. Thus it was Western criticism that brought Brodsky the high international recognition and prestigious literary prizes; it was also Western
criticism that contributed significantly to Miłosz's success, including the Nobel Prize. These prizes, in turn, had an impact on the subsequent interest in their writings among readers and critics in their homelands.

Since most English-speaking readers could not read Miłosz and Brodsky's poetry in the original (except for the few texts they wrote in English), translation played a most crucial role in the reception process of both poets. The two poets, who reflected acutely on the question of translation, differed quite significantly in their approach to the translation of their works. Translators also faced different problems in translating Miłosz and Brodsky's poems because of the very different poetics of the two poets.

Miłosz and Brodsky's strategies -- aimed to make their work available as well as to stimulate and facilitate its reception -- are important from the point of view of the critical reception of their works. Especially significant is their work with translators and their "approval" (or rejection) of translations and their own attempts to provide literary backgrounds and contexts to their works. My analysis of these strategies is based on Miłosz and Brodsky's interviews, essays, editorial activities and public readings in addition to their activities as translators or co-translators, critics, anthologists and academics.

One of the major differences in the reception of the two poets concerns the great disparity in the knowledge of the
Russian and Polish poetic traditions as well as the modern Polish poetry in the West. Polish poetry was almost unknown in the English-speaking world until the late 1960s when it gained the critics' and readers' increasing interest. The successful entry of postwar Polish poetry into the English-speaking "reader's market" was partly due to Miłosz's activities as translator and promoter of Polish poets in the West, but it became, at the same time, one of the major elements which helped to familiarize Western readers with Miłosz's own poetry. In the opinion of many critics, postwar Polish poetry along with the poetry of other East European nations, including Miłosz and Brodsky's writings, has had a considerable impact on contemporary poetry written in English and may be said to have altered its existing order (to recall a phrase of Eliot's).

The focus of my study is not the literary text itself, that is Miłosz and Brodsky's literary writings, but the critical responses to their works. Therefore, my work involves an analysis of critical texts published in English about Miłosz and Brodsky and their writings. In general, I do not evaluate these texts for their quality. Rather I treat them as documents which show how the "interpretive community" has approached and interpreted their literary work. By critical text I understand a reasoned discussion of a literary work, an activity of classification, analysis, interpretation, aesthetic judgement and estimation of the work's likely effect on the readers. Critical texts vary according to schools of criticism and, what is more important for
this study, in the way in which they approach the literary work. Besides literary and scholarly criticism there is also a category of criticism often relegated to the margins because of its non-scholarly character or interests that go beyond the discussion of specific literary works. The latter frequently touches upon problems that may be only marginal to the literary text. It includes book reviews and critical articles that aim at promoting or evaluating specific literary works from the point of view of their potential interest to the reader. Thus the category of non-academic criticism comprises a variety of texts that sometimes are difficult to compare. In general, however, it should be noted that while academic criticism is directed at the specialists in the field of literature and focuses on the artistic, formal or thematic features and values of the text, non-academic critical texts are directed at a more general readership and focus on elements which can evoke an aesthetic response on the part of the reader.

My study consists of six chapters. The first and second provide a survey of the reception process of Miłosz and Brodsky in the context of Western knowledge of Polish and Russian poetry, changes in the politically oriented interest in their writings, the increasing availability of their poetry in translation and the growing recognition in English-speaking countries of their respective poetic achievements. The third chapter deals with the methods of self-presentation of Miłosz and Brodsky. The impact of the self-presentation techniques on the reception process is
described and analyzed with special attention to the differences in the Western and East European conceptions of the role of the poet in the contemporary world. The fourth chapter deals with the availability of Miłosz and Brodsky's poetry in English and the quality of translations. The control that both poets assumed over the translation of their poetry (selection, evaluation of quality, co-authorship of translations) is discussed in the context of the more general problems arising from differences between the languages, literary traditions, formal features and the cultural contexts of the respective literatures. The fifth chapter is devoted to the impact East European poetry has had in English-speaking countries beginning with the 1970s. The rising interest in the poetry of this region provides an interesting frame for the reception of both poets, revealing the respective roles of the thematic and artistic aspects of their writings in its development. In the sixth chapter I analyze the reception process from the point of view of the most important features in its development. The analysis focuses on the critics and their roles both as mediators and readers. The interest in the text of the literary works of both poets is related to the pre-textual reception and special attention is paid to the aesthetic reception and search for aesthetic values in the actual text and in the tension between their writings and various literary and non-literary contexts. The approach in the first five chapters, while theoretically informed, is primarily narrative and descriptive and may be described as empirical in character. The
analysis in the sixth chapter lays the groundwork for the conclusion, which deals with the implications of the evidential and analytical parts for reader-response and reception theories.
Chapter 1

THE CRITICAL RECEPTION OF CZESŁAW MIŁOSZ

I

At the time of his defection to the West, in 1951, Czesław Miłosz was virtually unknown as a poet outside his homeland, and his decision to become an exile carried considerable risks for his literary career. Moreover, he was facing a number of immediate problems as a consequence of his defection and the political situation at the time. For instance, during the first few months after his decision to remain in the West, Miłosz stayed hidden in the house of the Polish émigré monthly Kultura in Maison Laffitte (near Paris). As Zofia Hertz explained in an interview, the editors of the journal were afraid that Miłosz might be kidnapped by Polish secret agents and sent by force to Poland, since such things were known to have happened to defectors from the Soviet Bloc (Chruścińska 1994, 63). Another of the difficulties faced by Miłosz was his inability to obtain a visa to the United States, where his wife and children were residing at the time. And there was, of course, the down-to-earth question of earning a living in a foreign country where interest in Polish literature was minimal, and interest in the author, as far as it existed at all, was coloured by the strongly pro-
communist sympathies of the intellectual elite.

Ironically, it was actually Miłosz’s difficulties with his entry into the United States, and not his poetry that brought his name to the attention of American readers for the first time. These difficulties were used by the editors of some of the more liberal-minded American magazines as an argument against the controversial policy of senator McCarran to bar not only foreign communists but also ex-communists from entering the U.S. The example of Miłosz was used to support more substantive arguments against this policy and, although journalists did not refer directly to any of Miłosz’s literary writings, they described him as one of Poland’s "leading young poets and intellectuals." The author of the editorial in the March 10, 1952 issue of Life stated that

Czesław Miłosz is a poet, perhaps the best now writing in the Polish tongue. He has translated Shakespeare, Milton, Blake, Wordsworth, T.S.Eliot. He considers Polish culture to be part of Europe’s, a heritage of Rome. He never joined the C.P; nevertheless, he served the Communist government of Poland as cultural attaché of the embassy both in Washington and in Paris. When he was summoned to Warsaw in 1950 for reassignment he found that all Polish writers must henceforth copy Russian models. This decided him to make the break....In Paris he has written absorbing studies of the Communist and pro-Communist mind....Miłosz was "better off" under Communism (writers get the privileges of big bureaucrats) than he is now. (p.30)

There were other aspects of Miłosz’s defection which complicated his personal and literary situation. Although he was opposed to Communism, at least in its Soviet version, he did not want to be associated too closely with either Polish émigré or Western anti-Communism, both of which seemed to him to be based
on too simplistic a view of postwar reality. Many years later, in the book Rok myśliwego [A Year of the Hunter] (1991) Miłosz recalled: "I wrote The Captive Mind in 1951, which was perhaps the worst year to write it, as at the time the cult of Stalin was reaching its peak in France.... The writing of the book cost me too much to boast about it. It involved too many conditions." (p. 168) He further pointed out that he could not have written The Captive Mind had he chosen freedom in the United States:

because there Joe McCarthy organised a witch-hunt against the communists, and this threw the intellectual milieu into such a panic that naturally no self-respecting person could become associated with the anti-communist campaign, which was viewed as the beginnings of fascism in the United States.... "Ifs" are always risky, but I think that had I stayed in the United States, I could not have written The Captive Mind without finding myself ostracised by the only circles in that country on which I could count. It was actually worse in France, but I knew in advance that I would be isolated there....

This book trailed behind me for a long time. Because of it various Poles denounced me to the American embassy in Paris (since they considered it to be crypto-communist), and that meant no visa to the United States for nine years; it made me a "renegade" in the eyes of progressive circles, and what's more, something which certainly wasn't to my liking, it led to my being classified as a prose writer and a specialist in political science. Incidentally, it did not help me in getting an academic position, just the opposite. (p. 168-70)

In the foreword to the 1981 edition of The Captive Mind he recalled the French intellectual scene in the early 1950s as presenting a different kind of dilemma for an East European opponent of Soviet-style communism:

This book was written in 1951/52 in Paris at the time when the majority of French intellectuals resented their country's dependence upon American help and placed their hopes in a new world in the East, ruled by a leader of incomparable wisdom and virtue, Stalin. Those of their compatriots who, like Albert Camus, dared to mention a
network of concentration camps as the very foundation of a presumably Socialist system, were vilified and ostracized by their colleagues. When my book appeared in 1953, it displeased practically everybody. The admirers of Soviet Communism found it insulting, while anti-Communists accused it of lacking a clear-cut political stance and suspected that its author was a Marxist at heart. A lonely venture, it has been since vindicated by facts and defends itself well against both kinds of criticism. (p. v)

Highly conscious of the complexity of his predicament, personal as well as literary, Miłosz took into account the difficulties that had to be overcome if he was to share his knowledge about the actual situation of the intellectuals in the Soviet Bloc. Knowing perfectly well the extent to which European intellectuals were at the time under the influence of communist ideology, Miłosz did not launch a frontal attack against them, but rather, he tried to convey both concretely and in a reasoned manner the consequences of Communist ideology and power for intellectual and artistic life, realizing that the Western intellectuals were often idealists who mistook ideology and propaganda for reality. He was also aware of the differences between American and West European intellectuals. Reacting to Miłosz’s concerns about the Western intellectuals, Dwight Macdonald, one of the leading American publicists, in his review of The Captive Mind not only noted the gullibility of Western intellectuals but also drew a distinction between what he called the "innocence" of American intellectuals and the experience of their European counterparts:

Compared to Europeans, we Americans are an innocent, almost virginal people... The difference is not so much in morality as in experience, and never has the gap been wider than it is today.... It is simply that they have "been taught"
things which we have not -- things so unnatural and terrible that it is hard for us even to imagine them. (1953, 157)

Macdonald concluded his observations by re-emphasizing the experiential "innocence" of Americans in comparison with someone like Miłosz: "[M]odern history has simply passed us by, as though we were some aboriginal tribe placidly living its traditional, idyllic days in an out-of-the-way nook of the globe." (p. 158)

In these words of Macdonald, as will become apparent later, one may find the kernel of one of the initial formulas of the reception of Miłosz's poetry. The distinction, which the poet himself made in The Captive Mind, between those who had and those who did not have certain kinds of experience, became a persistent motif of Western criticism dealing with Miłosz's poetry, which was often viewed as an artistic response to the horrible experiences of the Nazi occupation and of Stalinism. These experiences drew a dividing line between the two worlds and in consequence between two kinds of poetry.

Because of the political situation resulting from the division of the world into two hostile camps, one controlled by the Western countries and the other by the Soviet Union, the questions raised by Miłosz in The Captive Mind were at the centre of Western public interest. The falling of the "iron curtain" cut off to a considerable degree the flow of information about the reality behind it. Moreover, the picture of life in the Soviet Bloc that one could obtain in the West was distorted by communist propaganda. At the same time, the tension generated by the Cold War heightened Western interest in the Soviet Union and in the
other countries of its Bloc. This interest, however, was mainly political and ideological and this, in turn, considerably influenced the reception of literature written by authors behind the "iron curtain". The Captive Mind was welcomed upon its publication in 1953 in English translation as a primarily political essay based on the real experiences of its author. The truth about the difficult situation of the author as a poet was seldom brought to the attention of the reader in its unpolticized form. The political interest in the questions discussed in the book overshadowed its literary aspects. The book was, in fact, classified not as literature but as political science, partly at least because of its genre, rarely used at the time. Dwight Macdonald, praising the form of the book as "admirably suited" to the subject, nevertheless noted that "Miłosz's book represents.... an unfamiliar and rather antiquated form - the speculative essay." (1953, 157) Moreover, given the fact that the general interest in Eastern Europe was at the time considerably weaker than the interest in the Soviet Union, critics scarcely noticed that The Captive Mind was not about the Soviet Union (at least not directly); but about Communist Poland.

The second book published by Miłosz soon after his defection was The Seizure of Power (British edition The Usurpers, 1955), a novel devoted to a theme similar to that of The Captive Mind. The novel brought the first Western literary prize to its author, but also reinforced the initial classification of Miłosz as a political writer. There were actually few reviews of the book,
and their focus was principally thematic and political. The anonymous author of a short notice "Fruits of Experience" in *Times Literary Supplement* wrote:

Mr. Miłosz suggests this period, of suspension and fear, where only the intellect and the spirit could render abnormality endurable, in a cool, studied prose that gives the incidents of the season of deception and treason the universality and illogical strangeness of nightmare. (1955, 393)

The classification of Miłosz as a political writer followed him for years, even after the publication of his poems in English translation. However, both books definitely contributed to the Western understanding of the Communist system and of Communist policies in the sphere of literature. A chapter of *The Captive Mind* entitled "Murti - Bing" was published in the United States in 1951 by the American Committee for Cultural Freedom and the book itself, or rather, a shorter version of it in French translation, was reviewed in English and American periodicals even before it reached the readers in English translation (*Times Literary Supplement*, 1952; *Books Abroad*, 1954). It is worth noting that critical texts about *The Captive Mind* as a whole merely developed some of Miłosz's own thoughts. The major points of many of the critical reviews and articles were principally a restatement of Miłosz's own words. One may even say that *The Captive Mind* itself suggested the major points of its reception.

Since Miłosz introduced himself in *The Captive Mind* as a poet, not surprisingly many critics pointed out this fact in their reviews. However, they made no attempt to acquaint the reader with his poetry. The fact that Miłosz was a poet was...
mentioned, it would seem, primarily to underscore the sincerity and sensivity of the author as well as his ability to appreciate traditional values. Albert Guerard wrote in 1953:

Milosz is a poet. The man of letters may count himself a leftist in his political sympathies, like Hugo or France; but the very nature of his work makes him a traditionalist. Even when he rebels against certain traditions, his language is a link with the past. He is an heir. His public are those who can appreciate -- through a liberal education -- traditional values. (p. 436)

In fact, although not a single line of Milosz's poetry was quoted in any of the reviews, in some critical texts Milosz was even called "an outstanding poet". Most of the reviewers repeated the same formulas consisting of a mixture of biographical and literary information. William P. Clancy wrote:

Czeslaw Milosz is a Polish poet. During the war he was active in the anti-Nazi underground. In 1946 he entered the diplomatic service of the new Polish government (although he was not then, or ever, a member of the Party) and was stationed at the Polish Embassy in both Washington and Paris as a member of the Cultural Affairs Division. He broke with the Warsaw government and since then has lived as an exile in Paris. (1953, 328)

Nicola Chiaromonte in the Partisan Review offered essentially the same formula in a somewhat elaborated form:

A Polish intellectual, an outstanding poet, and a member of the underground during the war, Czeslaw Milosz, when Poland became a People's Democracy, tried to come to terms with "naked reality" and even with the Diamat1... He finally gave up the attempt because he felt that to him, as an individual and a poet, truth and genuine emotion were more important than the infinite rhetorical possibilities (and the good

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1 Abbreviation for dialectical materialism. In his review Macdonald writes: "diamat, which is an impressive terminology all its own that only adepts can understand, claims to explain everything, is intellectually consistent, and can be manipulated as an intellectual tool in the most complicated and subtle ways."
The English-speaking reader became, from the very outset, familiar with the fact that Miłosz presented himself to the West using literary techniques different from those that brought him recognition at home. Moreover, the politically and ideologically motivated Western interest made Miłosz’s political views and affiliations of far greater importance for the English-speaking reader than his literary past and achievements. As far as can be ascertained, not a single poem of Miłosz’s was available in translation to the English-speaking reader at the time of the publication of his first two political books. What the critics presented was an image of Miłosz suggested by the writer himself in *The Captive Mind*, that is, an image of a poet, an intellectual, and a member of the underground during the war who tried honestly to cooperate with the Communist-led coalition government yet had to give up the attempt. This image was then used to underscore Miłosz’s special qualifications to write with insight about the situation of intellectuals in the Soviet Bloc; however, no attempt was made to find out what kind of a poet he was, as if the matter had no relevance to Miłosz’s story and

1Other reviews of *The Captive Mind* began:
The apologia of a Polish poet and writer who stayed on in his own country after its "liberation" by the Russians, served the regime as a member of the Polish Foreign Service and, finally, broke with it and escaped to France. (*Time Literary Supplement*, 1953)

Czesław Miłosz is a Polish poet who although not a Communist, served in the Red Polish diplomatic corps after the war and finally abandoned his country because Communist pressure for artistic conformity became unendurable. (*Atlantic Monthly*, 1953)
arguments. Thus, the very limited interest in and knowledge of Polish literature on the one hand, and the overriding political interest in the Soviet Bloc on the other, completely obscured the fact that Miłosz was first and foremost a poet.

As I have already mentioned in the Introduction, Polish poetry was almost completely unknown to British or American readers before the 1960s; works of Polish literature available in English translation were comprised mostly of prose, and even those were few in number and on the whole poorly translated. English-speaking readers (or Western readers in general) had very little interest in Polish literature. Miłosz was aware of the lack of interest in contemporary Polish poetry in the West even before he decided not to return to Poland. In his conversations with Renata Gorczyńska, recorded in the mid-1980s, the poet, recalling his first stay in the United States in the years 1946-50, said:

By that time I was trying to translate Różewicz into English -- his poems are easy to translate. When I showed them to Americans, no one understood them. But people liked those same poems when I printed them recently. A certain evolution has occurred in America -- some things can now be understood. But back then an even greater distance existed between Poland and America than does today. Those were two very different worlds. (Czarnecka and Fiut 1987, 142)

At the time contemporary Polish poetry was very seldom presented to the English-speaking reader, and when it was presented, as in the December 1955 issue of the British monthly The Twentieth Century, the fact seemed to require special justification. "You may have different views" -- wrote the editor of the monthly --
about how or why the poets, writing in Poland, come to say what they do and express sentiments that remind one of The Waste Land, but you will surely find something heartening in their warm and human language. It is very unlike the parrot cries we have come to expect from that part of the world. (p. 503)

The lack of interest in contemporary Polish poetry was accompanied by a lack of knowledge of Polish literary history and traditions.

The situation began to change very slowly in the 1960s. After a spurt of interest in the mid-1950s evoked by political unrest in Eastern Europe and especially the so-called "Polish October," translations of Polish poetry began to appear more frequently in British and American periodicals thanks to the efforts of Miłosz and of the young generation of Polish émigré-poets from the London-based Kontynenty group. The first contemporary Polish poets published in English translation during this new and more genuine phase of interest were Miron Białoszewski and Zbigniew Herbert. Renata Gorczyńska, in discussing Miłosz's efforts to translate contemporary Polish poetry into English and promote it in the West, observed:

It must be said that he did not spare his efforts to make Herbert's poetry known in the English-speaking countries. He presented him to English and American readers not only in his anthology, but also in a separate volume (Selected Poems) published by Penguin in a large edition. Miłosz took an interest in Herbert almost from the very moment of his arrival in California. Already in 1962 he published in the London Observer five of his poems in his own translation. (1992, 352)

Miłosz's efforts to promote Herbert in the English-speaking countries turned at some point against Miłosz himself. Recognized as a major poet, Herbert for a time overshadowed Miłosz the poet,
whose role became relegated to that of the translator of Herbert.

He did more for [Herbert's] fame than for his own. In effect, when Herbert came to the States, Miłosz was introduced at Herbert's poetry readings exclusively as Herbert's translator - clearly a paradoxical situation. But much of the fault lies with Miłosz-the-translator who neglected his own poetry. (1992, 352)

The turning point in the rise of a genuine and widening interest in contemporary Polish poetry in English-speaking countries is undoubtedly connected with the appearance of *Postwar Polish Poetry* (1965), an anthology of poems in Miłosz's own translation. The anthology was very well received by critics and the interest it generated in postwar Polish poetry resulted in a number of publications of selections of poems by Polish poets of the younger generation in several periodicals and magazines.\(^1\) In 1969 the first volume of poems by Tadeusz Różewicz (*Faces of Anxiety*, London and Chicago) appeared in English, translated and edited by Adam Czerniawski. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, mostly thanks to the efforts of Polish poets and translators from the Kontynenty group (A.Busza, B.Czaykowski, A.Czerniawski and J.Darowski) and to Czesław Miłosz, contemporary Polish poetry began to appear in representative selections in a number of journals. Moreover, some of the poets (foremost among them Z. Herbert and T. Różewicz) came to be known more widely. The publication of their poetry in individual volumes as well as in periodicals, provided an opportunity for a more general

\(^1\) It is significant that J.Peterkiewicz and Burns Singer's anthology *Five Hundred Years of Polish Poetry* (1960), which did not include contemporary poets, failed to have a similar impact on critics and readers.
introduction of Western readers to Polish literary traditions and to the contemporary situation of Polish poetry. It was in this atmosphere of growing interest in contemporary Polish poetry that the first translations of Miłosz's poems into English appeared in a number of periodicals. San Francisco Review Annual (1963) published "Not More" translated by Adam Czerniawski, Encounter (February 1964) published "Through Our Lands" in Miłosz's own translation, and Modern Poetry in Translation (1966), which presented several of Miłosz's poems with a short introductory note, were only some of the first publications. However, until 1973, when the first volume of Miłosz's poems in English translation appeared in the United States, the number of translations of Miłosz's poems published in periodicals remained relatively small, in fact, incomparably smaller than the number of translations of Różewicz's and Herbert's poems.

The explanation of the surprisingly small number of publications of Miłosz's own poems in English-language magazines, at a time when poetry written in Poland was being increasingly successful, cannot be sought exclusively in the fact that in the eyes of editors and critics Miłosz was principally a political writer and translator of postwar Polish poets. Adam Czerniawski, who was also very active in promoting Polish poetry, provides a more plausible explanation in his essay "'Writing and Translating During the Cold War in a Country of which I Know Something.'" He describes how, in 1966 he was asked by a prominent translator of Polish literature, Celina Wieniewska, to contribute translations
to an anthology which eventually appeared under the title *Polish Writing Today*. "It soon became clear -- writes Czerniawski -- that under no circumstances would [Wieniewska] countenance the publication of any work by Polish writers abroad on the grounds that English readers are interested only in what happens in Poland. She assured me however that the émigrés would merit a passing mention in her preface on account of their translation efforts. And that is how Czesław Miłosz, Jan Darowski and I were secured a humble but permanent place in the Polish Pantheon. (1994, 11)

Czerniawski makes clear that Wieniewska's attitude was hardly an exception:

I report the Wieniewska case not only in order to record her bad faith but because her attitude reflects a position widely held at the time by Western intellectuals and culture-aparatchiks. The émigrés were dinosaurs, politically bankrupt, and therefore of course so was their culture....[Moreover], Wieniewska was also guided by realpolitik -- again like the Western intellectuals: she maintained good relations with the authorities in Warsaw, so including as authors in her anthology such agents of capitalist war-mongers as Darowski, Miłosz or myself would have meant that she as translator of Polish literature would have lost her privileged access to state-controlled publishers in Warsaw. (1994, 11)

Czerniawski's explanation illustrates tellingly the complex way in which the politics of the Cold War affected the literary process and cultural matters in general.¹

Over time, the political motivation that initially underlined the growing interest in contemporary Polish poetry

¹ Czerniawski is the source of another interesting piece of information, namely that in the late 1960s A.Alvarez, the ten editor of the Penguin series of Modern European Poets, offered to publish Miłosz's poems in the series in a volume shared with Tadeusz Różewicz. Apparently both poets declined the offer. See Czerniawski's essay "Odbiór nowoczesnej poezji polskiej w Wielkiej Brytanii" [The Reception of Modern Polish Poetry in Great Britain] (1994, 57). Miłosz's poems never appeared in the series, while Herbert's (in Miłosz and Peter Dale Scott's translations) appeared in 1968 and Różewicz's in 1976.
began to include aspects which, while being still thematic rather than artistic, were no longer narrowly topical. One of these aspects, which helped to reinforce the interest in contemporary Polish poetry, was derived directly from Miłosz's prose written in the 1950s -- especially from *The Captive Mind*. Although, as we have seen, the reception of the book was primarily political in character, and most critical opinions were little more than descriptions and repetitions of Miłosz's own thoughts, some critics were clearly influenced, or felt challenged by Miłosz's perspective of looking at literature and art in terms of his wartime experience and treated it as a yardstick of critical evaluation. In his review of *The Captive Mind*, Walter Allen wrote:

These men [who went through the experiences of Eastern Europe], Mr. Miłosz argues, knew a reality denied to the Anglo-Saxon West because for years they have lived and worked in countries occupied - and often worse - by the enemy...To such men, Mr. Miłosz contends, the Anglo-Saxon West in 1946, despite its professions of freedom, had nothing to offer except emotional luxuries; its religion was ineffective, its art decadent and cut off from people. (1953, 464)

To make the point clearer, the critic quoted from *The Captive Mind*:

A man is lying under machine-gun fire on the street of an embattled city. He looks at the pavement and sees a very amusing sight: the cobblestones are standing upright like the quills of a porcupine. The bullets hitting against their edges displace and tilt them. Such moments in the consciousness of a man judge all poets and philosophers.... The vision of the cobblestones is unquestionably real, and poetry based on an equally naked experience could survive triumphantly that judgement day of man's illusions. In the intellectuals who lived through the atrocities of war in Eastern Europe there took place what one might call the elimination of emotional luxuries. (1953, 464)
This passage from The Captive Mind made quite an impression on some English poets and critics, being quoted by several of them, especially in discussions concerning the impact East European poetry had in English-speaking countries. Miłosz's perspective of looking at poetry in terms of extreme experience especially appealed to critics promoting East European poetry in the West, while others found it necessary to comment on its apparent implications. Introducing the poetry of Vasko Popa (Penguin Books) in 1969, Ted Hughes wrote:

I think it was Miłosz, the Polish poet, who when he lay in a doorway and watched the bullets lifting the cobbles out of the street beside him realized that most poetry is not equipped for life in a world where people actually do die. And the poets of whom Popa is one seem to have put their poetry to a similar test. (p.10)

The same fragment of Miłosz's book was quoted by Geoffrey Hill (1971/72, 14-23), John Bayley (1984, 215-16) and Donald Davie (1989, 164-66). Others adopted Miłosz's point of view, sometimes misunderstood or simplified, in their evaluations of their native Anglo-American contemporary poetry.

Miłosz's third prose work which appeared in English, the autobiographical Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition (1968), initially did not meet with wide interest; the first substantial reviews of the book did not appear until the early 1980s after Miłosz had been awarded the Nobel Prize and the book had been reprinted. The immediate effect of Native Realm, like that of Seizure of Power, was limited to reinforcing the initial categorization of Miłosz as a political writer. In the long run, however, it contributed (along with several of Miłosz's essays
published in various periodicals) to a shift among some critics in their evaluation of contemporary poetry and eventually helped to enhance the interest in Miłosz's own poetry in the West. The long-term impact of *Native Realm* and his other prose works on Miłosz criticism became noticeable later, especially during the 1980s. It is worth noting, however, that *Native Realm* gained considerable interest among critics writing about Miłosz's poetry even before the book was reviewed after its reprinting in 1981. After he had been awarded the Neustadt Prize it was constantly referred to in critical articles and was subsequently treated as one of his most important literary works.

II

During the initial stage of the reception process every writer becomes categorized by criticism. In the course of reception, the initial formulas are often treated as elements already familiar to the reader and may be either challenged or used as "points of departure" for further characterizations of a work or works by the same author.

Miłosz, who went through the initial stages of the reception process twice (first as a prose writer and then as a poet), was regarded in the early 1970s as both a poet and a political prose writer. Miłosz-the-poet was known, however, not through his poetry but through his prose and the way he presented himself as a poet in his prose works. His literary work was seen not only
through its literary context but also in terms of his experiences. Since Poland was in the centre of major political events of the century, the writings of Miłosz were commonly viewed through the history of his nation.

The situation of Miłosz as a writer in English-speaking countries in the late 1960s and early 1970s presents a number of interesting features. In the years preceding the appearance of his first collection of poems in English translation (1973), he was already recognized as primarily a poet; however, no representative collection of his poems was available to the English-speaking readership. Hence, he owed his recognition mostly to his prose and to his own descriptions of himself as a poet. Only a very limited number of Miłosz's poems appeared before 1973 in various periodicals, while a few were included in his anthology Postwar Polish Poetry (1965) and in The History of Polish Literature (1969). Some critics, however, were able to take note of his Polish collections of poems. In 1969, Books Abroad published a comprehensive review of his collected poems, Wiersze, brought out in 1967 by the London "Oficyna Poetów i Malarzy."

In his prose Miłosz defined himself as a poet, and in all his books published in English he emphasized the fact that he wanted to be considered by his readers and critics first and foremost as a poet. The public readings which he gave in New York and at various North American universities, were almost exclusively devoted to poetry. As one of the principal speakers at
the Rencontres Mondiales de Poésie in Montreal in 1967, Miłosz presented his views on contemporary poetry and the role of the poet in the contemporary world. His prose, especially his essays, is sometimes called the best introduction to and explanation of his poetry. In the situation of an author recognized as a poet but not known to the reader by his poems, the role of critics seemed to be of special importance. They had to act as mediators between Miłosz’s poetry and the reader. Obviously, Miłosz himself also played the role of mediator, introducing Polish literature and especially contemporary poetry to the English-speaking reader as well as introducing his own poetry in his books and essays.

Since, in the absence of a representative body of translations, this kind of mediation required that the critic know Polish, the circle of critics capable of discussing Miłosz’s poetry was limited to those who were able to read and understand Polish. In practice, most of the critical texts devoted to Miłosz’s poetry in the 1960s and 1970s were written by critics of Polish origin, or by his students at Berkeley, of whom several learnt Polish sufficiently well to be able to read Miłosz in the original, or even to translate his works. For quite some time, at least until he received the Nobel Prize in 1980, Miłosz’s critics came almost exclusively from these two groups. Of importance here is not only their knowledge of Miłosz’s poetry but also their treatment of the author as a poet. For those who read his works in Polish, Miłosz was primarily a poet, since his first significant work in prose appeared almost 20 years after his
poetic debut and was always treated by Miłosz as being of secondary importance. Those critics who came from his "workshop" in Berkeley were introduced to his writings by the author himself and their point of view was to a large extent shaped and directed by the poet.

The first texts in English devoted exclusively to Miłosz's poetry were Z. Folejewski's fairly substantial article "Czesław Miłosz: A Poet's Road to Ithaca Between Worlds, Wars, and Poetics," published in Books Abroad in 1969, and George Gômôri's review of Miłosz's collected poems Wiersze originally published in London in 1967.

Reflecting on the distorted image of Miłosz in the West, Folejewski compared his reception in English-speaking countries to Boris Pasternak's popularity in the West:

Just as Boris Pasternak is best known to the Western world not for his poetry but for his prose work, Doctor Zhivago, so is the name of Miłosz associated mainly with The Captive Mind and La prise du pouvoir. In both cases the works that brought popularity to their authors, though intellectually important, artistically do not constitute the height of their creative ability, which is above all poetic. (1969, 17)

A comparison with Pasternak, which must have made at least some critics aware of the way in which prose overshadowed Miłosz's poetic achievement, was used later (for various reasons) in many critical texts; Miłosz himself devoted to him an essay "On Pasternak Soberly" (Emperor of the Earth, 1977; the essay, dated 1963, originally appeared in English in Books Abroad in 1970).

Folejewski and Gômôri's critical texts have some significant features in common. Both authors treat Miłosz primarily as a poet
and both appear to have tried quite consciously to separate their discussion of his poetry from the picture of Miłosz derived principally from his political prose, which they barely mention, although Gómőri quotes Miłosz's _Rodzinna Europa_ (Native Realm, at that time not yet available in English). Both critics described and analyzed Miłosz's poetry in its development within the wider context of twentieth century poetic trends and groups in Poland, of historical events he witnessed or took part in, and of his own biography. The entirety of his poetic oeuvre is divided into periods and the main poetic features of each period are characterized briefly. Both critics emphasized the major thematic preoccupations of Miłosz's poetry, such as the circumstances of the Nazi occupation and the personal experiences of the poet during that time, underlining the impact they had on his poetic development. According to both critics Miłosz's war-time poems marked a poetic break-through for their author. Polejewski wrote:

> While in earlier attempts to keep pace with the European mainstream Miłosz was quite successful but often remained hermetically Polish, even provincial, now by becoming national he is at the same time more universal. (1969, 22).

Gómőri, after a brief description of Miłosz's experiences during the Nazi occupation (experiences shared by the entire nation) stated that "from 1943 onwards Miłosz's poetry becomes different; it is now simpler, deeper, more human and mature." (1969, 201)

By emphasizing the impact of the events of the Nazi occupation in Poland on Miłosz's poetry, the critics did not limit his poetic achievement to the poems of this period only, but treated them primarily as a stage (though one of great
importance) in his poetic development. Nor did the two critics limit their reflections to the thematic preoccupations of Miłosz’s poems, but also characterized briefly the formal features of his poetry in each of the periods. Stating that "[t]here are few writers in world literature whose development equals Miłosz’s in artistic intensity and intellectual honesty" Folejewski (with whom Gômôri agrees almost completely) underlined "the basic conviction of his poetic vocation, his talent, and the force of the specific poetic vision" which in the critic’s opinion "was from the start unmistakeably his own." (p. 17)

Concluding his reflections Folejewski wrote:

It is not a happy, optimistic poetry. The basic element of pessimism is there, interchangeable with the notes of protest from earlier works. But it is a matter-of-fact poetry, filtered through philosophical reflection, exotic in personal retrospective detail, and universally valid in its awareness of modern man’s problems. There is also a further shift in poetic expression. More and more, all the formal features are eliminated; there is no trace of rhyme and stanza, and even rhythm and imagery are reduced to a minimum. The latest volumes....reveal a steady development in the direction of purity and organic simplicity. (1969, 24)

Bogdan Czaykowski, in his essay "The Fly and the Flywheel", did not undertake to describe the development of Miłosz’s poetry but tried to show its basic features. Czaykowski approached Miłosz’s poetry from a perspective entirely different from Folejewski and Gômôri’s and tried to highlight both the similarities and the differences between Miłosz and Herbert and Różewicz (the two postwar Polish poets best known to the English-speaking reader and the most representative of the postwar generation). In defining the distinctiveness of Miłosz’s poetry
in its wider context, Czaykowski stressed its thematic and formal range, and, as he put it, Miłosz's "inability to write merely a poetry of survival." (p. 28) The critic did not pay special attention to Miłosz's war-time poems, viewing them as part of a broader response of the poet "to the combined forces of history, geography and ideology."

As an East European, Miłosz embodies in his poetry the bitter experience of politics as an invader and destroyer of both these spheres [i.e. "man's right to a private life and personality" and his "right to pursue religious and metaphysical ends"]; he embodies the experience of the vulnerability of the individual in the face of the combined forces of history, geography and ideology. (p. 28)

Comparing Miłosz's poems to the poetry of Herbert and Różewicz, Czaykowski noted that all three poets (as, indeed, most East European writers) were convinced that "the poet has not only his art, but tasks to perform." (p. 25) Stating that his purpose was not "to trace Miłosz's intellectual and poetic development, but rather to define and describe the specific nature of his poetic achievement," the critic focused on one of Miłosz's "Californian" poems, "Bobo's Metamorphosis." This poem, in his opinion, expressed "Miłosz's poetic personality most fully" and this is what Czaykowski was seeking to delineate.

Among the characteristic features of Miłosz's poetry Czaykowski emphasized the profoundly personal character of poems on universal themes. He pointed out that Miłosz's constant poetic goal was

to give back to poetry what it lost, first through the excesses of Modernism, and then was unable to regain fully on account of the enervating effect of the horror of war and totalitarianism: a full voice and range of feeling and
expression. (p. 28)

He concluded:

Miłosz's poetry stands apart from the dominant trends of contemporary European and American poetry....[H]e belongs clearly with the "older poets", not because of his age, but because of his style, its richness of tone, imagery and syntax.... (p. 28)

Czaykowski's point of view and its presentation to the English-speaking reader, however interesting and challenging, was, nevertheless, probably premature from the point of view of the Western receptivity to Miłosz' poetry at that time. The critic did not take into account the gap between the very limited knowledge of Miłosz's poems in the West and the already functioning clichés of Miłosz-the-poet put in circulation by his prose. Furthermore, Czaykowski introduced a new way of viewing Miłosz by providing the reader with a "close reading" of a selected poem in order to illustrate features typical of the entire oeuvre of the poet. Folejewski's and Gőmőri's way of presenting Miłosz's poetry, although it went considerably beyond the established clichés, was probably more appropriate since the critics tried to achieve a balance between their own opinions and the image of the poet as it existed at the time; their articles were thus probably more attuned to the Western reader. Studies of similar depth and understanding of Miłosz's poetic achievement did not begin to appear and have an impact on the reception process until much later, when Miłosz had already been awarded major literary prizes and was generally recognized as a major twentieth-century poet.
It is interesting to note that in 1973, when Victor Contosky wrote "Czesław Miłosz and the Quest for Critical Perspective" (published in *Books Abroad*), the critic mentioned only the texts by Polejewski and Gômôri. Contosky's article appeared in the year of the publication of Miłosz's *Selected Poems*, but since there are no references in his text to the volume, we can assume that Contosky wrote the article before the collection was published and was thus not influenced by the selection or composition of this volume. The critic points out that "The Captive Mind has become something of a classic and achieved a popularity in the West which his essays and poetry can hardly hope to attain. Yet many who know the Polish language consider poetry to be his greatest achievement." (p. 36) Contosky tried to show Miłosz as a writer critical of his times, treating his poetry and prose as elements of unified thought. Within this unity, Contosky argued, Miłosz used different genres and techniques (prose and poetry) to communicate with the reader: "Because of his double vision (Eastern and Western) and his double role (politician and poet) Miłosz is especially sensitive to the delicate balance a critic must maintain." (p. 36) The author took into account the entirety of Miłosz's literary output to identify the constant and underlying theme of his writing, which he defined as the search for a critical perspective. Contosky described his essay as an examination of Miłosz's attempt to find a middle ground between the extremes of the public and private person, between the journalist or propagandist and the practitioner of Ketman. For in his sociological essays, his fiction and in
particular his poetry this search for a critical perspective is a constant theme. (p. 36)

Contosky used Miłosz’s *The Captive Mind* as a point of departure for further discussion: he demonstrated its limitations in so far as the book assumed "the supposedly static character of the communist society, a standard myth perpetrated by every government that poses as perfect". (p. 37) Polish literature was no longer limited to socialist realism which Miłosz described and analyzed in his essay. The critic pointed out that Miłosz wrote his book before the "emergence of such surrealist poets as Grochowiak and Harasymowicz who came to prominence in the post-Stalinist period" (p. 37). According to Contosky the value of the book consisted primarily in its being "a psychological study of the public and private man in conflict within the same person" (p. 37). In contrast to the majority of critics, who saw *The Captive Mind* from the Western perspective and treated it as a study of the politically controlled literary process in Eastern European countries in general, Contosky tried to see the book as part of Miłosz’s attempt to develop his critical perspective. As a critic of his age Miłosz was interested in many problems of the contemporary world, not only those that characterized society under Communist rule; he was, for instance, concerned with the erosion of traditional values of truth and ethics, which also affected the Western world. *The Captive Mind* -- as well as the *Native Realm*, other prose works and poems -- showed Miłosz’s preoccupation with contemporary ethical and philosophical issues irrespective of the system under which they occurred. Contosky’s
essay was then the first critical text which did not discuss The Captive Mind from a primarily political point of view. Western criticism did not see this book in the context of Miłosz's other works but rather in terms of the readers' interest in the countries "behind the iron curtain". Moreover, Miłosz himself constantly stressed the political aspects of his study rather than its literary character.

The critical essays mentioned above appeared in publications of very limited circulation, which meant that they had a very limited impact, if any, on English-speaking readers of Miłosz's works. In effect, the rare voices of genuine, non-politically motivated interest in Miłosz's poetry continued to be overshadowed by formulas introduced by the critical reception of The Captive Mind. As we have seen, reviewers of Miłosz's works constructed an image which had been suggested by Miłosz himself in his first Western books in prose: of a poet, intellectual, member of the underground during the war who found it impossible to cooperate with the Communist authorities, and who was of interest to Western readers because of his unusual experience of and insight into the Communist system.

III

Selected Poems, the first volume of Miłosz's poems to appear
in English translation, was published in 1973 when there already existed an obvious gap between the common knowledge of the fact that Miłosz was a major poet and the "second-hand" (or fragmentary) knowledge of his poetry. However, the collection did not give Western critics and readers a chance to bridge the gap fully, since the volume was composed in a very special way and did not present the entire spectrum of Miłosz's poetry.

The first section of the volume consists largely of poems which embody Miłosz's point of view on poetry and the role of the poet. The second section, subtitled "How once he was," contains three poems from Miłosz's prewar period in rather flat translations. The central section (titled "What did he learn") contains mainly Miłosz's war-time and political poems, while the last section contains principally poems of exile written in California. Thus Miłosz presented himself in his first English-language volume not only as a poet, but also as a witness of the Nazi occupation and of the Holocaust, as a critic of Communism, and, in the final part, as a poet aware of modern American civilization who is both influenced and inspired by the place of his exile.

In effect, the appearance of the first volume of Miłosz's poems in English translation did not become a turning point in the Western reception of his poetry. Reviews of the collection were not only few in number but also very general. The well-worn cliché of Miłosz the political prose writer was combined with the descriptive formula of Miłosz as the poet who had survived the
Nazi occupation and as a poet of exile reacting to the contemporary world as seen from an American perspective. The conclusion of a review by D.J. Enright was typical:

He has one great advantage, at least poetically speaking, and one great quality: his wounds are not self-inflicted ones, and he does not wear them on his sleeve. (1974, 29)

The major points of the critical response to the Selected Poems were basically of the same kind. They may be illustrated by a quotation from Paul Zweig’s review in The New York Times Book Review (the review was not overly enthusiastic).

Against the strident claims of an ideology that pretends to wipe clean the slate of history in order to create new values and a ‘new man’, against the discontinuity of war and exile, the poet offers a modest voice, speaking an old language. (1974, 7)

Even a very enthusiastic review by Stephen Miller simply repeats the basic elements of the already current description of Miłosz’s poetry.

Though the form of Miłosz’s poems often seems American, the mind at work in the poems seems thoroughly European: preoccupied with the devastations and dislocations of history, suspicious of paean to nature or hymns to the imagination. (1977, 318)

There is probably more than one reason why the Selected Poems did not lead to a significant change in the perception of the character and status of Miłosz’s poetry. Summarizing Miłosz’s critical reception in the West we can distinguish two main strands of the reception process. One came from the reception of his prose works published in the West in the 1950s; it brought recognition to Miłosz as a writer. This politically (or topically) motivated popularity also brought to the readers’
attention the fact that Miłosz was a poet; however the "formula" of the poet was not based on his poetry. Since the interest in Miłosz's prose was, to a large extent, the result of the political division of the world and of the various historical events in his homeland, Miłosz's poetry was also viewed within this general framework. On the other hand, Miłosz was also presented by some critics as a major, even outstanding national poet whose poetic achievement was of importance to world literature. However, because of the lack of translations, this point of view was confined to a small group of critics (those who knew Polish), and it was addressed principally to specialists. This strand of reception had at best only a very limited influence on the Western response to Miłosz's poetry at the time and did not acquire importance until the late 1970s, after Miłosz had been awarded the Neustadt Prize for Literature.

Assuming that Miłosz's prose works, and especially his self-presentation, had an impact on the reception of his works in the West, one may wonder why the poet himself chose to confirm, by the composition of his Selected Poems, the formulas established by earlier criticism based on his prose works. By the time his first collection of poems in English translation appeared, a few critics had already published articles dealing with the entirety of his poetry and its development. The selection of poems and especially the composition of the book, however, did not provide the reader with the possibility of forming an idea of Miłosz's poetic development. Although in later years Miłosz complained
about the formulaic treatment of his oeuvre and the insistent recalling of his early prose in reviews of his poetry, in 1973 he chose to present himself to the reader by means of mainly that part of his poetic oeuvre that could still be described according to the already existing formula; although more perceptive critics could have discerned, had they read the poems included in the volume carefully, broader ramifications of Miłosz's poetry, or at least, in the words of Kenneth Rexroth's introduction, "a subtlety and a profundity" that came "from an intensely humane literary sensibility," as well as a "remarkable understanding of the complexity of the human mind and its speech." (1973, 11).

In fact the poet, through his selection and composition of the volume, seems to have aimed at two kinds of audience. The general audience, which was assumed to have little interest in philosophical and artistic questions of their age but to be open to simplified issues arising from the events of contemporary history, was to be reached by formulaic descriptions of his writings. A limited circle of sophisticated, philosophically oriented readers was to be reached by readings of poetry, literary and philosophical essays and, of course, the poems themselves. Aimed at a very limited number of people, the latter kind of presentation was meant not so much to bring an immediate effect but rather to develop an awareness and a genuine interest.

It was to this latter group of readers or prospective readers that the publication of *Utwory poetyckie - Poems* (1976) was principally addressed. This comprehensive and up-to-date
collection of Miłosz's poems published in their original Polish version was introduced by Alexander Schenker, whose essay was not only written in English but also clearly addressed to the English-speaking reader. Placing Miłosz's work in the contexts of Polish history, literature and of the poet's biography, Schenker cited examples and parallels from non-Polish literary traditions to explain the phenomenon of Miłosz's poetry. At the same time the critic devoted a substantial part of his introduction to the formal features of Miłosz's poems (syntax, diction, figurative language and other stylistic devices) to show the character of his poetics and its links with the Polish literary tradition. In characterizing Miłosz's poetics Schenker noted that one of the typical characteristics of his poetic language was the prevalence of metonymy and a very sparing use of metaphor. In general, the critic distinguished three basic features of Miłosz's poetics:

In the first place there is a conscious attempt to fuse all levels of language, regardless of their social or cultural identity, into one poetic idiom. These levels of voices, while retaining their distinctive characteristics and fulfilling distinct stylistic functions, are skilfully harmonized by the poet into one polyphonic whole. Secondly, Miłosz proposes to compress the semantic charge of the poetic line until it achieves the optimal, metal-like density.... Finally, Miłosz creates a network of stylistic references to the past so as to echo earlier periods of Polish literature. In this way history enters a poem not only through cultural allusions but also through appropriate linguistic devices. (p.xxiii)

Schenker's introduction illustrates well the importance of critical mediation between Miłosz's poetry and the English-speaking reader. Moreover, it showed how significant the linguistic aspects of Miłosz's poems were for their understanding
and appreciation. Concluding his observations Schenker wrote:

Miłosz is a difficult poet, and his American reader will no doubt be helped by consulting some of the English translations.... A word of caution, however, is in order. Miłosz's verbal restraint tempts the translator to emphasize the content at the expense of the linguistic means. The resulting literalness often fails to render the delicate tensions between form and content which are the essence of his poetry. (p. xxvi)

Schenker's introduction, however, was not meant to produce an immediate effect on the non-Polish reader, considering that the volume comprised no translations; the aim of the book was rather to provide the narrow group of critic-mediators with a comprehensive selection of Miłosz's poems and to enrich their knowledge and understanding of his poetry and the critical and interpretive problems it raised.

IV

Since, until the appearance of the Collected Poems (1988), Miłosz's poetry was known to the English-speaking reader only in a very limited and carefully chosen selection, the critics who played the role of mediators were of special importance to the further development of interest in Miłosz's poetry. A careful reader of Miłosz criticism will note that critical texts following the Neustadt Prize were mostly written by critics belonging to the two groups described above (that is, critics of Polish origin and Miłosz's students or former students). The prize seems to have been of special importance for Miłosz's reception in English-speaking countries and marks a kind of
"watershed." After 1978 poetry becomes recognized as Miłosz's primary interest and is no longer presented only to a limited circle of readers and specialists. Those who enjoyed it before, and recognized and supported his candidacy for prizes in literature¹, were to become mediators and to present his poetry to the general readership taking into account the horizon of expectations of the general public but avoiding the earlier simplifying clichés. In fact, the Neustadt Prize opened a new phase of the reception of Miłosz's writing in English-speaking countries by reversing the degree of importance of the two already existing strands of reception. Since 1978, interest in his poetry has definitely prevailed over interest in his prose. The latter has been treated to a large extent as an introduction to his poetry not only in the sense typical of the earlier clichés but also in its being viewed as illuminating the philosophical aspects of his poetry.

In his "Encomium for Czesław Miłosz" read during the award ceremonies of the 1978 Neustadt International Prize for Literature, Louis Iribarne said:

Czesław Miłosz's literary debut in the West took place a little more than a quarter of a century ago. Looking back, one is now tempted to say that he has found his rightful audience not because of, but perhaps in spite of The Captive Mind, whose success only meant a postponement of his English debut as a poet. To a man who began his poetic career more than forty years ago, who has always considered poetry as

¹ In addition to several Polish émigré awards, Miłosz was awarded the Guggenheim Fellowship for his poetry and translations in 1976, an honorary doctorate of the University of Michigan in 1977, and his name was brought to the attention of the jury of the Neustadt Prize in 1972 and 1976.
his first vocation and whose reputation as a major poet was already assured in his native Poland in the years immediately after the war, the word debut in this context must bring a smile. It is an even greater irony that during the past decade the name of Czesław Miłosz -- in the English-speaking world, and then largely through his translations -- has been frequently invoked as the patron of a younger generation of Polish poets rather than as one of its masters. Today this silence is being broken, and his exile on this continent hopefully ended. (1978, 365).

Louis Iribarne, a former student of Miłosz's, was therefore prepared by the poet himself for his role as a mediator between Miłosz's poetry and the English-speaking reader. In the "Encomium" Iribarne made the distinction between the two different streams of Miłosz's reception as well as identifying a third, that is, the Polish aspect of Miłosz's reception. Openly opposing the formulaic treatment arising from the publication of The Captive Mind, Iribarne claimed that the Neustadt Prize ended the division and proved that Miłosz's poetry had finally transcended critical interest based on clichés. However, in his texts Iribarne tried to purvey another cliché of Miłosz. The cliché was based on his poetry and focused on Miłosz as the witness and distiller of the experience of his age. In his characterization of Miłosz's poetry, Iribarne made reference to some of the most important historical events that constituted the challenges and "breakthroughs" in Miłosz's poetic development, not only experiences undergone by Miłosz, but the collective experiences of the entire generation.

Miłosz's poetic techniques, as well as his thematic interests were described by Iribarne in terms of the impact that history had on them, not only of Miłosz's native Poland but of the
twentieth century in general. In his review of Miłosz's *Utwory poetyckie* - *Poems*, Iribarne wrote:

> Whether it be of the Holocaust, the totalitarian Dark Ages that followed it, or the circumscribing wreckage of modern civilization, in Miłosz that experience is always named, always held up to the light.... (1978, 951).

This actuality and concreteness of experience, according to Iribarne, set Miłosz's poetry apart from American poetry that "seemed obsessed much rather with the unnamed darkness at the centre." (p. 951) His own as well as the collective experiences of his age were transformed by Miłosz in his poems "in such a way that each is allowed to contain the other, coupled with the highly individual way in which tradition is brought to bear on that experience without sacrificing anything to modernity." (p. 951) The major historical events in the centre of Western interest were thus made to serve not merely as a background to, but also as an explanation of Miłosz's poetry.

In his review Iribarne placed Miłosz in a new context, that of other Polish émigré writers, and especially alongside Witold Gombrowicz and Leszek Kołakowski. The reference to Gombrowicz is important in view of Gombrowicz's considerable successes in the West (especially in France) at this time and of the high recognition he received as a major novelist and playwright. Kołakowski, on the other hand, had won acclaim not only as a philosopher and essayist, but also as one of the most profound critics of Marxism. The coupling of the names of the three famous Polish expatriates led Iribarne to claim a special distinction for Polish émigré writers.
If we were to broaden the terrain somewhat to include the philosopher Leszek Kołakowski, it could be plausibly argued that, by the standard of universality, Polish letters of the mid and late twentieth century will be remembered chiefly for its émigrés. (1978, 951)

The comparison with Gombrowicz and Kołakowski, however, was not developed further by Western criticism probably because the increasing recognition of Miłosz concerned primarily his poetry, while his prose over time began to be read largely because of the light it threw on the poetry. Only in the later stage of the reception process did the name of Witold Gombrowicz sometimes appear in the context of Miłosz's works.

What Iribarne proclaimed as the "end of poetic exile" for Miłosz was in fact the beginning of a new stage in the reception of his writings. This beginning of a new stage was marked by a special volume of Word Literature Today (1978) devoted entirely to Czesław Miłosz and his literary works. In addition to critical texts presented to the jury of the Neustadt Prize and the "Encomium" read during the award ceremonies, the volume contained several articles devoted to Miłosz's writings, especially to his poetry. In general, the essays included in Word Literature Today are of considerable critical and interpretive interest. Before the Neustadt Prize, the Western reception of Miłosz suffered, not only because of the incompatibility of the two main streams of the critical reflection, but also because the prevailing "formulaic" treatment was aimed at a general readership, while Miłosz's poetry is addressed at an intellectually mature reader. Critics who contributed to the Miłosz volume of World Literature
Today reinforced the model of writing about Miłosz that took this fact into account, while largely ignoring the horizon of expectations of the general public; hence they addressed their critical essays to what may be termed the "ideal" reader of Miłosz's writings. Since in his works Miłosz endeavours to "reveal a mystery," or at least to confront the essential questions of human existence, his writings are addressed to those who want to understand what, in philosophical terms, is sometimes described as the essence of being. Consequently, in their essays the critics touched upon complex questions requiring considerable maturity of thought on the part of their prospective reader. They defined elements of Miłosz's philosophical outlook, the ways in which he draws on the history of culture and ideas, and how he brings different cultural perspectives together in his writings. This "new model" may be illustrated by a quotation from Jan Błoński:

Poetry for him is not a symbolic reaching into the essence of things; nor does he rely on the traditional relationships of logical conclusions. It is understood instead as an unending discussion, a relentless and haughty (because it is not accessible to everyone) search which is at the same time full of anxiety because the truth is grim. Equal partners in this discussion seem to be the mind and the body, individual experiences and the recurrent patterns of history, fleeting occurrences and the reflections of philosophers. (1978, 388)

The introduction of the new model of interpreting Miłosz's work was possible partly because several of the essays were translations of texts written by Polish critics living in Poland. The group of mediators between Miłosz's poetry and the English-speaking reader was thus joined by critics who looked at his
poetry from a Polish perspective and did not feel compelled to take into account the horizon of expectation of general readership in the West. The Neustadt Prize and the publications of Miłosz's works that followed it also brought into the process of mediation and reception a "new" group of critics, namely émigrés from other countries of the Soviet Bloc especially sensitive to the problems faced by a writer in exile.

As a matter of fact, the essays published in the Miłosz volume of *World Literature Today* may be, to a large extent, classified according to the origin of their authors. In general, essays by Polish critics (Błoński, Sławińska, Dybcia and Fiut) are concerned with poetry, while those by Anglo-American critics are devoted to Miłosz's prose. The East European critics, the Hungarian Gyorgi Gőmöri and the Lithuanian Thomas Venclova (and one should also mention here Josif Brodsky, who presented Miłosz to the jury) paid special attention to Miłosz as a poet in exile and emphasized his links with Slavic culture and contemporary East European literature. All the critics, however, irrespective of their origins, noted the lack of translations of Miłosz's works into English and constantly referred to poems (and in some cases prose) not yet available to the English-speaking reader.

The limited availability of Miłosz's poems in the English translation was probably one of the reasons why his poetry was introduced in this collection of essays almost exclusively by Polish critics. However, perhaps more important was the critics' choice of the poems discussed or mentioned in the essays since,
having access to the entire opus of the poet's works, they did not have to limit themselves only to the texts already translated. By the same token, the Polish critics began to establish a canon of the most important of Miłosz's poems, not all of which were available at that time to the English-speaking reader. As a result they underscored the importance of the critical mediation between Miłosz's poetry and its non-Polish readers, while revealing the extent to which his substantial poetic achievement was still inadequately represented in English translation.

According to the critics contributing to the volume, Miłosz's poetry stood apart from the current trends of contemporary poetry, while articulating at the same time the most important issues of the contemporary world. The conclusion of the essay by Krzysztof Dybciak may perhaps be regarded as a good summary of the points made by all the other critics about the extraordinary character of Miłosz's poetic achievement:

Miłosz's work is something so extraordinary in our epoch, that it seems to be a phenomenon that has appeared on the surface of contemporary art from the mysterious depths of reality. At a time when voices of doubt, sadness and despair are the loudest; when writers are outstripping each other in negation of man, his culture and nature.... the world built by the author of "Daylight" creates a space in which one can breathe freely, where one can find rescue. (1978, 420)

It is characteristic that an essay devoted to poetry ends with remarks which refer to the entirety of Miłosz's writings. All the critics, while dealing with a great variety of issues and aspects of Miłosz's work, treated and presented his writing as a unity.

In her essay about The Issa Valley Lillian Vallee wrote that
Czesław Miłosz's foremost contribution to world literature is his poetry. Yet anyone who has read his poetry knows that it is not readily accessible and that it requires a great deal of elucidation via other texts, preferably Miłosz's own; his essays or nonfiction prose.... I would like to propose that this essay, a brief analysis of the novel The Valley of Issa.... be considered as another oblique angle of approach to Miłosz's poetry - not because the novel is unworthy of individual critical scrutiny, but because both novel and poetry gain considerably in a comparative context. (1978, 403)

Consequently, Miłosz's poetry and prose were to be explained mutually, the one through the other. The earlier attempts to present Miłosz the poet according to the image of the role of the poet, especially as formulated by Miłosz in The Captive Mind, were thus overcome and replaced by a deeper model of a philosophical inter-relationship between his poetry and prose.

Essays included in the Miłosz's issue of World Literature Today proposed also a new approach in the treatment of Miłosz's prose. Although three critical works are devoted entirely to works in prose, only one of them, "The 'Still Point' in Miłosz's Native Realm" by Alexander Coleman, analyzes a work that was already available in English translation. Two other articles are devoted to The Issa Valley and to two collections of Miłosz's essays The Land of Ulro and Visions from San Francisco Bay, that became available to the English-speaking reader only in the 1980s. In the essays devoted to poetry critics draw extensively on Miłosz's prose; yet, in the three critical analyses of Miłosz's prose works poetry appears only marginally and their authors only seldom draw parallels between Miłosz's prose and his poems. It is significant, however, that Native Realm and The Issa
Valley are presented to the reader in very similar terms, as books about self discovery. Alexander Coleman analysing Native Realm comes to the conclusion that Miłosz, not unlike T.S. Eliot, "is painfully aware of the dangers of dogma in literature." (1978, 403) In the critic's opinion the book presents

a dialogue within the self that exposes not merely an "artistic" drama of a poet trying to find one Word among so many words, but also that of a constant and implacable urge toward reconciliation of what may not be reconcilable either in poetry or in life....it is an eternal quandary and trial within the soul of anyone who seeks the truth. (1978, 403)

The Issa Valley, in turn, is described by Lillian Vallee as

a seemingly autobiographical novel depicting the Lithuanian countryside of the author's childhood as seen through the eyes of the child-protagonist Thomas. It is, ostensibly, the story of the boy's initiation into adulthood, his passage from a state of innocence to consciousness and the discovery of his own duality: the disparity between his inner and outer selves. (1978, 404)

Concluding her observations, Lillian Vallee states (in terms that resemble the main point of the Contosky's earlier article) that the novel as

Miłosz's own quest for singular perspective, the one point from which all is understood, leads us to the threshold of various contradictions: greed and insatiety, intoxication and aversion, hope and despair. One must exhaust all possible perspectives in search for the one that will arrange them in their proper hierarchical order. In order to do this, one must experience much of the world in order to liberate oneself from it. (1978, 407)

In fact both essays introduced the tenor of the later opinions about Miłosz's works in prose. This is true also of the third of the essays devoted to Miłosz's works in prose, Olga Scherer's "To Ulro Through San Francisco Bay." In her opinion Miłosz's essays, especially those written after 1969, should be studied together,
since they present consecutive stages of development of the same ideas. Though Olga Scherer focuses on two books, she also touches upon previously written prose stating that

Miłosz was never to acknowledge the alleged priority of existence over consciousness, and in his relentless attempts to give meaning to the course of human history he was to feel more at home in methods overtly involving metaphysical operations than in those which, yielding to contingent principles of determination, refuse or simply fail to recognize the fundamentally metaphysical nature of the present moral crisis. (1978, 408)

It is significant, that although essays in World Literature Today proposed readings of Miłosz's prose "on its own," and not only as an introduction to his poetry, his prose works in fact never gained the same kind of interest as his poetry. When in 1981 a special Miłosz's issue of Ironwood (nr 18) was published, only one article, strictly speaking, was devoted specifically to his prose, but critics drew extensively on Miłosz's essays in discussing and explaining his poetry.

Iribarne was right in proclaiming the Neustadt Prize as opening a new stage in Miłosz's recognition in the West. Actually, no other event (neither any publication of a new work by Miłosz nor other literary prizes, including the Nobel Prize) had such an impact on the critical reception of Miłosz's works in the West as had the Neustadt Prize. However, it would be wrong to conclude that the previously current journalistic and critical clichés had entirely disappeared from the critical writings devoted to Miłosz. They were still used by critics, especially in book reviews addressed to the general public. This co-existence of two models of critical description of Miłosz's works was
especially striking in the texts published subsequently to the award in 1980 of the Nobel Prize in literature to Miłosz.

The next collection of Miłosz's poems published in North America (after the poet was awarded the Neustadt Prize but prior to the Nobel Prize), Bells in Winter (1978) also did not provide the English-speaking reader with a fully representative selection of Miłosz's poetry, as it was comprised mostly of poems written in California in the early 1970s. In fact the volume, along with some of Miłosz's other works, did not become the focus of critical attention until much later, after their author had been awarded the Nobel Prize.

The initial reviews of Bells in Winter published immediately after the appearance of the volume (as well as the reviews of Miłosz's essays) did not present a consistent critical point of view on Miłosz and thus hardly made a difference to the development of the reception process. Since the collection consisted of poems written in exile, the majority of critics evaluated them in terms of the impact of exile on Miłosz. Richard Howard stated that the new collection had "transformed the way" he had looked at Miłosz's earlier poems and that Bells in Winter was "a good place to begin reading this great European master." (p. 46) The critic not only discussed the way in which exile thematically influenced Miłosz's poems but also pointed out that exile had changed the tone of his poetry and that "the special tonality -- disabused yet passionate, learned yet sensuous, accusatory yet tentative -- we hear everywhere in Miłosz." (p. 48)
Presenting a different point of view, D.M Thomas commenced his review with the remark that he "found Bells in Winter disappointing." Explaining his evaluation Thomas wrote:

We feel, even more strongly than with Brodsky, the numbing deprivation and loneliness of perpetual exile. The poems are abstract, unpeopled. There is little human warmth. But the final sequence, From the Rising of the Sun... moves with more freedom, and is undeniably powerful: the coldness of Miłosz's style is, here, a stinging, burning cold. And elsewhere there are moments of beauty which make me wonder how much more I am missing, through my own blindness or the limitations of translation. (1981, 49)

The difficulties with the critical evaluation of this collection of Miłosz's poems were later discussed by Donald Davie in his Czesław Miłosz and the Insufficiency of Lyric. It is also worth noting that reviews of Bells in Winter included the first significant remarks about the impact of translation on the reception of Miłosz's poetry.

After the appearance of the Bells in Winter, Terence Des Pres published in The Nation (1978) a very interesting critical essay in which he presented Miłosz's work against a broad historical background and in contrast to contemporary Anglo-American poetry. In his view "[p]olitical catastrophe has defined the nature of our century," and the result, "the collision of personal and political realms -- has produced a new kind of writer," epitomised by Miłosz (p. 742). Referring to "the vision of the cobblestones" from The Captive Mind as to the criterion by which Miłosz himself judged his own poetry, Des Pres wrote:

In sharp contrast to prevailing notions of poetry in America -- for which the self and nature are still the only important realities -- literary fulfilment for a poet like Miłosz depends on extraliterary consciousness, it depends on
knowing the historical situation to which the poem implicitly responds, which is a kind of awareness the poem then incorporates back into itself. (p. 742)

Des Pres, however, does not see Miłosz’s poetry as merely a testimony of events witnessed by the poet. "I know of no poet more driven to celebration" -- he writes --

to sing of the earth in its plainness and glory, and therefore no poet more tormented by the terrible detour through history which must be taken if, in pursuit of joyous song, the authority of poetic affirmation is not to remain untested or open to the charge of ignorance.... To equate life with happiness and mean it is an astonishing victory in our brute century -- against terror, death, camps, war’s constant eruption and now too, the threat of nuclear holocaust. (p. 742)

Concluding his essay, Des Pres defines further the distinctiveness of Miłosz’s poetic achievement:

To celebrate life at the same time rejecting its perversions is the basis of all thought and art which deserves -- in the pure, ideal sense -- to be called "political," and we should not be fooled by literary critics.... who tell us that poetry and politics cannot successfully meet. Miłosz is proof of the contrary, and his work is exemplary for the way it stands so firmly in contrast to the kind of poetry (again, mostly American) which proceeds, after Auschwitz, after Hiroshima, as if between self and history there were no tie or common ground. On the contrary, Miłosz’s poetry is enhanced by its fund of historical sense. Rooted directly in political realities.... this kind of poetry yields a new aesthetic, which in Miłosz’s case I would call a poetic of aftermath. (743)

The critical interest in East European poetry and the tendency to evaluate contemporary Anglo-American poetry according to criteria derived from Miłosz (and from other East European poets), or, in Des Pres’s phrase, in terms of "the vision of the cobblestones," became a significant element in Anglo-American criticism beginning in the 1970s. At the same time, the interest in the poetry of "the oppressed," or more broadly, of poetry
displaying historical awareness and tested by experience, contributed to the development of the reception of Miłosz's works, especially in its later stages.¹ However, it should be noted that Des Pres did not present Miłosz in terms of one of the current formulas, such as "poetry of the oppressed," "poetry of survival," or "poetry of witness." Instead, he drew quite extensively on Miłosz's poems as well as his prose in an attempt to come up with appropriate categories of critical description of Miłosz's poetry. These categories, in fact, came close to Miłosz's own, as defined by him a few years later in his The Witness of Poetry.

The award of the Nobel Prize to Miłosz in 1980 -- at a time when Poland, because of major political changes, was in the centre of public interest in the Western countries -- brought to its winner lively critical interest followed by many articles in the popular press, as well as critical essays in scholarly publications. In general the press welcomed the award while describing it, somewhat begrudgingly, as a politically motivated choice. In his article in The New Statesman, Clive Wilmer opined that "The award to Miłosz of the Nobel Prize in the aftermath of the recent Polish upheaval cannot be regarded as non-political." (1980, 25)² Another critic wrote:

¹ For a fuller discussion of the reception of East European poetry, see Chapter 5.

² However, as one as one can ascertain, the decision of the Nobel Prize Committee had been made already in May, that is, before the August strikes and the rise of "Solidarity". See Espmark 1986.
First, a cardinal from Poland -- a state where religion is discouraged -- became pope. Then Party leaders were presented in 1980 with a Polish language Nobel Laureate whose works they banned for decades... (Stocker 1982, B7)

In Encounter, François Bondy recounted the statement made by one of the great professionals among the Book Fair elite. "What's his name again? Milos? Milosch? Never heard of him. But obviously, after Wojtyla and Walesa, it was time for a Pole, and Stockholm has a nose for these things. All a matter of politics, no doubt about it..." (1980, 37)

Although Miłosz had already been awarded other major literary prizes, it turned out that he was still relatively unknown to the readers in the West. Much more interesting for the general public were the contemporary events in Poland which overshadowed Miłosz's writing and its descriptions in the press. Some of the notices in the press do not mention even a single work of Miłosz's, quoting instead the political reactions in Warsaw.

Nevertheless, one may be surprised to find that several of the press items described Miłosz principally as a poet, treating his prose, including The Captive Mind, as of secondary importance. Quite typical in this respect is the item in the weekly Time ("Honoring a Pole Apart"). Its description of Miłosz's literary achievements begins with the quotation of two lines from his "Mid-Twentieth-Century Portrait," and it even gives the date of the poem. At the same time the article focused on Miłosz's war-time poems and then moved to his politically oriented prose. The piece concluded with some thoughts concerning the interest in his poetry in the West and the fate of the poet in exile:

It is Miłosz the poet, however, who has been suddenly thrust
before the world. Works such as Selected Poems... and Bells in Winter... have long attracted glowing attention from other writers and poets, especially those who share Miłosz's state of spiritual and political exile. (1980, 105)

Assuming that the politically motivated interest in Miłosz and his writing in the West still had to be taken into account by critics, we should note that presumably the events of 1980 in Poland were of much greater interest to the English-speaking readers in the 1980s than Miłosz's politically oriented prose from the 1950s. In the early 1980s, the horizon of expectation of the English-speaking reader was clearly influenced by the recent political developments, such as the rise of "Solidarity" and of other democratic movements in Eastern Europe rather than by the "history" of the 1950s.

As has been mentioned, the award of the Nobel Prize was followed by numerous publications of Miłosz's works in English. Both new editions of his previously published volumes in English and the publication of more recent as well as earlier works made Miłosz's oeuvre much more accessible to non-Polish readers. However, the critics were aware that a considerable body of Miłosz's work remained untranslated. The quality of the available translations also became a critical issue.

A new factor added to the reception of Miłosz in the West by concurrent appearance and re-appearance of several of his works in translation was the realization of the need for a thorough reevaluation of his oeuvre, including taking a fresh critical look at previously "reviewed" works. This was probably the reason for the "reappearance" of essays devoted to specific works by
Miłosz and several attempts at "grasping" the message contained in his writings. Moreover, some of the reviews dealt with a number of Miłosz's works at a time, discussing them both individually and jointly. Since several of Miłosz's books were reissued after 1980 and The Issa Valley finally became available in English in 1981, the critics took the opportunity to "rethink" some of the issues raised by Miłosz. In the "Return of the Native" John Bayley wrote:

his genius flourishes and finds its subject in the many degrees of consciousness nationality implies; and to feast on such things and yet remain free of them is in itself a gift of genius. Language and nationality are haunts of the irrational. They are also the root of well grown ego....Our natures grow and flourish by denaturing those who are not planted in the same bed. (1981, 29)

The international recognition encouraged critics to consider Miłosz's literary achievement from the perspective of world literature, as well as to explore his ties with his own literary tradition as one of the possible ways (interesting, even if not the most pertinent) of assessing his importance as a writer.

The critical texts from 1980 to 1992 included book reviews, in several cases devoted to books already reviewed before 1980, critical essays published in leading periodicals as well as the first two books devoted entirely to Miłosz's writings. In addition, the number of critics writing about Miłosz, as well as the number of critical texts devoted to him, increased significantly. The hitherto limited circle of critic-mediators was now joined by critics of Anglo-American origin, who were not only native to their culture but also became better acquainted
with the poet's native literary background.

With the rising number of Anglo-American critics publishing essays devoted to Miłosz's writings (and especially to his poetry) the Western perspective became more important and increasingly distinct from the Polish perspective. Anglo-American critics in general tried to evaluate Miłosz's poetry according to categories of their own poetic traditions. In essays published in *Ironwood* 18 (1981) Marisha Chamberlain and Mark Rudman presented their opinions about how far, if at all, Miłosz's procedures could be justified by...Keatsian standard. To Marisha Chamberlain it seemed clear that "he possesses that characteristic that Keats called 'negative capability', which distinguishes the great artist: the ability to stand in doubt for a long time, to proceed from failed attempt to failed attempt, keeping alive the appetite for the problem itself". To Mark Rudman on the other hand, it seemed that "may be the best way to put it is that Miłosz has rejected a concept that has formed the basis of romantic poetry, 'negative capability', to which poets who might not agree on anything else often cleave." (Davie 1986, 30)

In the course of time it became more and more clear that Miłosz's poetry did not fit easily into any of the categories that were known to the Western readers from their literary traditions. Critical attempts to present Miłosz's poetry in comparison with writings of Anglo-American poets, such as H. Sisson (D. Davie) and Ezra Pound (H. Vendler) or the French poet Saint-John Perse (R. Howard), to name a few, proved that Miłosz may be better described by contrasts than by similarities with them. At the same time East European poetry became known in the West and gradually its categories increasingly influenced at least some of the Western critics. As a result of this process, Western critics
attempted to do both: to place Milosz in the Anglo-American tradition (more often by contrast) and to describe his poems according to the categories applied to East-European poetry.

With regard to the American perspective, of special interest is the already mentioned Milosz issue of the American journal Ironwood which, although it appeared in 1981, was prepared before the award of the Nobel prize to Milosz. Of the thirteen essays included in the issue, nine were written by American poets, a significant indication of the extent to which Milosz's poetry had become part of the American poetic scene by 1980. But what is of particular interest is the nature of the authors' response, namely their recognition of the distinctiveness of Milosz's poetry (and of East European poetry in general) and the need several of them felt to bring out the contrast between the American poetic tradition and the poetry of Milosz. Marisha Chamberlain, for instance, observed how different Milosz's attitude was towards public life and his assumptions concerning the role of history in comparison with that of American poets:

Czesław Milosz assumes in his poetry an intimacy with public event and a belonging to the public world. The assumption that public life is embraced and controlled by history is rare among American poets.... For the American reader it is important to know that Milosz sees himself not as an individual adrift, but as a product of history. History made him an orphan.... (1981, 28)

Similarly, Jean Valentine, noting the differences between Milosz and contemporary American poets, wrote that it was hard, "for whatever reasons....to imagine such faith in poetry in the United States" (1981, 10) as seemed to exist in Poland, while Patricia
Hampl found the American concept of "identity" too narrowly psychological when compared with the historical experience of East European poets. "The solution," she wrote, of the contemporary American imagination in regard to "identity" -- the self seeking to uncover its hidden psychology, to "get in touch with the unconscious" -- must seem thin gruel indeed to such writers [as Miłosz, who come from threatened nations]. (1981, 57)

What set Miłosz's poetry apart from Western poetry, in the view of several of the authors published in Ironwood, was not only the experience embodied in his writings (a factor often stressed by Western critics), but also "a compelling relation.... established between the subject's story and the history of the nation," (p.58) as Patricia Hampl put it, as well as the distinctive "poetic voice" and tone of Miłosz's poetry and, according to Mark Rudman, its "visionary" character. The role of memory, of memory as "force and memory as something that must be regained, like paradise," was also stressed by a number of the authors as a distinctive feature of Miłosz's poetry. Critics also commented upon the role of exile in Miłosz's poetry, and while they disagreed on the precise impact of exile on Miłosz's poetic development, there was a general consensus that Miłosz's poems written in California differed significantly from his earlier work. In Mark Rudman's view the "strange astringency" which characterized much of Miłosz's poetry "had been tempered by California," where he could "recollect horror with tranquility" (p. 11), although he also thought that "exile changes a man's order of priorities," and that Miłosz had to "reopen the wound,
reexperience the pain and horror of his own past and by implication, that of his country and most of Eastern Europe before it was razed to rubble." (1981, 18)

Although some of the poet-critics commented upon the loss which Miłosz's poetry suffered in translation, the depth and sensitivity of their reflection seems to indicate that even in translation Miłosz's poems had considerable impact on their readers. Some of the contributors must have heard Miłosz read his poems both in English and in Polish. Jean Valentine, for instance, drew a very interesting conclusion from the contrast between the Polish version of "A Song on the End of the World" as read by the author and its English rendering:

Hearing Miłosz read "A Song on the End of the World," it was a song.... In English the poem hasn't got the body of its lullabye; only its imprint. This way there is no seduction of mere language: of the language of genius even, which sometimes carries immoral substance or no moral substance at all. And in Miłosz's poems in English we are not given another voice, as we sometimes are in translations; other poems. The touch of a voice is not there. In a great poet, maybe it is this close, physical voice, not poetry, that gets lost in translation. (1978, 8)

The Polish perspective continued to be the major point of view on Miłosz in essays written by Polish critics. The points of view of Polish critics who contributed to the special issue of Ironwood devoted to Miłosz, differ considerably from those of the non-Polish critics. The former placed an inordinate stress on the Polish context of Miłosz's writings, although even they took into account Miłosz's broader poetic and philosophical affinities, realizing that an exclusively Polish perspective was clearly inadequate to the task of understanding and characterizing
Miłosz's work. At the same time, in tracing closely Miłosz's poetic development, Polish critics were able to show how crucial the role of the religious aspect in his poetry and thought was. For Anglo-American critics who were not acquainted with the entirety of Miłosz's poetry, the religious element became easier to grasp after the publication of The Land of Ulro (1984).

By the mid-1980s, the increasing knowledge of Miłosz's writings in the West began to make a real difference to the critical reception and its categories. As a result, the mediation of critics living in Poland became less important, and, with the exception of Aleksander Fiut (whose view of Miłosz was largely influenced by the poet himself), their role as mediators between Miłosz's writing and the English-speaking reader diminished. The process took place even before the appearance of Miłosz's Collected Poems (1988).

On the other hand, critics of Polish origin living in the West who were more familiar with the horizon of expectations of the English-speaking readers were not only enhancing the critical debate with new arguments but were also able to contribute directly to the discussions concerning the poetry of Eastern Europe. These discussions were probably the most significant new element in the critical reception of Miłosz's works after the Nobel Prize. At that point critics wanted both to acquire a deeper knowledge of his writings and to discuss the general impact of East European poetry on Anglo-American poetry and criticism. Bogdan Czaykowski's essay, "The Idea of Reality in the
Poetry of Czesław Miłosz", is a good example here. It argues for the centrality in Miłosz's writings and thoughts of the ontological theme and emphasizes the poet's insistent "will to reality" both as a quest for understanding and as an evaluative principle; and it moves freely between Polish and Anglo-American affinities of Miłosz's poetry and reacts polemically to at least some Anglo-American reflections on Miłosz. These questions which Czaykowski brought into critical focus would not be knowledgeably discussed until ten years later by Leonard Nathan and Anthony Quinn in their book The Poet's Work (1991). In fact Czaykowski, as it were, anticipated the thematic concerns of the two major studies of Miłosz's poetry that came out in the early 1990s:

The theological aspect of Miłosz's idea of reality would require a more extensive treatment than I can provide in this short paper. It comprises Miłosz's gnostic and Manichean tendencies, his firm belief in the existence of good and evil, his conviction that "we walk over hell while looking at flowers", the attempt to find in human history a link between transience and 'the eternal moment', the probing of eschatological and apocalyptic ideas and visions, and the polemic with the limiting character of the scientific outlook. (1988, 108)

Another significant attempt to define in a synthetic manner the complexity of Miłosz's overall philosophical and poetic stance and the nature of its appeal to readers outside of a particular national culture is found in Edward Możejko's essay "Between the Universals of Moral Sensibility and Historical Consciousness." Emphasizing that Miłosz's work is permeated "from beginning to end" with "a high-minded reflective tone," Możejko noted that one could "hardly resist the impression that [this reflectiveness] is tinged with a certain degree of moralizing"
(1988, 2). Having made this potentially damaging observation (at least in terms of modern attitudes to literature), he proceeded to turn it to good account by pointing out that it all depended on how one understood the concept of moralist. He mentioned the fact that "the eminent and internationally acclaimed Canadian author Margaret Laurence" believed that "a great writer cannot avoid being a moralist," and then defined his understanding of how the term could be used to illuminate the character of Miłosz's reflective tone:

What form of moralizing is meant, then, and what is the essence of its meaning? It seems to spring from a strong desire to sensitize man's conscience to the universal existential problems which are expressed in terms of good and evil, to problems religious, philosophical, national and social alike, which are of concern to those conditioned by a particular historical experience, but equally of concern to individuals living at all latitudes. This moralizing springs from an incessant anxiety and from hope; its source is the wealth of the Judeo-Christian tradition and the cultural and civilizing experiences of all mankind. Man is not a one-dimensional being, but a tangle of varying experiences. From this belief springs the polyphonic nature of Miłosz's poetry and its appeal to the reader. (1988, 2)

The co-existence of various critical models of describing Miłosz's works, the continuing evolution of his poetry and thought, and the increasing availability of his works in English translation made the task of those critics who did not know Polish especially challenging, even more so as they were still unable to place Miłosz's works in their chronological order. Shortly after the Nobel Prize, several of the previously unavailable books of Miłosz as well as his new works appeared in English translation. In 1981 The Issa Valley (Polish edition 1955), a year later Visions from San Francisco Bay (Polish
edition 1969), in 1984 The Separate Notebooks (volume of poems) and The Land of Ulro (Polish edition 1977) became available to the English-speaking reader. At the same time a number of his works which had previously appeared in English were reissued in new editions. In 1983 The Witness of Poetry was published simultaneously in English and in Polish (the first time this happened with a work by Miłosz), and Unattainable Earth (a volume of new poems) appeared in English translation in 1986, only two years after its Polish edition.

As a result, reviews of new translations as a rule involved critical reevaluation of works already available. The Issa Valley (despite the disagreements among critics about the quality of its translation) was welcomed by critics as a profoundly personal novel, "one born out of love and nostalgia for the world which was forever destroyed by the World War II." (Thompson 1981, 18) Treated as a book inspired by the writer’s childhood, The Issa Valley provided the critics with the opportunity to reflect on Miłosz’s Polish-Lithuanian origins and the impact his childhood had on his later development. This novel, as well as the volumes of Miłosz’s essays, enabled the critics to trace Miłosz’s intellectual development, his philosophy and its religious roots more fully than hitherto. Some critics reviewed The Issa Valley jointly with the simultaneously re-published Native Realm. Both books, despite considerable differences in their literary form, were seen in very similar terms. Such a treatment was possible because The Issa Valley was generally received as an
autobiographical novel in which Miłosz portrays himself as Thomas. As has already been mentioned, with the exception of essays published in Miłosz's issue of World Literature Today, Miłosz's prose was often analyzed as a whole, while critical essays in which their authors move freely from one prose work to another and include arguments from Miłosz's poems are the most interesting. John Bayley in his "Return to the Native", analyzing Native Realm and The Issa Valley, but also referring to The Emperor of the Earth and Miłosz's poetry, gives more than a review of Miłosz's works. Bayley touches upon one of the most important aspects of Miłosz's writings -- the poet's concept of art being not about words but about reality. Bayley points to one characteristic of Miłosz as a writer, "something in his work that is unique today: the reality of the thing, the return of the thing." (p. 30) This makes Miłosz very different in comparison with contemporary American literature. Bayley states that Miłosz's prose

makes us realize the extent to which an American masterpiece tends to be about itself only....[W]e have forgotten how to read and to recognize a primitive work. All those events and objects and people....these are real, with the reality conferred by primary art; they are not the 'web of symbols' ingeniously discovered by Edmund Wilson... (p. 30)

And concerning The Issa Valley he added: "It takes a masterpiece to reveal the sheer unreality of our modern creative modes and poses." (p. 30)

Nevertheless, the general tendency of looking at Miłosz's prose as an introduction to his poetry through the elements of his personality and philosophy was present even in reviews of
consecutive volumes of his essays. In his review of The Land of Ulro Norman Davies (not a critic, but a well known historian of Poland) wrote:

One learns much about Miłosz himself - his nostalgia, love of the esoteric, delight in ideas as wonderful playthings and self-indulgent distress as an "external alien" in a bad world growing worse. (1984, 16)

Mikicho Kakutani in her review for The New York Times expressed a similar opinion.

The book's value, to most American readers anyway, resides more in the picture it gives of Mr. Miłosz's own intellectual and spiritual odyssey, and in the handful of personal glimpses it affords of the poet himself. (1984, 21)

The critics not only showed an increasing awareness of the fact that there was a close connection between Miłosz's poetry and prose, but began to use his essays as an interpretive tool in their discussions of his poetry. One may even say that, in general, Miłosz's prose did not become a separate field of critical interest. This may be one of the reasons why, in the later stages of the reception, critical discussion of Miłosz's prose occurs mostly in essays devoted to his poetry. At the same time, the poet's self-presentations had clearly influenced critical discussion in the direction of thematic analysis of Miłosz's poetry. Moreover, Miłosz's prose did have an impact on categories used by some Western critics in their evaluations of developments in postwar culture. In this context, Madeline G. Levine's contribution to Between Anxiety and Hope, an essay devoted to Miłosz's political prose of the 1950s, is of considerable interest. Arguing that Miłosz's poetry proves that
the "central insights into the relationships between intellectuals and Communism as ideology and as power... had already been formulated by Miłosz in the late 1940s" (1988, 113) the critic presents Miłosz's political prose through the unity of its thoughts.

Driven by a fervent desire to bear witness to the expansionist menace of Soviet Communism, and by what appears to have been an obsessive need to reconstruct his own political/historical identity, Miłosz experimented with delivering his message to the West in three widely differing prose genres: the hybrid philosophical essay/portrait series of The Captive Mind; the kaleidoscopic novel, The Seizure of Power; and the intellectual/sociological autobiography, Native Realm. (1988, 115)

Limiting her reflections to political and ideological aspects, Levine analyzed how Miłosz tried to influence Western intellectuals' attitude toward "Soviet state and Soviet Marxist variant." (1988, 113) In fact, Levine's essay provides one more proof that the most valuable critical evaluations of Miłosz's prose did not come directly as reviews after the publication of specific works but when his prose works were analyzed jointly with his poetry. In many respects the reception of Miłosz's 1981-82 Harvard lectures, published in 1983 as The Witness of Poetry, was also similar. Reviews following its publication were on the whole very positive, but few in number. Critics reviewing the book pointed out that "the text of [Miłosz's] Norton Lectures is the credo of a great poet" (Wieseltier 1983, 32) and that The Witness of Poetry is a book of the rarest and most valuable kind of criticism, and an example of the very best of that kind. It creates a perspective from which to view poems, and while Miłosz's point of view may have limits or blind spots, or may see
sometimes what is harshly illuminated, he offers a profound corrective to many of the current assumptions not so much of criticism but of poetry itself. (Gibbons 1983, 193)

The reviewers described and discussed some of the most salient features of Milosz's concept of poetry, such as his view of poetry as "the passionate pursuit of the Real," and generally noted the philosophical and religious underpinnings of his argument. However, more important than the immediate response to Milosz's lectures, was their long-term impact on the categories of evaluation of contemporary poetry, the fact that the book created, in Gibbons's words, a "perspective from which to view poems," and laid the ground for the concept of "poetry as witness." That perspective also had an "indirect" influence on the subsequent reception of Milosz's own poetry.

Quite significant in this respect was the impact of The Land of Ulro which provided the critics with clear evidence of the religious character of Milosz's thought. Although the reviews were generally rather uninteresting, the impact that the book had on criticism can be seen in critical reflections on the religious aspects of Milosz's poetry and his affinity with William Blake.

As a result, the English-speaking reader was provided with an increasingly thorough and nuanced introduction to the complexity of Milosz's thought and poetry even before the appearance of the Collected Poems. Despite such advances in the depth and range of the critical reception of Milosz's work, critics who could not read Polish still found themselves hampered by their inability to encompass the entirety of his poetic
development. The consciousness of this limitation constantly comes to the surface in Donald Davie's *Czeslaw Milosz and the Insufficiency of Lyric* (1986). This book is a perfect example of the nature of the problem faced by English-speaking critics at that time.

Davie's book consists of several previously published articles which the author tried to integrate around a common theme. Davie attempts to trace Miłosz's poetic development and to analyse the evolution of his poetics and his struggle with language while at the same time setting him apart from other writers and philosophers preoccupied with similar issues.

It is very important to distinguish Miłosz's complaint about "the insufficiency of words" from certain far-reaching complaints about language which have exercised philosophers and poets for at least 300 years.... For Miłosz, language in the hands of a poet does indeed have access to the real, but not to the real in all its abundance. It names right enough, it names reliably and accurately, but it names too little. (p. 24-25)

Moving between Miłosz's poetry and prose Davie does not present any consistent point of view on Miłosz's works. On the one hand, he recognizes Miłosz's rejection of formal experiments in poetry and his classical point of view on "the office of poetry"; on the other, he disagrees with Miłosz's critique of writers and artists for their loss of contact with society and sees society at least partly responsible for the situation. Davie also recognizes Miłosz's innovative treatment of the lyric, but finds the fact "that the speaker of those [that is Miłosz's] poems occupies no fixed point for the duration of his poem but on the contrary is always flitting, moving about" -- irritating and
he would like to trace in detail Miłosz's gradual departure from lyric: "Miłosz characteristically seeks poetic forms more comprehensive and heterogeneous than any lyric, even the most sustained and elaborate." (p. 8) Another characteristic feature of Miłosz's poetry, according to Davie, is the construction of his poetic "I." Trying to come to terms with this feature, Davie wrote:

A "me" that is "cleaned... from time and changed all into a present without being or end" was not readily nor easily available to a poet, Miłosz, who had, in Native Realm and elsewhere, resolved to write a poetry that would always "contain history." Again the question arises: how was that attainable by Miłosz, except for the price of surrender to the overweening lyrical "I" that he has always distrusted? And the answer seems to be: by the way of the dithyrambic "I," which is not overweening because not in any way personal. (p. 48)

In his view, however, the selection available in translation does not provide a critic with a sufficient basis for a comprehensive analysis of Miłosz's poetry. The most characteristic feature of Davie's approach is the inconsistent mixture of old and new ways of looking at Miłosz's literary achievement. Actually, the book is quite typical of the various confusions and inconsistencies noticeable in the critical reception of Miłosz's works between 1980 and 1988 in the English-speaking countries. Criticizing Donald Davie's Czeslaw Milosz and the Insufficiency of Lyric, Renata Gorczyńska failed to understand that Western critics were unable to evaluate the extent to which the already available translations of Miłosz's poems were representative of the entirety of his oeuvre. Only a knowledge of Polish and the ability to trace his poetic development in its entirety made it
possible for Gorczyńska to write:

Presently, twelve books by Czesław Miłosz exist in English....Furthermore, his numerous essays, public speeches and new translations of poetry have been published in American and British periodicals. His English-speaking critics need not worry for lack of material, although critical familiarity with Miłosz is far from complete..... Nevertheless, the bibliography mentioned above allows scholars who have no ability to read Polish to undertake in-depth studies of Miłosz’s modes and visions. (1988, 208)

Even when the retrospective and fairly comprehensive collection of Miłosz’s poems in English translation, the Collected Poems, finally appeared in 1988, Miłosz criticism still found itself unable to make the actual texts of the poems the basis of addressing Miłosz’s prospective reader. Critical mediation still relied, at least to some extent, on the accumulated critical formulas and opinions and the critics’ assumptions about the horizon of expectations of Western readers. Not surprisingly then, when the previous cliché of Miłosz -- as principally the author of The Captive Mind -- reappeared in A. Alvarez’s review of the Collected Poems, Miłosz wrote an irate letter to the editor of The New York Review of Books. The poet complained about constantly being viewed through his first prose works published in the West. In his opinion, politically distorted Western interest in Central and Eastern Europe was to blame for this situation.

I brought, unfortunately, my share to the body of knowledge on the subject, by writing, in prose The Captive Mind and Native Realm. I say: unfortunately, because....they distort the image of their author in the minds of the readers and of literary critics, by presenting him as more obsessed with historical events than he is....[i]n fact for a long time my name was connected with my books in prose available in translation, while the poetry that I have been publishing
since 1931, only slowly made its way to the reading public abroad thanks to its English versions....I am grateful to America and proud of being now one of its poets, reaching young audiences who treat me primarily as a poet. You can imagine my surprise, therefore, when I saw Mr. Alvarez copiously quoting from my old prose book instead of dealing with my poetic œuvre sufficiently exemplified by Collected Poems. (1988, 42)

One may note, however, that on the whole the earlier clichés appeared in the reviews directed at the general public. The same observation can be made about the reactions to the award of the Nobel Prize to Miłosz in 1980 in the news’ sections of daily and weekly papers. However, the appearance of a number of new translations, as well as the award of the Nobel Prize, did have a significant influence on the further development of critical models of writing about Miłosz in scholarly and critical journals. For instance, D.J. Enright, reviewing Miłosz’s Collected Poems suggested that the real difficulty with coming to terms with Miłosz’s works was to determine the status and nature of his literary achievement.

The difficulty with Miłosz lies less in understanding him than in establishing or recognizing what one thinks or feels about him: not what the author says, but how the reader responds. (1988, 956)

Some of the confusion (or hesitation) discernible in Western criticism actually showed that, although several in-depth studies of Miłosz’s writing had already been published in periodicals or as chapters of books, they were (for various reasons) hardly ever taken into account by the majority of Anglo-American critics. One of the possible explanations of the limited (or very slow) impact of these works on the reception process lies in the fact that
essays overviewing Miłosz's poetry were published primarily in books devoted entirely to contemporary Polish literature and were addressed to the specialists in the area.

In Madeline Levine's book *Contemporary Polish Poetry 1925-1975* an entire chapter is devoted to the poetry of Czesław Miłosz. The critic commenced her observations about Miłosz's writings by stating that Miłosz "cannot be comprehended apart from the context of the chaotic upheavals of East European society during this century," and she accordingly tried to describe Miłosz's poetry in the context of the historical events of his nation and of the poet's biography. Though Levine provides a general characterization of Miłosz's poetry stating that

in his classically restrained poetry Miłosz addresses the crucial problems of the twentieth century: the cataclysms of world war, the destruction of cultural values, the crisis of religious faith, the erosion of humaneness and individual dignity (1981, 36)

-- her main focus is on the poet's reaction to the historically changing reality. By focusing on the themes of his poems, the critic only marginally makes observations about their artistic features. Nevertheless a careful reader of the chapter will take note of Levine's statement that "commonly, Miłosz approaches themes of ominous import with either the icy quiet of scathing irony or with deceptively placid description." And despite the limitations of the approach chosen by Levine one can also learn that

the somber discursive mode....became the distinguishing characteristic of Miłosz's mature poetry. The "typical" Miłosz poem from the 1940s and 1950s adheres (in a relaxed modern fashion) to such traditional prosodic structures as
regulated line length, rhyme (even if approximate), stanzaic structure. Images are rare and are more likely to be metonymic than metaphoric. Emphasis is always placed on the theme or message which the neat form and the sonorous lines enhance.

The poems from the American period are marked by a decided relaxation of formal constraints. In a given poem lines may be of any length, conforming more to the natural rhythms of discourse than the prescribed rhythms of prosody. Rhyme is basically dispensed with. The mode is still discursive, but the tone is quieter, more contemplative than the assertive argumentation of, especially, the political works from the 1950s. The loosening of formal constraints in the poetry parallels the introduction of new themes. The bitterly ironic perspective of the observer of historical process has yielded to a more meditative posture as Miłosz ponders the eternal philosophical questions of the nature of good and evil, of man's moral responsibility in a universe which often appears to be the plaything of demonic forces. (1981, 48)

So even before the wider attention paid to Miłosz's poetry after the award of the Nobel Prize, the English-speaking reader as well as interested critics were provided, in spite of their complaints expressed even as late as the 1990s, with fairly detailed observations about the poetic art of Miłosz.

Bogdana Carpenter's study The Poetic Avant-Garde in Poland 1918-1939 provided Western readers (and especially the critics, since the study has a scholarly character) with a discussion of trends in Polish poetry at the beginning of the century. Although the book only marginally deals with Miłosz, Carpenter's study presents the situation of Polish poetry at the time of Miłosz's debut and outlines the importance of his poetry for the literary process in Poland. Furthermore, the book shows the Polish context of some of Miłosz's opinions about poetry and its role that were often explained by Western criticism (especially in the 1980s) by Miłosz's exposure to and the situation of modern Anglo-American
poetry. Referring to Miłosz’s article "The Lie of Today’s Poetry," published in 1938, Carpenter writes:

Opposed to the formalistic approach to poetry that does not go beyond the poem itself, Miłosz shifted the stress from the poem to the artist. He opposed aesthetic categories with the ethical categories of responsibility, inner discipline, and truth to oneself.... For Miłosz the poetic act included the moral responsibility, responsibility oriented both outward - toward others - and inward - toward himself. If poetry was justified by the poet’s certitude that his work "can be helpful to at least one man in his struggle with himself and with the world", it was also a means by which the poet defined himself and his destiny. Poetry was important not as an aesthetic but as an ethical category, as a means for solving the philosophical and moral dilemmas of either the poet or the reader; its ultimate task was to bring the realization of one’s own individuality. (1983, 198)

In other words, it was not the events of history witnessed by his generation but Miłosz’s general attitude toward poetry that made him an important literary figure. Miłosz’s views were primarily formed in relation to avant-garde theories and practices and as a reaction to the situation of his native poetry in the early decades of the century, and only secondarily, as a reaction to historical events. Concluding her book Carpenter wrote:

The feeling of living in exceptional times, of being both witness and victim of an apocalypse, was the source of the poet’s sense of belonging to a condemned, stigmatized generation. The same awareness would become overwhelming among the poets of the post-World War II generation. With them, also, Miłosz shared the tragic conviction that in the time of war, death, and hunger, there was no room for poetry, at least as it had been known before then. History that has grown to the dimensions of an apocalypse left no place for art, just as confusion destroyed harmony and anxiety excluded peace. Miłosz’s realization of the obsoleteness of poetry in the face of death and destruction was totally alien to Avantgarde attitudes, but it would become the major dilemma of Polish poetry after 1945. In the evolution of Polish poetry, the importance of Miłosz is that he pushed the critical point - what might be called a watershed, or division between post-World War II and prewar
poetry - as far back as 1933, when his first catastrophist poems were written. (1983, 201)

Although focusing on Miłosz's prewar poetry, Carpenter's study emphasizes the unity of the different periods of his literary career rather than the differences between them. This point of view on Miłosz's writings became increasingly common among critics in the 1980s. Despite the complexity of the problem, in his contribution to Between Anxiety and Hope Edward Możejko tried to come to terms with the question of "periods" of Miłosz's writing.

Miłosz's works have a surprising continuity and a consistency rarely found among writers. It is therefore a highly risky undertaking to look for some kind of ceasura, for a border separating one period from another in his case.....Despite the above statement, it is difficult to resist the temptation to insert certain delimitations. Even the poet himself seems to notice such a ceasura, when in the preface to Zniewolony umysł he admits that the war has changed him considerably....It appears that a certain period of Miłosz's creativity comes to an end at the close of the half-century and that a new period begins. The difficulty lies in trying to define the difference. (1988, 17)

Not surprisingly, the divisions into different periods, emphasized especially by Polish émigré critics in the 1970s, appeared in the later essays devoted to Miłosz less frequently. Instead of distinguishing separate periods, critics more often tried to define the distinctiveness of Miłosz's poetic art. One of the most interesting attempts to characterize Miłosz's poetic achievement is Stanisław Barańczak's essay "Miłosz's Poetic Language: A Reconnaissance." Unlike the majority of the critical works discussed so far, Barańczak's essay focused on Miłosz's concept of poetic language and the thematic preoccupations of the
poet were touched upon only marginally. Pointing out Miłosz's attempts to describe reality, Barańczak states that "Like many other poets, Miłosz is tormented by a basic shortcoming of language: its being out of proportion to reality." (1986, 320) In Barańczak's opinion Miłosz's way of overcoming this "shortcoming" in his poetry contributes to the uniqueness of his poetics. Since the poet believes in the superiority of reality over language he "always tries to find the most concrete among all possible synonyms, even at the cost of transgressing the limits of the ethnic language". (1986, 322) However, the "lexical quest" does not seem to be enough to define Miłosz's struggle to describe reality. As Barańczak points out

his most characteristic stylistic inclinations appear not so much within the field of lexical options as within the field of figures of speech. Compared to most lyrical poets, Miłosz stands out as someone who almost completely rejects figures near to the metaphorical pole (especially metaphors as such and symbols) and who instead strongly favors metonymical figures (especially synecdoche and within it especially pars pro toto). Miłosz is a poet of synecdoche.... (1986, 322)

This observation leads the critic to the conclusion that the best description of Miłosz's poetry can be given by using "technical film expressions" and especially such terms as "panorama", "close-up", "cuts" and "sequence of film shots." Film terminology gives Barańczak the tool to show that Miłosz's poetry can be characterized by a "fusion of extremely incompatible perspectives" as well as by "testimonies belonging to various points of view."

Though Barańczak does not limit his observations to the Polish background of Miłosz's poetry, he not only quotes some of
the opinions of Polish critics but also refers to differences between Miłosz’s and Julian Przyboś’s concepts of poetic language. Stating that Miłosz’s "speech is not 'more accurate’, as Przyboś would like it, but rather 'more complete’, the critic refers to the opinion of Jan Błoński:

Błoński’s formula, "more complete speech", is very exact. It stresses that Miłosz’s use of "someone else’s word" and "someone else’s voice" has not only classicistic provenances: in other words, it represents not simply a resistance to romantic egocentrism and "confessional" poetry. One must remember in this connection the basic antinomy of Miłosz’s poetry - the tension between preeminent reality and imperfect language (which is nonetheless the poet’s only tool).
"Someone else’s word" and "someone else’s voice" certainly help to create a self-ironic distance toward one’s own ego; but more important in Miłosz’s case is the fact that this technique makes possible the marshaling of various and complementary testimonies about reality. (1986, 327)

Self-ironic distance and pathos make another of the antinomies characteristic, in Barańczak’s view, of Miłosz’s poems. In fact Barańczak’s analysis of Miłosz’s poetic language is a search for oppositions (or antinomies) that help to define his achievements as a poet. Another opposition noted by the critic is Miłosz’s struggle "between the harmony of the verse and the flexibility of syntax". Referring to another Polish critic, Jerzy Kwiatkowski, Barańczak writes:

The critic Jerzy Kwiatkowski was right when he indicated that what he called "Miłosz’s magic" consists, among other things, in a specific interplay between more or less traditional versification and modern, individual, colloquial, and flexible syntax and vocabulary. (1986, 329)

This observation leads Barańczak to the conclusion that

Miłosz’s poems really are "free from the claims of poetry or prose".... but not for a simple reason that they avoid metaphorical condensation of meaning and prefer metonymical
presentation of the "accidentals of life". Another important reason is Miłosz's ever-present inclination to counterpoint pathos with irony, sublimity with coarseness, high style with low. (1986, 330)

Though Barańczak's study of Miłosz's poetic language was quoted in essays written by Western critics of non-Polish origin (Helen Vendler, Leonard Nathan and Arthur Quinn), its impact was very limited. As Czaykowski pointed out in his essay about Miłosz in The Mature Laurel, much of the attention Miłosz's poetry has received in the English-speaking world has been focused on Miłosz the East European intellectual, the author of The Captive Mind..... "the conscience of Poland", "the conscience of modern man", or, at best, "a historical poet of bleak illumination", rather than on Miłosz the poetic artist. (1991, 50)

Czaykowski's essay "The Poetry of Bolesław Leśmian, Czesław Miłosz and Aleksander Wat" was devoted in large part to a discussion of the poetic art of Czesław Miłosz in comparison with the poetry of Leśmian and Wat. Czaykowski attempted to give an answer on several levels to the question of "what the pursuit of a more spacious form meant in Miłosz's case." He paid special attention to Miłosz's way of "developing and fusing disparate voices" and of the "blending of richly modulated yet often strikingly climactic rhythmic flow with near-dramatic speech."

Trying to define distinctive features of Miłosz, Czaykowski pointed out not only that "[a]bove everything else, Czesław Miłosz is a master of the full poetic line," but also emphasized "that Miłosz consistently keeps his poetry close to the mode of referential speech in contradistinction to the category of linguistic construct or autonomous language." Noting that "inner
form" was not the hallmark of Miłosz’s poetry, he nevertheless stressed the poet’s mastery over an astonishingly wide and variegated range of poetic forms, from gnomic maxims and short lyrics to cycles of poems and long poetic essays.

In spite of the above essays devoted to the poetic art of Miłosz rather than to the description of his thematic preoccupations and philosophy, the latter interest remained a prevailing feature of the majority of studies devoted to Miłosz. The award of the Nobel Prize and the enhanced interest in Miłosz led to the publication of the first major book-length studies dealing with the entirety of Miłosz’s oeuvre. The first of these, *The Eternal Moment* (1987) by Aleksander Fiut, was a translation (with some modifications) of a work which had previously appeared in Polish. Despite its emphasis on Miłosz’s Polish literary background and affinities, and its involvement in polemics taking place among Polish critics, the book presented a consistent and well exemplified point of view on Miłosz’s poetic achievement. However, the book is more an exposition and analysis of Miłosz’s thought than a study of his poetry. The treatment of Miłosz’s poetic language by Fiut is far from adequate and the critic does not pay sufficient attention to the formal distinctiveness and complexity of Miłosz’s poems. Therefore the value of the book lies primarily in the comprehensive discussion of Miłosz’s poetry in terms of its philosophical and religious rather than its political and ideological aspects.

Also similar in this respect is the first book-length study
of Miłosz written by two American academics, Leonard Nathan and Arthur Quinn. In their book, *The Poet's Work: An Introduction to Czeslaw Milosz* (1991), several aspects of Miłosz's poetry, including the religious aspect, are discussed at some length and in-depth from a Western perspective, whereas before only critics with the Polish perspective were able to be as comprehensive and self-assured. The Western perspective is also very clear in the presentation of Miłosz's connections with the most prominent writers of "world literature," including his affinities with modern Anglo-American poets. In his foreword to Nathan and Quinn's study, Stanisław Barańczak remarked that "[t]his book is no doubt just what Miłosz's work needed as the poet reaches his eightieth year: a way of looking back at his six decades of writing to discover the underlying unity." It may even be said that the book marks the critical maturing of the Western reception of Miłosz's oeuvre. However, the authors focus mostly on Miłosz's own explanations of his writings and only seldom take into account what has already been said about the poet by other critics. They emphasize the importance of various aspects of Miłosz's self-presentation while paying insufficient attention to the critical works devoted to him.

It remains an open question to what extent the critical reception of Miłosz in English-speaking countries contributed to a better understanding of his works by his English-speaking readers. In more general terms, however, at least some points of view presented by critics during the reception process should be
highlighted. Trying to come to terms with Miłosz's poetry, Western critics, for the obvious reason of limitations of translation, initially focused primarily on contextual and thematic preoccupations of Miłosz's writings. Apart from politically oriented interest, the critics focused on the fact that Miłosz in his poetry presents historical experiences of the entire nation in a very personal and unique way. His war-time poems, and especially "The World", were analyzed in terms of the role of poetry after World War II and of the poet's response to the tragedy of the Nazi occupation. It became clear, however, that the distinctiveness of Miłosz's poetry did not lie in its themes. The critical reflections about the poet's response to tragedy and injustice of the war period and to the subsequent historical events in Eastern Europe did not result in a satisfactory explanation and interpretation of his writings and failed as a way of presenting and evaluating his oeuvre. Gradually Western critics began to pay closer attention to ideational as well as formal features of his poetry, especially to its "cold" tone and to the avoidance by the poet of formal experimentation.

The problems presented by Miłosz's poetics were posed most searchingly by Donald Davie in his book *Czeslaw Milosz and the Insufficiency of Lyric*; however, other critics too (Seamus Heaney and Helen Vendler among many others) began to pay closer attention to the difficulties of establishing adequate categories of description of his writing. Moreover, in general critics
realized that searching for similarities with other poets known to English-speaking readers was of very limited value in their attempt to grasp the essential character of Miłosz’s poetry. Even in the early stage of the reception of Miłosz in the West it was clear to at least some critics that studies of Miłosz should not be limited to thematic analyses of his literary works only but should take into account questions of poetic form. This point of view, presented initially by critics who knew Polish, gradually (and for a variety of reasons) became more common among non-Polish critics.

In the 1980s, the majority of English-speaking critics tried to come to terms with the formal aspects of Miłosz’s poetry. In fact, the formal elements of his verse and of his poetic language became important factors in the analysis of his literary œuvre and the best critical works devoted to Miłosz did not ignore the importance of form for the meaning of his poems. Critical essays published in English brought to the fore several points of view and categories of considerable importance for the understanding of Miłosz’s literary works. Critics analyzing Miłosz’s use of language (his diction and syntax) pointed out that the poet constantly refers to reality and not to the language itself. Similarly pertinent observations were made on the level of poetic structure and of the poet’s choice of figures of speech (his preference for metonymy over metaphor). Critical reflections on various elements of Miłosz’s poetics, especially on his rejection of formal experimentation, his uses of literary
tradition, the non-personal poetic "I," the search for "a more spacious form," the use and fusing of different voices and perspectives, including the voice of affirmation, coldness of tone or the art of the full poetic statement, all contributed to a better understanding of Miłosz not only as a thinker but also as a master of poetic art.

Nathan and Quinn's book, ignoring the question of Miłosz's poetic form, may be at best treated as a limited introduction to the thematic aspects of his oeuvre. The Western reader who would like to come to know what makes Miłosz's writing unique would still need to become familiar with several other works devoted to Miłosz.
Chapter 2

THE CRITICAL RECEPTION OF JOSIF BRODSKY

I

The unflagging Western interest during the postwar period in the various aspects of Soviet life and culture was a complex and variegated phenomenon, which reflected the antinomies of Western political attitudes to the "leading country of socialism" and world's second largest nuclear power. The situation during the post-Stalinist period obviously differed from that of the late 1940s and the early 1950s. The changes in the policies (both internal and external) of the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin opened up an entirely new era in the relations between East and West. Taking into account the fact that the critical reception of Josif Brodsky did not begin until the mid 1960s, it is reasonable to focus on the post-Stalinist period of the international context only.

The combination of curiosity, ideological motivation and fear, characteristic of the post-Stalinist period of the Western treatment of the Soviet Bloc, resulted in inconsistent and, at times, even contradictory attitudes. While Nikita Khrushchev's reforms were warmly welcomed in the West, and the successes of Soviet technology helped to enhance the interest in what was officially approved by the Soviet authorities, the growing power
of the Soviet state and the unmistakable spread of communism evoked considerable fear and stimulated a Western search for voices of opposition inside the Soviet empire.

This ambivalence in the attitudes to the Soviet Union also affected Western perception of its literature. In general, Western criticism reflected the prevailing attitudes of acceptance or rejection (often a mixture of both) of the official self-image of the Soviet Union. At the same time, Western attitudes toward the Soviet Union were affected by the evolution of philosophical trends, as well as the political and ideological orientations of Western intellectuals.¹

The multiplicity and the nature of the factors involved in the development of Western interest in Russian literature in the post-Stalinist period makes it impossible to present this development in a linear fashion, as the result of a few underlying causes. The changing political strategies towards the Soviet Bloc (such as the brief period of the policy of liberation, through coexistence to detente and the Helsinki process), changing Soviet policies, both internal and external, literary and critical developments on both sides of the "iron curtain," and the differences in the policies, attitudes and

¹ The oscillations of Western attitude are well illustrated by the choice of Soviet writers for the Nobel Prize in Literature: the award to Boris Pasternak for the novel Doctor Zhivago in 1958 and the enthusiasm shown by leading critics for his poetic achievement was followed in 1965 by the award to Sholokhov, one of the pillars of Soviet communist establishment; this choice was "counter-balanced" five years later by the award to Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, the most prominent of the dissident writers.
cultural dynamics of individual countries (since the term "English-speaking countries" covers several countries that differed in many respects) -- resulted in a process of considerable complexity, which at any given time consisted of a mixture of attitudes and trends. What is, nevertheless, clear is the fact that the USSR and its literature was constantly on the horizon of the critics' and readers' interest in English-speaking countries.

A closer scrutiny of the Western reactions to Russian literature in the 1950s and 1960s reveals that Western critics were to some extent influenced by the official line of the Soviet authorities in the sphere of literature. In the 1940s and 1950s they seldom wrote about authors "banned" from the literary existence in their homeland; only in the 1960s did they begin to pay increasing attention to "unofficial" literary works. Already known and recognized in the West as a major poet, Anna Akhmatova was almost absent in Western literary criticism during the years of her forced silence. However, after the reappearance of her poetry in official Soviet publications, she was awarded the Taormina Prize for Poetry in Italy in 1964, and a year later an honorary degree from Oxford University. Shortly before her death she published in the West Requiem and the Poem Without a Hero, described by a Western critic as "two masterpieces in verse." (Terras 1985, 15).

In the 1960s Western critics began to show considerable awareness of the inter-relationship between literary and non-
literary factors in the reception of Russian literature. Linking the wide interest in contemporary Russian poetry with the political situation, A. Alvarez wrote:

'[I]nterest in the new Russian poets grows steadily. The Kremlinologists started it, but Yevtushenko and Voznesensky were their own best agents. In 1961 their first tour to the West became a triumphal progress. In their different ways, both are masters of the art of public reading... they have that film star's gift of projecting their glamour even over an audience that can't understand a word they say (1967, 21).

Not surprisingly, the most translated, especially in the mid-1960s, were those poets who, although officially recognized in the Soviet Union, did not appear to be entirely "trusted" by the state -- Y. Yevtushenko and A. Voznesensky. Commenting on Voznesensky's poetic tour of Canada in 1971, a Vancouver journalist wrote:

Voznesensky's tour of Canada (Toronto, London, Vancouver, Montreal) was arranged by the federal government's external affairs department, and is his first trip abroad after his 1967 visit to the United States from which he was summarily recalled on the ground that he was "too sick", an allegation he later denied publicly. (Hesse 1971, 38)

Despite the statement's indirectness, it was understood that the poet was recalled from his visit in the United States in 1967 by the Soviet authorities. By noting this fact the journalist indicated that the poet was officially recognized, but probably not fully trusted by the Soviet officials and as a result was

1 Considering Canadian foreign policy at the time, whose aim seems to have been to counterbalance U.S. influence by developing closer relations with the U.S.S.R., it is not surprising that the tour of Voznesensky was organized by the Department of External Affairs which, in this case, almost acted as an agency promoting Russian poets to the Canadian audiences.
even more interesting for the Western reader. By the mid-1960s several volumes of contemporary Soviet poetry appeared in English translation, among them at least four volumes of Yevtushenko and Voznesensky. Their poetry was seen by some critics as a continuation of the great Russian poetry of the 1920s and early 1930s. In the eyes of critics there was an interruption in the development of poetry in the Soviet Union during the Stalinist period (roughly from the mid-1930s until mid-1950s); however the newest wave of Soviet poets was seen as going back to the best traditions of the first three decades of the century. In 1965 George L. Kline wrote in *Triquarterly*:

Since Pasternak’s death in 1960, the greatest living poet writing in the Russian language is undoubtedly Anna Akhmatova. But Akhmatova is past seventy, and her best work -- unlike Pasternak’s -- is almost entirely pre-Soviet. Between the aging titan and the youngest generation of Soviet poets there are a few poets of competence, skill, and minor talent. However, the youngest generation has, in the last half-dozen years, produced two superbly gifted poets: Andrei Voznesensky (b.1935) and Joseph Brodsky (b.1940). (p. 85)

Pointing out the affinities of the newest wave of Soviet poets with their great predecessors and linking this fact with the renewed availability of the work of the major Russian poets of the early 20th century, Simon Karlinsky observed:

Since 1956....there has been a definite poetic revival in the Soviet Union. Within the country, the most striking development of the past decade is the grudging recognition now granted to the great Russian poets of the early 20th century, and, most important, the partial availability of their work. (1966, 549)

The critics connected the fluctuations in the development of poetry in the Soviet Union with the changes in Soviet policies in
the sphere of literature. Karlinsky in his review of several volumes of contemporary Russian poets focused on the impact that consecutive political changes had on Russian poetry:

By the early 1930s, that great wave was forcibly brought to an end by what in retrospect amounts to a governmental ban on all creativity and imagination. While Mayakovsky was being acclaimed the great Soviet poet and his work nationalized; while Pasternak was being decried by the Soviet press for his uniqueness and individuality, no younger poet was any longer allowed to try to equal the stylistic daring and modernity of either of these two. Victorian-age poetic techniques, themes and styles were brought back, proclaimed the latest word, and institutionalized as the only possible way for Socialist-Realist poetry, whereupon all Russian poetry worthy of the name ceased until after Stalin's death. (1966, 549)

He also aptly emphasized the difference in Western reception of the greatest Russian poets of the interwar period and those of the newest generation:

Outside the Soviet Union, the youngest post-Stalinist poets have been making the biggest news. The international attention now attracted by Yevtushenko and Voznesensky is nothing short of phenomenal. Their poetry is read in translation and acclaimed by thousands of young Europeans and Americans for whom Akhmatova and Pasternak were merely names....(1966, 549).

Perhaps the most enthusiastic welcome for the youngest Soviet poets came from such American writers as Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti and their counterparts in other Western countries. This enthusiasm was probably due to their involvement in the creation of a culture for the masses as well as their openly expressed rejection of official American culture and of the policies of the American government (in which opposition to the war in Vietnam played a major role).

The mixture of attitudes described above is reflected, for
instance, in Michael Horowitz's "Afterwords" to the anthology *Children of Albion: Poetry of the "Underground" in Britain*, in which the author referred frequently to Voznesensky and Yevtushenko. Western 'underground' poets found it easy to regard the young Russian poets as inspired by ideas similar to their own. Horowitz wrote:

> And the race which matters most is not white or Russian or American....but that of all mankind, chosen by birth in this age to shoulder the burdens of world citizenship. By the legislature of poetry, creeds and charters and patriotic loyalties are no substitute for self-examination; but in their conviction that the race is still worth running (and race memory depends on race futurity), nearly all living poets are believers, with Yevtushenko -- "My religion is a belief in man." (1969, 373)

The number of Russian writers who visited Western countries to read their poetry was very limited; the visits of those who were allowed to travel were treated by the Soviet authorities as instruments of Soviet propaganda directed at the West. This fact, however, was seldom brought to the attention of the Western audiences of the public readings by Voznesensky and Yevtushenko, nor was it prominent in the critical reflection. For example, when Andrei Voznesensky visited Vancouver in 1971, the local newspaper, *The Vancouver Sun*, wrote:

> No wonder Andrei Voznesensky draws tens of thousands of listeners when he reads his poems in Russia. His voice sounds like a full orchestra. He ranges in expression from a pianissimo flute to the mighty forte of the growling tuba, and the pizzicato of the string section softens to the andante of a mellow cello. (Hesse 1971, 38)

The article says next to nothing about the poems themselves; instead several paragraphs are devoted to the reading. The sound of Russian (notable for its melodiousness) was at the centre of
interest for both the critics and the audiences:

The rich phonetics of Russian language lend themselves well to poetry read aloud. There is a wide range of colour and of modulations in the Russian speech pattern that doesn’t often become audible when Canadian poets read their verse. (Hesse 1971, 38)

This general observation may partly explain the large public interest in the readings of poetry "performed" by contemporary Russian poets.

The wider exchanges in the sphere of information and culture, including literature, between the West and the Soviet Union did not mean, however, that Western attitudes were now based on the belief that the Soviet Bloc was really changing, or that the Soviet policies were taken on trust in the West. The factor of dissidence and opposition continued to play an important role in gaining the Western reader’s interest in Russian writers.

Western critics writing about contemporary poetry in the Soviet Union seemed to be inconsistent, often mixing disparate categories of critical evaluation. One may even get the impression that they tried to combine literary and political points of view. While they did not want to reject the poetry that was published underground even if it was of doubtful literary value, neither did they want to reject officially approved contemporary Russian poets whom they considered the most interesting. At any rate, apart from Voznesensky and Yevtushenko, few contemporary Russian poets (such as Bella Akhmadulina, Aleksandr Kushner, Naum Korzhavin and Natalya Gorbanevskaya) were
available in translation and they were not as widely translated and published in the West as the two "representative" Soviet poets.

In the articles published in the late 1960s which dealt with the youngest generation of Russian poets, Western critics openly showed their concern with the impact the Soviet state had on the officially published poets. In 1966 Karlinsky noted that in the poems of Yevtushenko and Voznesensky there were still present "the standard themes of official Soviet poetry: the greatness of Russian people, the tenderness and affection inspired in the poet by Lenin's name, and the horrors of American militarism, Western decadence and FBI." (p. 550) He added that when Mayakovsky treated similar themes back in the 1920s, there was no doubt that they represented his actual convictions; in Yevtushenko and Voznesensky, whatever their feelings may be, the reader gets the inevitable Soviet clichés which all Soviet writers (and especially those allowed to travel abroad) have been required to reiterate ad nauseam for the past thirty years. (p. 550)

The consciousness that the Soviet State still tried to control literature was present in almost all Western responses to officially published works. "The concept of literature, including poetry, as a lesson or a sermon has always been central to Soviet culture" wrote Karlinsky in the same article. In his analysis of Voznesensky's poetry, Kline noted that

Voznesensky is not only a political but also a "philosophical" poet, that is, a poet who discerns and attempts to evoke possible, but non-actual, modes of cosmic reality and human existence...

To Soviet critics such evocations smack of 'formalism' and 'abstractionism'. But despite their disapproval, Voznesensky has managed to publish almost everything he has written, usually with a delay of not more than a year or two,
sometimes with no delay at all....Apparently the Soviet
leadership can tolerate an "experimental" and even
"philosophical" poet -- so long as his political commitment
is clear.... (1965, 86)

Although sharing the belief in the impact of politics on
poetry in the Soviet Union, critics differed in their view of the
actual freedom an officially recognized poet could and would be
willing to exercise in his writing. J. Symons was rather
pessimistic when he wrote: "I suppose if you are a public poet
like Yevtushenko, consciously a Russian patriot, you are bound to
produce extravagantly phrased poems on large themes...." (1967,
87) In the opinion of Alvarez the pressure exerted on the writers
was considerable, but international fame might allow poets to be
more open and free. The political pressure gave an excuse for and
explained the origin of those poems of Yevtushenko's that
actually reflected Socialist Realism. "God knows what pressures
he is working under, but they seem to have been too much for the
poetry." (1967, 21) Writing about Voznesensky he added: "I
suspect he and Yevtushenko exploit their fame as cultural Beatles
in order to protect themselves from the party zombies". (1967,
21) Western doubts about the possibility of political and
artistic freedom of literature in the Soviet Union were
reinforced by the words of Anna Akhmatova, who, shortly before
her death, "stated in several interviews that today's important
and lasting Russian poetry does not appear in the official press
and is unknown abroad." (Karlinsky 1966, 550) The name of Anna
Akhmatova was, in fact, often used to introduce unofficial poetry
published inside the Soviet Union in underground publications.
Commenting on Akhmatova's opinion Karlinsky wrote:

The underground poetry Akhmatova had in mind has a miniscule circulation in the Soviet Union in mimeographed publications, the very names of which constitute a challenge to what is officially acceptable: Syntax (an open invitation to a charge of formalism), Sphynxes (an assertion of the mystery of poetic creation) and Phoenix (a rebirth of poetry from the ashes). In these privately circulated publications (some of which have been reprinted in toto in a West German émigré journal), young and unknown poets can achieve a full measure of freedom from the ideological fetters and can write in any style about anything they please. Their stylistic inspiration comes for the most part from Khlebnikov's experiments with language of some fifty years ago; Marina Tsvetaeva (who committed suicide in 1941 after her voluntary return from exile) and Nikolai Gumilev (shot for counter-revolutionary activities in 1921) are objects of a cult. The poetry in these little journals is by no means great, and it is even rarely good, but it is fresh and free in the way Yevtushenko's is not. (1966, 550-51)

Similarly, while praising Yevtushenko and Voznesensky, Michael Horowitz found it necessary to bring to Western attention poets persecuted in the Soviet Union. The dream that "more living art centres, revolutionary seminars, and kibbutzim be set up, to accommodate the wide potential of energies now being spawned," (1969, 372) expressed in the poems of the young British poets had been, after all, almost fulfilled in the official image of the Soviet Union. However, such a "poetic heaven" did not, in fact, exist in the Soviet Union, and Horowitz could not ignore the reality of Soviet literary life, noting, for instance, the mistreatment of Josif Brodsky and "the vicious banishment" of the group of Ginsburg. Nevertheless, and perhaps not surprisingly, he made almost no distinction between internal exile and banishment as penalties for dissidence or nonconformity and the practice of censorship.
The snag is, of course, that where something like this arrangement already exists, as in Russia, it’s sometimes those that do produce who get eaten -- because their milk of human kindness doesn’t meet the policy requirements of the marketing board commissars. Viz. -- the indictment and exile of Joseph Brodsky as a "workshy element" and "dangerous parasite" for working at nothing but his poetry and translations; the vicious banishment of Russia’s Ginsburg and his underground friends; and the censorship by Khrushchev of the punchlines of Yevtushenko’s "Babi Yar".... (1969, 372)

The young founders of and contributors to the Western "underground" movements treated literature as well as the entire counter-culture very seriously. In the "Afterwords" Horowitz wrote:

But if (like Yevtushenko, after being exported as a wonder boy of post-Stalinism, withdrawn from circulation because -- like Voznesensky -- he will not be "directed") our underdogs can be strangled to heel by frustrated owners (tied to their own possessiveness)...., if festivals like Hughes’s have to be qualified, in utilizing the facilities of the governing literary bureaucracy, by restricting themselves to poetry of which that bureaucracy can entirely approve -- and yet be ostracized by the Russians; then revolution only comes full circle to reassert the triumph of warheads and crypto-satanic mills of power & profit & failure scraping the charter’d skies.(1969, 375)

The critical interest in "unofficial" Russian poetry which began to rise in the West in the mid-1960s and resulted in the publication of collections of non-official poems written in Russian outside of the Soviet Union or in the underground, may also be seen as a counterattack from the "traditionally" oriented critics. The need for a re-evaluation of the actual freedom of writers in the Soviet Union became part of the concern shown for the Soviet treatment of literature as a model of mass culture in the West.

In 1969 Praeger published Russia’s Underground Poets: a
comprehensive anthology of non-official poets with a thorough introduction to their writing, as well as to the underground publications. In the introduction the Soviet State was accused of persecuting all independent poets and publishers. The anthology presented the unofficial poets' writings, but the introductory essay focused more on the treatment of the poets by the officials than on the literary merits of their poems.

One of the few critics who tried to separate the political from the literary categories and to show that the mixture of political and literary criteria were imported to the West from the Soviet Union, was Pearl K. Bell. In her essay "The Politics of Russian Poetry," which assumed that in the West poetry belonged exclusively to the sphere of literature and had little to do with politics, the critic wrote:

Poetry is a dangerous vocation in Russia, precisely because it is taken seriously there. To the rulers of the Soviet Union it is invariably political, not because it sometimes speaks of politics (or refuses to) but because poetry can be profoundly unsettling and therefore subversive. (1973, 7)

This remark, reinforced by a quotation from Nadezhda Mandelstam to the effect that "[e]very poet is a 'disturber of sense' - that is....he extracts new sense from his own understanding of the world," emphasized the very special place of the poet in Soviet society.

In the view of Bell, anthologies like the one discussed in her essay (Poetry from the Russian Underground) comprised authors (and poems) chosen in accordance with political rather than literary criteria.
[I]f one judges this anthology, as the editors claim they did in making their choices, by 'customary literary criteria', all that's samizdat isn't gold. Most of the work here is thin and crude; genuine freshness of perspective and language is in short supply.... Overall, the extraliterary scaffolding of this volume fails to exonerate the largely mediocre quality of the poetry, and it would be condescending to pretend that it does. (1973, 9)

The critic also argued against the attitude, common in the West, of treating all dissident poets as a single literary movement or a poetic school. The very fact of their being not trusted by the State and of being published in the underground did not say anything about the literary affiliations of the poets. The young Russian poets connected with the samizdat, wrote Bell, "by the virtue of their dissent, do not constitute a movement." "[T]his seems a dubious linkage, for the omnivorous Soviet censorship encompasses an enormous variety of attitudes and opinions in its Index of the forbidden". (1973, 9)

Nevertheless, political persecution in the Soviet Union continued to be treated by Western critics and publishers as a criterion for choosing a writer for presentation to the Western reader.

Political motivation characterized Western interest not only in the case of writers from the Soviet Union but also with respect to the literature of the entire Soviet bloc. As Adam Czerniawski, a Polish poet and translator, observed in his introduction to the 1991 edition of Tadeusz Różewicz's Selected Poems:

An East European poet generates interest when he or she is a political dissident and constantly in trouble with authorities. Dissident East European poetry, which often in
its simple-minded rhetorical stridency is uncomfortably close to propaganda, has found favour in the West. It turns out that readers in liberal democracies prefer the type of sloganizing which Stalin’s henchmen used to force out of poets, so long of course as the slogans are anti-government. This is not to deny that excellent politically motivated poetry can be written. Zbigniew Herbert demonstrates this. It nevertheless remains true that Western perceptions have been unduly influenced by the overtly political background against which East European poetry was written over the past forty years. (1991, 11)

II

The same interest in the political persecution of writers of non-official ideological and literary outlooks brought the name of Josif Brodsky to Western attention. He was introduced for the first time to English-speaking readers in 1964 as a poet persecuted in the Soviet Union for his independence of thought. (Field 1964, 10) In fact, it was his trial, staged in Leningrad in 1964, which brought international attention to his poetry. The political interest, however, clearly overshadowed everything else. In the introduction to Brodsky’s first collection of poems in English translation, Elegy to John Donne and other poems, the translator (Nicholas Bethell) wrote: "The trouble is that Westerners think of him, if they think about him at all, as a victim of a miscarriage of Soviet justice. His trial has been published -- his poetry hardly at all." (1967, 7) In fact, the first translations of Brodsky’s poems appeared in The New Leader and in The Russian Review immediately after his trial. In 1965
Inter-Language Literary Associates published in the United States his collection of poems in Russian (the first published collection of Brodsky's poetry), and in 1967 Longmans (London) published the first collection of Brodsky's poems in English translation. In consequence, Brodsky became known to the Western specialists in the area even though he was not officially published in his homeland.

The politically oriented introduction of Brodsky to the West was the result of his treatment at the hands of the Soviet authorities rather than of his poetry. However, once his poetry was noticed, its a-political character, treated as a political crime in the Soviet Union, was immediately recognized and stressed in Western criticism and became, in turn, an important political factor in Western interest in Brodsky and his writing.

Another aspect brought to the fore as a result of Brodsky's trial was Anna Akhmatova's opinion of his poetry. Akhmatova, as we have seen, was already well known and highly regarded in the West as a poet and as a "moral authority" of Russian poetry. Andrew Field began the description of the trial of Brodsky by mentioning Anna Akhmatova's opinion of his poetry. "I first heard his name when the elderly Anna Akhmatova, Russia's greatest living poet, praised his poetry in a conversation on the work of the younger generation, adding that 'That might be because he writes like me though'." (p. 10)

Critics frequently mentioned the name of Anna Akhmatova in connection with Brodsky's poems. Her praise of his poetry and her
remarks about him were frequently cited by critics, and at times even replaced their own evaluation of his poems. Once Brodsky gained the ability to shape his own image in the West, he reacted negatively to this trend and emphasized his affinities with other Russian poets, referring to Akhmatova principally as a personal friend rather than his "poetic master." In the anthology *Modern Russian Poetry* (1972), its editor, Olga Andreyev Carlisle, introduced Brodsky as a poet already recognized by Nadezhda Mandelstam and Akhmatova and not only genuinely talented but the best of his generation. She recalled Nadezhda Mandelstam’s words about Brodsky: "He is a poet and needs readers; his haughtiness is a pose. I hold him in greatest esteem. And of course Anna Andreyevna [Akhmatova] thought him to be the most talented of all our young poets." (1972, 25) As the first substantial collection of Brodsky’s poems in English translation, *Selected Poems* (1972), was published in the same year as a collection of Akhmatova’s poems in English, they were reviewed and analyzed jointly. Stephen Spender wrote: "[H]is poetry is continuous with the line of Pasternak and Anna Akhmatova, who befriended him (when she was in London some years ago she told me that she thought he was the most interesting of the young Soviet poets)." (1973, 915) Thus Brodsky was being introduced as heir to the tradition of the greatest Russian poets of the interwar period, a follower of Akhmatova, Pasternak and Mandelstam, and references to Akhmatova’s remarks about his poetry were cited as proof of this fact. Pearl K. Bell wrote: "Like Akhmatova and Mandelstam, he
thinks of language as palpable substance, and material objects
for him... are ‘sacramental signs, messengers from the
unseen’." (1973, 9) Akhmatova and Brodsky’s personal experiences,
too, were sometimes compared; for example in John Bayley’s review
of both collections: "Brodsky, like other younger Russian poets,
feels the greatest respect for her poetry and her moral
authority, though in some ways -- in labour camps, mental wards,
and enforced exile -- he has already suffered even more than
she." (1974, 25)

When reading critical texts about Russian poets of the
twentieth century, one cannot help noticing the frequency with
which their sufferings were emphasized by critics. The poets’
suffering became a link between the political circumstances and
their writing, often used to elicit sympathy with and interest in
Russian poetry among readers. In effect, the political
persecution and a writer’s suffering became one of the major
elements of presenting twentieth-century Russian writers to the
Western reader.

When Brodsky’s poetry was initially introduced to the West,
not all the critics placed him in a category apart from the other
contemporary Russian poets, nor was he always described as the
best poet of his generation. After reviewing new collections of
poems by Voznesensky, Yevtushenko, Brodsky, Okudzhava, and a
volume of Russian underground poets, Karlinsky wrote:

The best present-day Russian poetry is not produced by any
of the four by now internationally famous poets discussed so
far. Since the death of Anna Akhmatova, the finest Russian
living poet is a man whose poetry is known to perhaps a few
hundred people at most. His name is Nikolai Morshen. In originality of content, profundity, literary culture and craftsmanship, neither Voznesensky nor Brodsky can even touch his work. Morshen has been publishing for over a decade, yet his name remains virtually unknown in the Soviet Union. It is a question of the peculiar role of geography in modern Russian literature. St.-John Perse and Thomas Mann could reside in America and maintain their positions in their respective literatures. But a modern Russian writer who leaves his country inevitably loses not only his Russian audience but any claim to international attention. (1966, 551)

The last sentence reveals one of the most striking truths about the actual interest in Russian literature in the West at that time (and this observation can be extended to all writers from the Soviet bloc), namely that a writer from these countries had a better chance of becoming known in the West if he had gained recognition in his country and remained inside. Obviously, the distrust of the officials could be a major point of interest in his writing, but emigration of a totally unknown writer practically left him without a chance for recognition either in the West or in his homeland. Because of this fact, the reception of Brodsky's poetry in the West prior to his exile seems to be of considerable importance for his full recognition later as a major poet.

It is also important to note that Western criticism strongly emphasized the links of Brodsky's poems with English and American poetry. For instance, his poem "Verses on the Death of T.S.Eliot," translated and published by Kline in 1968, provided the translator with the opportunity of comparing his poetry with that of W.H. Auden. Kline pointed out in his introduction that "Brodsky's poem is modelled on Auden's 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats,
The sequence of metrical patterns and rhyme-schemes follows Auden’s closely...." This approach of stressing Brodsky’s poetic connection with Anglo-American poetry was also, at least to some extent, "suggested" to the Western critics by the Soviet authorities. In an introduction to his translation of Brodsky’s "Elegy for John Donne" Kline wrote:

One witness for the prosecution charged that Brodsky’s own poetry was pornographic, unpatriotic, and expressed a sense of withdrawal and alienation from the world. The first charge is absurd, the second false, the third largely true, but irrelevant to a judgement of the poetic quality of Brodsky’s or any other poet’s work. But the truth to which this witness was clumsily pointing is that Brodsky is a totally apolitical poet, no more pro-Soviet than anti-Soviet. He is a private, not public, muse. What is perhaps even worse, in official Soviet eyes, he is a metaphysical poet, in very much the sense in which Donne is a metaphysical poet. His poetry is intensely personal, meditative, religious, existential, "suffering". He is obsessed with the mysteries of love, death, communion, solitude, sin and salvation. (1965, 334).

There is little doubt that the factors involved in bringing Brodsky and his poetry to the critics’ attention had a considerable influence on the initial formulas of his critical reception. These factors included the lively interest of the young generation in the West in "underground" culture, as well as the need felt by critics for a Russian poet whose personal experiences and writing could be used (as, in fact, they were used) to counteract the images bringing popularity and recognition among Western creators of counterculture to poets like Voznesensky and Yevtushenko. Brodsky was initially perceived in the West mostly through the arguments used against the poet by the Soviet authorities during his trial. The political
persecution in his homeland brought his name and poetry to the attention of Anglo-American critics and readers as a result of the constant politically motivated Western interest in Soviet literary life. What was unacceptable in the Soviet Union and thus used against the poet during his trial, was of considerable interest in Western countries, in which it carried positive rather than negative connotations, and was emphasized as such by Anglo-American critics. In summary, the most frequent factors mentioned by the critics included: the situation of Brodsky as someone persecuted because of his independence and writing; his links with Anna Akhmatova, and her high opinion of poetry published in underground publications (samizdat); and, finally, the comparison with the best known officially published, travelling poets, that is Voznesensky and Yevtushenko.

By the early 1970s (when Brodsky was expelled from the Soviet Union), Western interest in Russian émigré writers rose considerably. The shift in Soviet foreign policy, known as détente and the Helsinki process (notably in the sphere of exchange of information and respect for human rights), involved a new Western strategy of dealing with the Soviet Bloc. Émigré (and dissident) writers became more readily recognized and used as an element of political pressure. Given the extent to which Western receptivity to Eastern European literatures was politicized, it is not surprising that émigré writers were often induced (or chose) to cooperate with such agencies as Radio Free Europe, Voice of America as well as on the "home front." From
this point of view interest in Brodsky and his writing was constantly at the centre of fluctuating trends of Western attitude toward the Soviet Bloc.

III

Brodsky’s first collection of poems in English translation, *Elegy to John Donne and Other Poems*, went almost unnoticed by Western critics who, as a matter of fact, in their later criticism counted the volumes of Brodsky’s poetry in translation not from the *Elegy* but from the *Selected Poems*, published in 1973. The latter volume, edited and translated by Kline, appeared shortly after the poet was exiled from the Soviet Union and by this time had a chance of becoming one of the contributors to the discussions concerning contemporary Russian poetry as well as of his own writing. *Selected Poems* was perceived not through the "initial formulas" which became current prior to Brodsky’s exile but through their versions modified by the poet himself. Brodsky’s presentation of himself to the Western public was initially aimed at reformulating the already existing clichés. By the time of the appearance of the *Selected Poems*, Brodsky had already managed to challenge his image as a poetic disciple of Akhmatova as well as to overcome, at least partially, the description of his poetry derived from the statements made at his trial. New elements, such as the fact of his exile and his close
ties with noted Anglo-American poets as well as the wider interest shown in his poetry (a result of his banishment from the Soviet Union), began to play their role both in the receptivity to and the actual reception of his work.

The Selected Poems were published with two introductory essays: a short "Foreword" by Auden and a more substantial "Introduction" by Kline who, as the translator of the poems, also wrote "A Note on the Translations". Both critical essays presented Brodsky as an extraordinary poet whose poetry was situated in the tradition of the great Russian poets of the first decades of the century and in opposition to "the Mayakovsky tradition of 'public' poetry." (Auden 1973, 11).

His poetic achievement...bears comparison -- in my considered judgement -- with that of the thirty-two-year-old Anna Akhmatova (as of 1921), the thirty-two-year-old Boris Pasternak (as of 1922), and the thirty-two-year-old Marina Tsvetayeva and Osip Mandelstam (both as of 1924). Whether Joseph Brodsky will one day stand beside these four giants of twentieth-century Russian poetry it is perhaps still too early to say. I myself am confident that he will. (Kline 1973, 22)

Both Auden and Kline introduced Brodsky not only as the continuator of the great tradition of Russian poetry but also, in Auden's words, as a poet of "an extraordinary capacity to envision material objects as sacramental signs, messengers from the unseen." (1973, 10) Kline emphasized that Brodsky "to a certain extent continues the elaborate and inventive poetic 'conceits' of the English Metaphysical poets." (1973, 15) He was also characterized as a poet concerned with religious themes, especially with the "relationship of Christianity to culture..."
One may only speculate as to what extent the religious elements of his poetry were highlighted because of the search for "mysticism" evident in the "underground" movements, since in this way Brodsky's poetry could be linked with the poetry of the new generation of Anglo-American poets and brought to the attention of the critics connected with the new wave. The more so as, according to Auden, Brodsky was

a traditionalist in the sense that he is interested in what most lyric poems in all ages have been interested in, that is, in personal encounters with nature, human artifacts, persons loved or revered, and in reflections upon the human condition, death, and the meaning of existence. (1973, 11)

Any differences between Auden and Kline's introductions of Brodsky's poetry were probably determined, at least to some extent, by the fact that while Kline read Brodsky's poetry in Russian, Auden was limited to reading it in translation only. Hence Auden's statement that "[k]nowing no Russian and therefore forced to base my judgement on English translations, I can do little more than guess." (p. 9) However, toward the end of the preface he emphasized the advantages of judging Brodsky's poems by foreigners:

About the uniqueness and, at the same time, universal relevance of a poet's vision, it is easier for a foreigner to judge, since this does not primarily depend upon the language in which it is written. (p.10)

Kline, who not only translated Brodsky's poems but also knew his literary background much better than Auden, introduced Brodsky mostly in terms of his affinities with the poetry of the greatest Russian and Anglo-American poets of the century.
One may be surprised to find that among these masters of poetry Kline also included contemporary Polish poets. Obviously drawing on information supplied by the poet himself, Kline underlined the fact that Brodsky had read a fairly large number of works in English and in Polish unavailable to the Russian reader around the year 1960.

He also read such contemporary Polish poets as Zbigniew Herbert and Czesław Miłosz both of whom he admires enormously. He considers Miłosz, whom he is currently translating into Russian, one of the major poets of the twentieth century. (p. 14)

Brodsky's sense of himself significantly influenced the critics and was reflected in their arguments. His openly expressed opinions about the officially recognized Soviet poets set Brodsky apart from the then prevailing poetic trends in the Soviet Union. In fact, and in accordance with Brodsky's own view of himself, Western critics described his poetry as a continuation of the traditions of great Russian poetry of the preceding generation rather than in terms of its links with his poetic contemporaries. Moreover, his poetry differed not only from Russian but also from contemporary Anglo-American poetry so strikingly that he could not be considered fully one of them either. Taking into account that he was mostly seen through his Russian and Anglo-American literary connections, Brodsky's poetry could be best described in terms of differences and even apartness from the contemporary poets following these traditions. Kline probably mentioned contemporary Polish poetry as the
closest contemporary poetic equivalent of Brodsky’s poetry. The East European context gave a possibility of treating Brodsky not as an isolated poetic phenomenon but as a poet sharing in the contemporary poetic developments both East and West.

In may be said that almost all arguments used by critics in the reviews which followed the publication of the Selected Poems had their roots in the two critical introductions to the volume. Hence Brodsky was also seen in the context of East European poetry. In his article "Near and Far East," Roger Garfitt wrote:

In the current interest in the work of East European writers one sometimes defects a certain wistfulness, a feeling that if we really want the conditions for striking work, we should all move to Moscow. There is nothing peculiar to the Soviet situation in Brodsky’s achievement, and certainly no simple ratio between persecution and poetic development. What matters, quite as much as the courage of his resistance to pressure, is the positive nature of his response. (1974, 105)

The interest of English-speaking critics, especially in the case of translated poetry, was focused on works that had the potential of influencing contemporary Anglo-American poetry and one should not be surprised to find that Brodsky was presented in terms suggested by the rising Western interest in the contemporary literature of Eastern Europe. In contrast to his fellow-poets in the Soviet Union, Brodsky was perceived as a poet who brought new and fresh elements to contemporary English poetry. The arguments used by critics were, in fact, more appropriate with respect to contemporary Polish than to contemporary Russian poetry, although

1 The comparison was somewhat spurious. Not only was Brodsky considerably younger than the Polish poets who had by then become known in the West, but also differed from them considerably.
Garfitt mentioned Moscow in the context of Eastern Europe. It may also be noted that the terms used by Auden (who, as we have seen, knew Brodsky’s poetry only through translation) to describe Brodsky’s poetic achievement are very similar to those used by certain critics (especially those who knew the entirety of Miłosz’s poetic oeuvre) in their presentation and discussion of Miłosz’s poetry.

In fact Russian poetry of the 1960s and 1970s did not constitute a distinct poetic trend, nor was it interesting enough to be considered in terms of its impact on Western poetry, as was the case with contemporary Polish poetry. The fairly straightforward political preoccupations of the majority of Russian poets as well as a general lack of genuine poetic merit—which Brodsky stressed on every possible occasion—definitely could not be treated as constituting a poetic movement of importance for Western literature. Auden and Kline claimed that Brodsky’s poetry had certain unique characteristics and should be considered apart from the other Soviet poets of his generation. As a result most of the critical texts dealing with Brodsky did not draw any comparisons between his poetry and that of the other contemporary Soviet poets. Focusing on his great poetic promise, critics preferred to see him as a great contemporary poet rather than the greatest Russian poet of his generation. Some of the critics writing about Brodsky’s Selected Poems used the occasion to distance themselves from the high recognition which Western critics had granted Yevtushenko and Voznesensky. The recognition
given to Brodsky challenged the accepted perspective on contemporary Russian poetry and prompted at least some critics to reconsider their earlier categories and judgments. A. Cohen, for instance, emphasized that Brodsky "has nothing to do with the spectacles and spectaculars which have become the hallmark of the vagabond poets of the Soviet Union, to whom the United States has been so hospitable in recent years." (1973, 2) One may note that as a result of Brodsky's own opinion about the "official" Soviet poets, critical reception of Brodsky challenged the prevalent formulas of writing about contemporary Russian poets, especially in the essays devoted to his own poetry. In his review of Brodsky's collection Victor Erlich wrote:

At the launching of his now rapidly fading career, Evgeny Evtushenko had freshness, panache and a measure of civic courage. Yet even at his peak, he was at best a second-rate poet and a facile if occasionally effective rhetorician. Andrey Voznesensky's engaging verve and exuberant involvement with his medium earned him plaudits in the West which in retrospect may seem somewhat excessive: seen at close range, Voznesensky's "modernism" appears derivative and a trifle gimmicky. (1974, 617)

The high recognition which Brodsky gained as a poet was based not only on his poetic achievements but also, as was stressed by Kline, on the expectations and promise of his further development. Moreover, some Western critics noted what Garfitt called the "very narrow bands" of Anglo-American poets and were looking for new poetic impulses to affect the local scene. Considering the need, felt by some Western critics, for a Russian poet who could be used as a counter to the most prominent Soviet poets as well as to the Western poetic movements of the time and
the lively interest in the Soviet Union, one may speculate to what extent all these factors contributed to the high regard shown for Brodsky as a poet when he was only thirty three years old. After the publication of only one volume of his poems in English translation, Brodsky was already described as the most important poet of his generation. At the same time at least some critics made the point of stressing in no uncertain terms that the political interest in the Soviet Union and its dissidents did not influence their opinions and that they judged Brodsky's poetry solely on its merits. Arthur A. Cohen wrote:

How does one know that Joseph Brodsky is, at 33, a major poet, not simply a major poet to whom majority is accorded as a complementary addendum to the details of heroic biography? Nothing needs to be known about Brodsky other than the poems.... (1973, 2)

The critic called Brodsky's Selected Poems "a revelation of the power of the word living in the cracks of silence" and added:

Against the vectors of antihumanism Brodsky sets a tensed and tough version of justice, justice within nature and creation which must be believed and sustained. And to him, sustaining his sense of strangeness in this world (not alienation)....is a vision....which might be described as Christ-bearing or Messianic. (1973, 2)

In writing about Brodsky, the critics invariably used very general categories abstracted from actual poems to serve as descriptions or explanations of his poetry principally in order to show the importance of his work. Several critics introduced and treated Brodsky as a religious poet; they generally stressed that his recognition as a major poet reflected the qualities of his poetry and not the facts of his biography. Quite characteristic for this phase of the critical reception of
Brodsky is a short note on the Selected Poems published in the Booklist:

USSR exile Brodsky transcends political complications to voice a traditional observation of life in a private poetry of distinction. Concerned with death, solitude, and the healing of broken lives, the poet uses images from Greek mythology, orthodox religion, and world literature to illustrate the interaction of words and ideas. (1974, 712)

In longer articles Brodsky's personal experiences, arising from the highly politicized treatment of him in the Soviet Union, were described in terms of the events of his life and their influence on his poetry. By the same token the politically oriented Western interest in his biography gradually acquired a different character in as much as the events of his life began to be viewed in terms of their influence on his poetry. Of crucial importance to the Western critics in this respect was Brodsky's "Northern exile" as the beginning of a new phase in his poetic development. At this stage of the reception a few of Brodsky's poems appeared to critics as more interesting and important than the rest. To the "poems in tribute to T.S.Eliot and John Donne" (Booklist, 1974), introduced to the English reader prior to Brodsky's exile, were now added "A Halt in the Desert," "Gorbunov and Gorchakov" and "A Letter in a Bottle" as his most representative texts.

It is interesting to observe that at this stage of Brodsky's reception critics showed very little interest in the quality and faithfulness of the translations of Brodsky's poems. It is possible that Auden's introductory essay to the Selected Poems had something to do with this disinterest. His statement about
the advantages of dealing with what was preserved in translation, combined with the high expectations of Brodsky’s further poetic development, made critics assume that translations presented only a marginal problem for Brodsky’s reception. Another possible explanation comes from the fact that the interest in Brodsky’s poetry at that time was highly political and all other aspects of his writing, including artistic, were pushed out of the picture. The translator, G.L. Kline, was thus generally praised both for his work and for bringing so important a poet to the attention of the West. However, a marginal strand of criticism did raise the question of the quality of translations, which proved of significance to the later development of the critical interest in Brodsky’s poetry.

An interesting example of this criticism is found in a note published in Choice after the appearance of Brodsky’s Selected Poems:

Joseph Brodsky is in the difficult position of being a poet without a country....Political facts have given him a reputation but obscured his poetry. He himself has skated between the self he would like to be and the image which politics has conjured....Emblematic is what is lost in the absence....of the original texts....[T]here is not one word of Brodsky’s in the book....At poetry recitals by Brodsky, these translations have been read aloud; audiences have appreciated knowing what Brodsky’s poems say, but they have not admired the translations. American poets who have read them have been more critical, hoping that the academic stiffness of lines....belongs to the translator, not to the poet. (1974, 266)

Apart from the main stream of criticism, Brodsky was seen by some critics in terms that were characteristic of the reception of the poetry of those contemporary Russian poets who read their poems
in the West, that is through poetry readings. Brodsky's poetry appeared to lose so much in translation that an author of the critical note blamed the translator for lowering the attractiveness of Brodsky's poetry for the English-speaking audience. Reading the note one gets the impression that wherever Brodsky's poetry may have resided, it certainly did not reside in the translated texts. Consequently, the author did not describe or evaluate his poetry, stating in his conclusion that without the possibility of dealing with the original poems, he only knew that what was "left out was the best part" of Brodsky's poetry.

The reviews of Brodsky's two Russian collections of poems, Chast' Rechi and Konets Prekrasnoi Epokhi, both of which appeared in 1977, brought out a further aspect for critical consideration, namely, the fact that Brodsky was, after all, a Russian poet. Since both volumes presented Brodsky's poems in the original, this shift in treating Brodsky as primarily a Russian rather than an international poet was quite natural. The authors of some of the reviews stressed Brodsky's contribution to contemporary Russian poetry, and omitted to mention his importance for Western poetry. Instead of being called "a major poetic talent" (as was the case in earlier criticism), Brodsky was now described as "the finest living Russian poet," although one of the reviewers qualified his high evaluation of Brodsky's poetry by adding: "this collection says that may be so, but in such Olympic games clear winners are few and far between." (Choice 1977, 869). The reviewers also emphasized the fact that in being presented in the
original Russian, Brodsky's poetry did not have to be explained to the reader. One may note in these group of reviews the signs of a transition in the reception of Brodsky's poetry, along with the surfacing of questions that would become major points of interest in the reviews and articles devoted to the next volume of his poems in English translation, A Part of Speech, published in 1980.

This volume consisted primarily of poems written in exile; nevertheless, the poet also decided to include some of his earlier work, which had previously appeared in English. According to the poet's introduction this decision was motivated by his desire to show his development as a poet. The inclusion of his earlier "Russian" poems legitimized the general shift toward critical treatment of Brodsky as a Russian, rather than an international poet. His poetry was still described as being under the influence of English Metaphysical poetry, but critics began to stress to a greater extent than before the "Russian" elements of Brodsky's poetry. Michael Schmidt, for instance, wrote that in Brodsky's "poetry there are continual daybreaks and sunsets, a Russian sense of immense distances..." (1980, 25); F.D. Reeve called Brodsky "one of Russia's outstanding living poets" (1981, 36), and Clarence Brown's review was entitled "The Best Russian Poetry Written Today" (1980, 7).

As a Russian poet Brodsky was still clearly distinguished from his officially published colleagues in the Soviet Union. However, the critical treatment of Yevtushenko and Voznesensky
was no longer a simple echo of Brodsky's opinion of them. They began rather to be classified among poets whose significance lay principally within the context of a single period and a single poetic tradition (Russian), while Brodsky was seen as having crossed the borders of his time and of his nation. Perhaps the best description of the critical status of the major contemporary Russian poets in the West was given by Michael Schmidt. In his essay "Time of Cold" the critic wrote:

I would risk a generalization here. Poets such as Evtushenko, Voznesensky and others to whom 'plot' (in the narrative sense) has come to replace subtler notions of form, belong to contemporary history. They will continue to be read -- even poems such as 'Babi Yar' -- for what they tell of general attitudes and sentiments. Brodsky, in contrast, is part of a broad Western tradition. His work, of less value to the historian or journalist, extends its tradition. (1980, 25)

Thus, by 1980, Brodsky began to be viewed as a Russian poet of major interest to the West, rather than as a poet of exceptional international significance. This meant that, according to the critics, the poet in writing his poems had in mind not so much an international readership as the Russian reader, who not only knew the language but was also acquainted with Russian history and the Russian landscape. It is not accidental that in his essay about the 1980 volume Clarence Brown pointed out the difference between the Russian and the English-speaking reader:

an occasional set-piece....can suggest to the English reader one of the limits of Brodsky's range.... The ideal Russian reader for whom Brodsky writes would immediately detect the echoes....Literary echoes of a somewhat more obvious and less functional sort might possibly offend the ear of the ideal English reader. (1980, 16)
The most striking shift in the critical focus that occurred after the publication of the first two volumes of Brodsky's poetry in English translation was in the treatment of the problem of translation. Since a separate chapter is devoted to this problem, I will deal here only with those elements that seemed to have had a significant bearing on the development of the reception process at this stage. What should be noted, however, is the almost complete lack of critical discussion of the translations published in the Selected Poems and the strong interest shown in the question of what was lost in translation in articles devoted to the volume A Part of Speech.

The problem of dealing with translated poetry and thus of not being certain of the real quality and value of the original poems, appeared strikingly in the essays devoted to A Part of Speech. The complexity of the problem was highlighted by F.D. Reeve who wrote that "[i]n a time of inconsistent judgements....we may overlook skill and celebrate the second rate. We may be tempted to suppose that Brodsky's reputation is his achievement." (1981, 36) In spite of the initial judgement of Auden who underlined the advantages of dealing with Brodsky's poetry in translation and reading it from a non-Russian point of view, critics writing about his second collection seemed to be uncertain of the extent to which the qualities of his poetry were preserved in translation. They underlined the importance of the poet's playing with language. Those Western critics who knew Russian and were thus able to see the difference between the
original and the translation, seemed to be more certain about the merits of Brodsky's poetry. Others just tried to readjust previous clichéd descriptions of his works so they could also apply to his newest collection.

Poems written after Brodsky had been exiled from the Soviet Union were usually described as "the poems of his exile" (Schmidt 1980, 25), and thus the already existing formulas of description of Brodsky's poetry became now enriched by the new factor of exile. Dealing with translations, and hence not entirely certain of their ability to penetrate to the core of Brodsky's poetry, the critics preferred to stay within the safe circle of already existing critical formulas and clichés. The new poems contained in the volume were simply added to the list of those already known and discussed as further instances of the intrinsic interest of Brodsky's poetry.

Quite typical in this respect is the opinion expressed by Brown:

Though his attitude toward exile, longing, solitude and the insulting dilemmas of growing older may waver, we can only feel grateful that the result is the same: a transmutation of this experience into the most powerful, the most technically accomplished, erudite, wide ranging and consistently astonishing Russian poetry being written today. (1980, 15-16)

In another review we find opinions and formulas even closer to those expressed in the reviews of the Selected Poems:

In both short and lengthy poems, the drily witty, if world-weary, speaker draws psychological insights or makes philosophical (and oblique political) reflections from his acute observations. Adept in creating dramatic scenes, the poet tends, however, to overload his poems with dense imagery. (Booklist 1980, 1404)
The difference between the "earlier" and the "new" clichés consisted in the absence of any emphasis on the religious elements in Brodsky's poetry. Some critics (for example, M. Schmidt) actually noted that Brodsky's treatment of various themes became more "secular."

The appearance of *A Part of Speech* added to the list of Brodsky's "essential texts" two new poems, "Lullaby to Cape Cod" and "The Butterfly," both of which found favour with almost all critics. Nevertheless, the new collection did not seem to fulfil all the expectations the Western critics had of Brodsky's potential. Concluding his divagations about the poet, Schmidt wrote:

> What can be said of Brodsky, now he is 40? Of the recent poems, "Lullaby to Cape Cod" seems to be a masterpiece; "The Butterfly" proves his lyric and philosophical gifts are intact....Exile and middle age have made him no less allusive and oblique. And yet, with a substantial achievement behind him, Brodsky paradoxically remains a poet of promise. (1980, 25)

It is of interest that the reviews of *A Part of Speech*, more often than before, mentioned Brodsky's public readings of his own poetry, which suggests that either his manner or the sound of Russian became a factor in the attractiveness of Brodsky's poems in the West. Brown, for instance, recalled the impression a poem recited by Brodsky made on him more than a decade earlier:

> In 1966 he recited to me (wittily enough, just beneath the Kremlin walls) his then-unpublished elegy on the death of T. S. Eliot, and the deliberate echo of an earlier model, Auden's elegy on Yeats, was immediately perceptible. The form alone was speaking with its mute but unmistakable eloquence, and the Russian poet's moving lines extended to include two other great poets -- tradition and the individual talent, as it were. (1980, 16).
The critic drew attention to the importance of form and sound patterns discernible more readily in recitation. However, Brodsky’s public readings in the West (and he gave numerous public readings), were usually described as strikingly different from those of Voznesensky’s and Yevtushenko’s. His way of reading poetry often disappointed his audiences; what they expected was not so much poetry as a recitatory performance. As Schmidt observed:

Last year, I heard Joseph Brodsky read at Cambridge. I’d been told he was temperamental. If he disliked his audience he might read for only a few minutes. I was optimistic -- but no, it was not to be. He read on and on, upstaging his patient translators, as if to say he knew how much we appreciated him. Well, I didn’t. Unlike Voznesensky and Yevtushenko, Brodsky is not, I believe, a particularly good performer. He wears his arrogance (a quality endemic in the public persona of Russian poets) without grace. But he is something other than a performer: an excellent poet. (1980, 25).

It should also be observed that while critics often made references to other reviews and articles devoted to the 1980 volume, there was little discussion among them. Referring to different reviews the critics usually used the formula "as aptly remarked by." Also there are almost no references to the criticism of Brodsky in Russian. One of the few examples of a critic taking note of the Russian critical literature on Brodsky is an essay by Reeve. The critic quoted Efim Etkind ("the most respected Russian critic today") about Brodsky’s poetry primarily in order to support the view that the mastery of his poems was not preserved in English translation, that "[n]emoved from its native Russian, this tension [that is "the structural
conflict....between prose erudition and verse poetry"
vanishes..." (1981, 36)

The 1973 collection occasioned critical reflection about the predicament of the poet in exile. Various elements of Brodsky's "political" biography were used at this stage -- not only to explain his poems -- but also to underscore the fact of his separation from his homeland and from his native language. The question of the writer in exile, and thus of belonging to more than one culture, placed Brodsky in the context of contemporary émigré literature. This new critical perspective became especially significant in the later stages of the critical interest in Brodsky's writing. Initially, critics seemed to be content with merely taking note of this perspective without being able to place Brodsky's poetry in relation to other émigré Russian poets. This observation may be illustrated by a quotation from Jo Ann Bailey:

One question which invariably comes up these days in connection with the oeuvre of émigré writers is whether it is possible to maintain a certain level of intensity in one's work once the irritant which generated the pearl has been removed. (1981, 341)

While recognizing the importance of the phenomenon, critics seemed unable to define the category and thus to identify writers belonging to this group. Brodsky's poetry written in exile (like his entire attitude to exile itself) was so strikingly different from the writing of other Russian émigré writers (who formed a kind of Russian diaspora in the United States), that it was not possible to place him among them. Even at this stage, a careful
reader could see that the new category of "poet in exile" was to embrace those writers who managed to adjust themselves to a new country and culture while at the same time retaining ties with their native culture and language. However, that such a definition of the "poet in exile" was not yet clearly formulated, can be deduced from several articles on Brodsky and from the critical confusion connected with the fact that as a Russian poet he actually did not belong to any of the known groups of writers. In his review of A Part of Speech, Anthony Astrachan noted:

Brodsky is not one of those emigrants who confine themselves to the narrow horizons of the exile archipelago. He lives in an American world whose language and literature he loves, and must let his work feed and be fed by that language and literature. Whether or not he can be called great....he is the finest poet writing in Russian, in or out of the Soviet Union. (1980, 323)

Those critics, who made an effort to place Brodsky's poetry written in exile in the context of works by other non-Russian émigré poets whose poetry displayed a similar attitude toward exile as his, seemed less confused and thus better able to go beyond the existing clichés and to formulate independent opinions about his poetry. For instance, Henry Gifford, who continued to view Brodsky in the wider context of Eastern Europe poetry, re-classified him as belonging to the group of dissident poets of the region whose writings were not only influenced by the literature of the country of exile but also brought new elements to this literature. John Bayley went further; he not only evaluated the influence that Anglo-American literature had on Brodsky's poetry but also compared him with another exile poet,
Czesław Miłosz. Focusing on poems written in exile, significantly influenced by the culture and literature of his adopted country, and taking note of the fact that Brodsky not only began to translate his own poems into English but also to write poetry in English, the critic wrote:

The paradox about him is that his own language has the locality that goes with the anecdotes and increments, the dense familiarity of a true poetic landscape, but at the same time he exists in another dimension, half aphasic, half fashionable, in which poetic language is merely another form of public medium.... Something has no doubt been gained from the vogue for Lowell-type imitations of "world poetry".... and the kinds of impersonality involved seem to please readers who are not at home with true idiosyncrasy, and dislike the effort of meeting a poet as his true self. (1981, 88-89)

Bayley compared Brodsky to other poets who, although influenced by another culture, were able to preserve their poetic personality. Comparing Brodsky's poems with the poetry written in exile by other poets, the critic chose Miłosz as an example of the opposite attitude. Miłosz, wrote Bayley,

whom Brodsky regards as the greatest poet of our time [always remains himself]. Though he has had to become as Americanized as Brodsky, and like him has translated his own poems into English with help from his friends, Miłosz remains even in translation an unmistakable and marvellously authentic Polish poet. It is worth comparing his collection, Bells in Winter with A Part of Speech. The comparison is not to the advantage, not of Brodsky himself, but of the kind of idiom into which his native poetry has become increasingly assimilated. (1981, 89-90)

Bayley showed himself interested not only in Brodsky's poetry but also in the process of assimilation that a poet in exile must inevitably undergo and in the effect of the influence of a new culture on his poetry.

It was, one may argue, only the appearance of a new critical
interest in the influence of the non-native culture and language on the poetry written by poets in exile that made it possible to compare the poetry of Miłosz and Brodsky. It is then worth noting that Miłosz and Brodsky's first volumes in English translation (both entitled Selected Poems) appeared almost at the same time.

Two later collections of Brodsky and Miłosz, A Part of Speech and Bells in Winter included poetry written during roughly the same time by poets whose situations were by then remarkably similar. In time, the quest for a critical perspective on Brodsky's poetry met with the rising recognition and knowledge of Miłosz's poetic oeuvre. As a result both poets began to be seen as belonging to the same category, which the critics later defined as that of the "poet in exile" or of the "nationless" poet.

The next two volumes of Brodsky's poetry, Rimskie Elegii (1982) and Novye Stansy k Avguste (1983), had a very limited -- if any -- immediate impact on the reception of his poetry in the West. More important is the fact that by the mid-1980s Brodsky became the subject of scholarly research and that his poetry came to be analyzed in terms of its formal features. In general, the scholarly-oriented research had initially a strictly limited impact on the categories of description used in critical texts which aimed at a more general audience rather than at the limited circle of specialists in Russian poetry. It should be noted that scholarly studies of Brodsky's poetry were initiated by critics and scholars of Russian origin (L.Loseff and V.Polukhina being
the most important ones), who for the most part had hitherto made almost no contribution to the critical discussion of Brodsky's poetry. The first book-length study of Brodsky's poetry was Mikhail Kreps's study *O Poezii Josifa Brodskogo* published in 1984. In 1986 there appeared *Poetika Brodskogo*, a collection of scholarly articles, edited by Lev Loseff and written by critics of various origins all of whom, however, were able to deal with Brodsky's poetry in the original. Both works confirmed the high evaluation of Brodsky's poetic achievement in terms of his "technical" mastery in playing with the conventions and structures of Russian poetry. Published in Russian, however, the two books could not have any major impact on the reception process in English, a fact confirmed by a virtually complete lack of references to either of them in the critical writings aimed at the non-specialist; it was rather the fact of Brodsky's becoming the subject of scholarly studies that was their most important immediate effect on the process of critical reception.

Brodsky's next book to appear in English was *Less Than One*, a volume of essays written in English which had previously been published in different magazines. Since the author was already known to the English reader as a major poet, all the reviewers of the book constantly referred to his poetry. In view of the topics and themes of his essays, the critics treated them to a large extent in terms of the additional light they shed on his poetry, his literary affinities, taste and biography. Most of the critics who reviewed the book limited themselves to describing and
developing topics and themes of Brodsky’s essays without reacting to the author’s points of view. In addition to showing interest in his biography and literary ties, critics focused especially on Brodsky’s affinities with Auden and on his ideas about language and its importance. The comparison with Auden was usually made in the context of Brodsky’s decision to write in English. Henry Gifford wrote:

Brodsky’s motive for deciding in 1977 that he would "write (essays, translations, occasionally a poem) in English" was "to please a shadow", that of Auden, who had befriended him at the start of his exile....

The engagement with Auden’s poetry is another thing; and even if his estimate should seem quite out of scale, here as no doubt in America, what led Brodsky to declare it so emphatically is important to see and should be viewed with respect. He says that by writing in English he could "work on his [Auden’s] terms, to be judged, if not by his code of conscience, then by whatever it is in the English language that made this code of conscience possible". (1986, 1019)

From this point of view, Brodsky’s remarks about the Russian language and the impact communist ideology had on language proved of considerable interest. The poet’s view of language as a victim of political and social change in the Soviet Union and the importance he attached to language in general served as an explanation of his insistence to preserve formal elements of his poems in translation. Critics also emphasized the importance of poetry for the preservation of the Russian language. Bayley noted that Brodsky saw the effect of the Revolution on the Russian language as

an unprecedented anthropological tragedy, a genetic backslide whose net result is a drastic reduction of human potential. Poetry may have survived, in inner or outer exile, but Russian prose could not escape in that way, or survive the embrace of the state. (1986, 4)
The question of language helped the critics to find Brodsky's place among other contemporary Russian poets. At the same time, Brodsky's collection of essays written in English made possible a shift in the critical treatment of Brodsky's works. *Less Than One* placed him among American writers and from this point on he began to be considered both a Russian poet and an American essayist.

The reviews of Brodsky's essays continued also the line of classifying him as a writer "in exile" rather than as an émigré writer. R.Z. Sheppart pointed out the striking difference between Brodsky and other dissident writers expelled from the Soviet Union by observing that "Brodsky is much more than another exile expected to tell ghost stories about Soviet oppression. He is a major literary figure linked directly to a great tradition, and he never forgets it." (1986, 70) He noted that the rising critical interest in cross-cultural poetry might be perceived by American poets with envy.

Such success by an outsider is cause for envy and resentment: American-born poets must struggle not only with the uncertainties of their craft but against indifference to their art. (1986, 70)

The interest aroused by Brodsky's collection of essays was so lively that criticism began to stress his links with poets of different origins and literary backgrounds. The political reasons of his exile began to lose their interpretive value once he was included among writers whose works (in spite of the biography of their authors) could be described in terms of cross-cultural experiences and literary affiliations. In the *Poetry Review* this group is called "fortunate travellers" and the name is used for
the distinctive group of cosmopolitan poets....
Brodsky, Hecht, and Walcott are not a school, but they
share obvious similarities in style and subject-
matter.... All three writers often use subject-matter
remote, both geographically and historically, from
their roots.... What all three poets show is that a
world poetry is possible, through the medium of the
English language. (1986, 3)

Unlike Miłosz's critical reception in the West, Brodsky's
was very much related to the appearance of his books. By
contrast, literary honours gained by the poet seemed not to have
had any serious impact on the development of the critical
interest in his work. The Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to
Brodsky in 1987 did not actually bring any immediate significant
new elements to this interest, nor did it produce any new
critical perspectives or insights. However, it did encourage
academic criticism. The articles and critical notes that appeared
in the press underlined the possibility of giving Brodsky's
poetry back to its Russian readers, especially in connection with
Gorbachev's policies of "glasnost'" and "perestroika." On the
other hand the prize provided an opportunity to develop the
criteria of interest in "nationless" poets.

It is also worth noting that none of Brodsky's works which
appeared in English subsequent to the Nobel Prize changed or even
challenged significantly the earlier elements of the critical
reception. To Urania (1987) was reviewed in critical terms and
categories already established after the appearance of A Part of
Speech. The problem of translation of his poems into English
still seemed to be in the centre of interest of almost all
critical texts. Brodsky's treatment of language and the
importance he attached to language, which he emphasized in his essays, gave a new lease on life to this discussion. Also, the structural elements of his poetry, especially those considered impossible to preserve in translation, became a topic of further critical reflection.

By the late 1980s, Western reception of Brodsky, however laudatory, was challenged, at least indirectly, by three consecutive scholarly studies of his literary works written by critics of Russian origin. In 1989 appeared Valentina Polukhina's: *Joseph Brodsky: A Poet for Our Time*, the first book-length study of his poetry written in English. Stating that "Brodsky's use of language conveys the poet's perception of certain values through his language" Polukhina ventures the statement that Brodsky's "ultimate importance as a poet will undoubtedly rest on this treatment of language and his whole attitude towards language" (1989, xiii). This emphasis on Brodsky's poetic language allows Polukhina to reclaim Brodsky as an essentially Russian poet.

Although Polukhina’s study reveals several important features of Brodsky’s poetry, its impact on the reception process in English-speaking countries has been rather limited given the scholarly character and terminology of the study and the fact that it requires a fairly good knowledge of Russian poetry and versification. Moreover, her study draws on criticism written in Russian and thus not readily accessible to the majority of Western critics. Finally, the critic’s focus on the connections
of Brodsky's poetics with the poetics of major Russian poets not always well known to English-speaking readers, limited the impact of her book to the circle of specialists. In short, Polukhina's treatment of Brodsky was somewhat removed from the predominant interests of Western critics; at the same time it has considerable value in showing the mastery of Brodsky's play with Russian poetic tradition and the Russian language.

The critic focuses on Brodsky's use of metaphor and on the formal features of his poems, including the figurative means by which Brodsky's poetic "I" is constituted. The analysis of Brodsky's metaphors by comparison to major Russian poets, especially those of the first quarter of the twentieth century, allows the critic to examine Brodsky's ties with the tradition of Russian poetry as well as his departures from it. Brodsky's links with Anglo-American poetry are also examined from the point of view of how they influenced a poetics that was profoundly rooted in the traditions of Russian verse. Discussing "The Great Elegy to John Donne" (written in 1963, many years before the poet's exile from his homeland) the critic points out that in this poem "Brodsky forces the Russian language to surpass itself" (p.74) and concludes, in agreement with an earlier observation by Yury Ivask, that in this poem Brodsky "brings the Russian close to the English." Similarly, the poet's exile and its impact on his poetry, a question that, as we have seen, evoked considerable interest among Western critics, is examined by Polukhina in terms of what she calls estrangement or alienation characteristic of
his poetry. The critic is concerned primarily with the various stylistic resources used by Brodsky to create "the effect of estrangement." In her view, "Brodsky has, more profoundly and more consistently than other contemporary Russian poets, developed the idea of alienation," again treating this aspect of Brodsky’s poetry primarily in the context of Russian literary traditions.

A similar task of examining the close link between language and values in Brodsky’s poetry was undertaken by several specialists in Russian poetry in the collection of essays Brodsky’s Poetics and Aesthetics edited by Lev Loseff and Valentina Polukhina and published in 1990. Though the book was meant to be a sequel to Poetika Brodskogo (the 1986 collection of essays written in Russian), its impact on the Western reception of Brodsky’s poetry was considerably greater because the essays were published in English and because they touched upon several issues central to the interest of Western criticism. While some of the essays, especially those narrowly focused or of a fairly technical character, primarily reinforced the high evaluation of Brodsky as the master of poetic form, there were other essays devoted to more topical questions concerning Brodsky’s writings, such as the impact of exile on his poetry and the problem posed by his authorial translations. Moreover, critics tried to establish categories of writing about Brodsky’s poetry that would be accessible not only to specialists in Russian literature but to readers of poetry in general; they also paid close attention
to the poet’s own views on contemporary poetry. This approach resulted in analyses of Brodsky’s works in the context of his other literary writings and in the treatment of his literary oeuvre as a whole in its intertextual complexity. In his fairly technical close reading of "Polden’ v komnate" Gerald S. Smith noted that some of the details of the poem,

enigmatic and capricious in isolation, may be found in closely contextualized detail in Brodsky’s essay ‘In a Room and a Half’, his memoir... of a coddled upbringing as the only child of cultured middle-class Jewish parents, and of the psychological torture of not being permitted to meet them again after the poet emigrated in 1972 (1990, 127). Though the critic did not think that "these parts of the poem need the prose parallels in order to be understood," he concluded with the observation that "[t]he parallels interestingly confirm and amplify the poem’s text, which as always in Brodsky is maximally taut and economical, and they convert the general into the specific in a uniquely authoritative way" (1990, 127). In general, critics were moving between Brodsky’s poetry and prose exemplifying their observations about Brodsky’s poetic oeuvre with quotations from the poet’s essays, treating them as aspects of Brodsky’s self-presentation, hence relevant to his own poetry. For example, tracing the affinities between Brodsky and Mandelstam in his essay, Leon Burnett not only compared texts of their poems but also drew extensively on Brodsky’s essay "The Child of Civilization" devoted to Mandelstam. By discussing Brodsky’s poems critics took into account the entirety of his writings, including his play Marble and even his opinions expressed in various interviews.
Though the majority of the essays are devoted to reflections about Brodsky's affinities with the Russian literary tradition -- even his metaphysical poetry is discussed in the context of "the 'metaphysical' strain in his own native Russian literature" (Burnett 1990, 12) -- there are other critical essays which touch upon questions raised in criticism oriented toward a more general readership. Kline in his "Variations on the theme of Exile" presents Brodsky's poetry through the prism of exile as "the poet's natural condition." The critic points out that in Brodsky's work one may distinguish "three different groups of 'poems of exile'" since long before the poet had left Russia "the world around him was one of alienation" (1990, 56). Incorporating into his analysis biographical, textual and intertextual elements, the critic argues that exile had an impact both on the themes and the form of Brodsky's poems. The consecutive groups of poems show, according to Kline, a growing "historical, mythological, and political dimension of Brodsky's reflections on the fate of the exiled poet." (1990, 62) According to Kline, in his "exile poems," especially the most recent ones, Brodsky expressed his identification, or close association, with three major historical figures, who have in common the fact that they were mistreated - disgraced, exiled, or executed - by the country or city which they loved and served with devotion and effectiveness. The three are Dante, Mary Queen of Scots, and the Soviet Second World War hero Marshal G. Zhukov. (1990, 59)

In this way Brodsky incorporated in his poems different traditions (only one of the "historical figures" is a Russian) and wrote of a general condition of disgrace and exile. Brodsky's
identification with a historical figure is "most complete in the case of Dante" and is reflected not only in the themes but also in the formal aspects of several of the most important of Brodsky's "exile poems." The poems' triple rhymes are "a clear echo of Dante's 'terza rima'." According to Kline, Brodsky "plays many changes on triplicity, none of them identical with 'terza rima', but all of them reminiscent of it" (1990, 81). Concluding his article, the critic observes that Brodsky, who should be seen not as a Russian writer, but rather as a writer in exile "like the Polish-born Joseph Conrad, living in England and writing in English," has thrown "himself with notable energy and imagination into the literature and culture not just of America and England but of the West more generally" (1990, 83).

Another question, already posed by criticism oriented toward a more general readership, was that of the differences between Brodsky's texts written in Russian and in English. In his article "A Journey from Petersburg to Istambul," which deals with Brodsky's essay "A Journey to Istambul," Thomas Venclova makes some interesting observations by comparing its Russian and English versions, noting that they did not "fully coincide." Since Brodsky was also a co-translator of the essay (and thus was responsible for the changes to the text) and given the fact that the differences between the Russian and the English versions are significant ("[t]he jokes, hints and intertextual commentary all differ"), Venclova believes each of the texts should be taken on its own terms. The critic makes the point that the question is
not marginal since "this is characteristic of many of Brodsky's recent works, perhaps the majority of them" (1990, 135).

Venclova begins his observations by stating that Brodsky's "A Journey to Istambul" "exists in two versions... and therefore enters into two different textual spaces... What is particularly remarkable is that the two versions are oriented towards different literary subtexts" (1990, 135). While in the English text "there are... noticeable echoes of Yeats," the Russian version "points to a different tradition - the tradition of Russian philosophical travel sketches." Commenting on the affinities of the English text with W. B. Yeats's "Sailing to Byzantium" Venclova states that "Brodsky, as the title indicates, constructs his entire essay as a rebuttal to Yeats." In addition to the title of Brodsky's essay (an obvious paraphrase of Yeats's work), "echoes of Yeats" are present in the entire text "beginning with concrete details (the mechanical nightingale) and ending with more general motifs threaded through the entire text (the theme of old age)" (1990, 136). As Venclova aptly notices, the two texts are oriented towards different subtexts and directed at different groups of readers. Examining the English subtext, the critic points out that the play with Yeats's work is lost on the Russian reader who is usually, alas, unacquainted with Yeats's poetry. (Just as the English-speaking reader will not detect the Pasternak quote "what's the millennium outside?" which in the Russian version is replaced by the neutral "millennium"). (1990, 136)

However, the most essential difference between the two texts, according to Venclova, lies in language. "Although the
English text is colloquial and even slangy, a sharp stylistic relief of the Russian text is undoubtedly lost. "The critic characterizes the language of the Russian text as "stumbling, scattered, crippled by cliché bureaucratese and pseudo-scientific expressions," which

sometimes degenerates into idle chat and often into abuse... Sometimes it is Mandelstam, rephrased in the language of a contemporary resident of Liteyny Avenue.... Sometimes it is a history discussion reminiscent of Zoshchenko's or even Averchenko's parodic histories... (1990, 136)

This language is connected with a specific narrative mode which "involves constantly checking with the reader...., constantly provoking him, aiming at dialogue that ends without having time to begin." At any rate, Venclova concludes his observations, "translating such speech into English is either difficult or impossible" (1990, 137).

It is roughly at this time that Brodsky's use of the English language became a topic of discussion of non-academic criticism, with the quality of his literary English strongly questioned by some critics, especially after the appearance in 1992 of Watermark, a book on Venice written by the author in English. In 1992 Polukhina published a collection of interviews with 18 poets (14 of them Russian) on the subject of Brodsky and his poetic achievement, thus adding a new aspect to Western criticism of looking at Brodsky's poetry from the point of view of Brodsky's poetic contemporaries. The appearance of the volume by Polukhina may be viewed as an attempt to establish a more immediate literary context in which to present Brodsky's poetry
to the reader and also as a way of searching for a "fresh and challenging look at the work of the youngest of the Nobel Prize-winning poets" (Polukhina 1992, vii).

Finally, in 1994 David M. Bethea published Joseph Brodsky and the Creation of Exile, a major study of Brodsky's writings. The author set himself the task of describing "the tone and the voice of this poet" and defining "the secret essence of the 'Brodskian' within Brodsky" by taking into account the literary tradition he comes from as well as his non-Russian literary affinities. The author re-examines various literary contexts in which Brodsky has usually been described by critics, but in the end decides that all of them are of limited value. "Countless analogies, therefore, can and presumably should, be made between Brodsky and his cherished predecessors, but they, in the end, are only that -- analogies that point to certain paradigmatic affinities," (p. 9) concludes Bethea.

Noting the impact East European poetry has had on the poets and critics in the West, especially Czesław Miłosz, Bethea begins his study with the observation that "Yeats imagines the Black Out through which these poets have lived and out of which they have written. This is where Brodsky's discourse has its provenance" (p. 8). Underlining the importance of "the act of faith in art which becomes manifest as the artist copes with tyrannical conditions," (p. 8) the critic proposes to view and analyze Brodsky's poetry in connection with his biography. Bethea argues that the notion of "the death of the author" may work only for
poets "without a biography" (p. 11) and does not apply to the majority of modern East European and Russian poets.

Bethea asserts that not many contemporary poets can write with "such moral authority,...supreme control of the medium, so to speak (raspy) full-throatedness" (p. 13) as do the East European poets, including Brodsky. Among Anglo-American poets the critic finds the closest parallel in "poets who write in English yet operate existentially at the edges of our culture and who are constantly fed by different, non-native originary myths" (p. 13). Referring to Czesław Miłosz (as a Polish poet of Lithuanian origin), Bethea stresses that the fact of detachment from one's own culture gives a poet a special passion for ideas. He also believes that exile is a condition that makes writers more aware of differences between cultures and languages and that it has metaphysical implications.

Though in the course of his study Bethea defines Brodsky as a Russian poet, in the introduction he states that Brodsky did not become a leading poet by defining himself exclusively within the value system of his parents' culture, but rather against it, and by trying to write the kind of Russian poetry that is both mindful of its native inheritance and committed to invigorating that inheritance through repeated inoculations of the foreign. (p. 10)

Brodsky's Jewish origin, along with his openness to influences of Anglo-American traditions of poetry, allows Bethea to treat Brodsky as a poet operating on the edges of his own native culture. This, in turn, allows him to see Brodsky through his affinities with the poets of several, quite disparate literary traditions.
Yet, we should also recall that he has never sought solidarity with any group or "interpretive community" other than his own private "dead poets' society". Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Martial, Catullus, Horace, Dante, Donne, Mandelstam, Akhmatova, Tsvetaeva, Auden, Frost, Lowell - these are his jury of peers, his writing must meet their standards. (p. 6)

Consequently, Bethea sees serious limitations in describing Brodsky in the context of other contemporary Russian poets, even those who had not been officially promoted in the Soviet Union.

It is not perhaps fair, for example, to compare someone like Alexander Kushner, a fine academic poet and contemporary Leningradian, to Brodsky.... Despite moments of splendid erudition and technical brilliance, Kushner's efforts have not eventuated in poetry of the magnitude, grandeur, and nearly Promethean vitality of that written by Brodsky.... In this regard, Brodsky is a unique phenomenon on the cultural landscape of contemporary Russia. (p. 9)

Bethea is also very careful when he makes comparisons between Brodsky and modern Anglo-American poets who write in the tradition of metaphysical poetry -- especially in the tradition of John Donne; yet the reason does not lie exclusively in the fact that he treats Brodsky primarily as a Russian poet contributing to the development of his native poetry. While he observes and analyzes a number of similarities between Brodsky and Donne, he also notes that Brodsky is the first "metaphysical" Russian poet. Having a rich philosophic and meditative tradition, Russian poetry did not have a major writer who would "rediscover" metaphysical elements of Russian "imported baroque" and mediate them to the modern writers. In consequence, "Russian baroque, which does indeed suggest certain paralells with Donne and English metaphysicals.... made its way to the wings but not, in the end, to the center stage of modern Russian letters." (p.76)
In contrast to those modern Anglo-American poets who write within their own tradition of metaphysical poetry, Brodsky writes in the tradition of Russian "poetry of thought." Paying special attention to metaphysical elements of Russian poetry and recalling traditions of Russian literature of the eighteenth century, Brodsky is, at the same time "the first to recognize that, while the potential was there, the "take" did not happen" (p. 77). In this sense, Brodsky is the first Russian metaphysical poet as well as a mediator of English literary tradition to Russian poetry.

His mediation, however, is not limited to "metaphysical" poetry but also includes Brodsky's affinities with modern Anglo-American poets, especially Eliot and Auden, both of whom influenced Brodsky significantly. The two poets, in the critic's view, played a special role in Brodsky's case because their poetry mediated traditions of Anglo-American poetry to him. "Brodsky learned a great deal by tracking his elegiac sentiments at the time of Eliot's death through the filter of Auden's poem on Yeats" (p. 135). Analyzing the role of Auden for the development of Brodsky's poetry, Bethea states that "Auden played the role....of Virgil in Brodsky's passage into the world of Anglo-American poetry." (p. 137) From Auden Brodsky adopted his attitude toward language and a notion of "language being prior to history." Not without importance was the fact that Auden himself was a poet in exile.

Since Bethea sees Brodsky as a poet in exile he tries to
show Brodsky's affinities with other poets in exile, including English poets who emigrated to America, East European poets in exile, and other Russian writers belonging to different "waves" of Russian emigrants (especially Nabokov and Khodasevich). But exile is understood by the critic in much broader and more profound terms as an alienation from society and the fact of being different, and this allows Bethea to view Brodsky in comparison with other Russian poets of Jewish origin. Bethea analyzes several features of Brodsky's poetry in terms of its affiliations with poets of various literary traditions, showing that, in fact, a number of different cultures were mediated to Brodsky by his predecessors in his native Russian literature, as, for instance, Dante was mediated to him by Mandelstam. This, according to Bethea, gives Brodsky's poetry a unique "triangular" vision of Western culture and sets him apart from other modern Russian poets.

The uniqueness of Brodsky's vision comes also from his belief in the "ethical" nature of language, in every language having a different "personality," that "underlines anything that is said through the language." Paraphrasing Brodsky's own words, Bethea states that "in English it is more difficult to lie or, in general, to be ethically ambiguous" (p. 121). Thus the critic explains Brodsky's decision to write in English as arising from "reasons that were simultaneously ethical and aesthetic". (p.122) This does not mean, however, that Brodsky's insistence on preserving in his English poems formal features that work in
Russian poetry always results in good English poetry. Pointing to Brodsky's "History of the Twentieth Century" the critic has to admit that

balance, perhaps intrinsic to Brodsky's "layered" Russian, deserts him.... The triple rhymes, the "gay/clay/okay" of the opening tercet, are not specific and prosaic...in the way that "fortochku/koftochku/kostochku" are. The English language's lack of inflected endings has made these rhymes predictable, so that "gay" cannot be used in its original meaning....and "okay" is clownishly self-parodying. (p. 233)

Though the critic points out that some of the elements of Brodsky's poetic style work in his English poems, the fact that the entire study is written from the point of view of Brodsky's contribution to Russian poetry may suggest that Bethea sees Brodsky as a poet more important for the development of Russian than of Anglo-American poetry. Reminding his readers that "Brodsky is an American poet laureate whose primary audience is in another language and culture ..." (p.6) Bethea nevertheless states that Brodsky's poetry is of special importance for the Anglo-American audience because of the fact that "we may be witnessing the death of poetic language in our own [that is Anglo-American] culture and that the least that can be said is that many of us have grown indifferent, at times profoundly so, to how poetic language works and lives from the inside" (p. 10).
Chapter 3

METHODS OF SELF-PRESENTATION

The strategies which Miłosz and Brodsky employed to make their work available, as well as their efforts to stimulate and facilitate its reception, are important components of the critical reception of their works. Both writers took considerable care in making their works available to English-speaking readers and in providing them with appropriately chosen literary contexts and backgrounds. Moreover, they did their utmost to control the quality of the translations of their works. The analysis of the strategies they pursued will be based principally on their prose writings and interviews, but their activities as translators (or co-translators), critics, anthologists and academics will also be taken into account, as will their comments on each other’s poetry in so far as they reflect their poetic personalities and ideas.

It is not my intention, however, to provide an exhaustive analysis of all of their writings that performed the function of self-presentation, nor do I intend to describe all the images of themselves which they created, whether in prose or in poetry. During the period of over 40 years in the case of Miłosz and of 20 years in the case of Brodsky, both poets underwent a considerable evolution. At the same time both the political
situation and Western attitudes toward the Soviet Bloc countries have been undergoing continuous change. In effect, Miłosz and Brodsky's interpretations of events from their lives or statements of motivations varied according to the changing circumstances. Following such shifts and modulations would be a separate task only partly relevant to the major issues of my interest in the reception of their writings in English-speaking countries. Therefore, their self-presentation will be discussed mostly in terms of the methods which they employed and mainly with respect to the impact these had on the reception of their writings.

It is quite easy to detect inconsistencies in the opinions expressed by both poets at various times or to find them giving different answers to the same question, depending on the situation or the interlocutor. It will not be necessary, however, to deal with such inconsistencies as they did not appear to have had any serious impact on the reception process. Most such inconsistencies occur in the interviews conducted by interlocutors of different nationalities; they simply demonstrate Miłosz's and Brodsky's awareness of, or assumptions about, the differences in readers' horizons of expectations which were shaped by different cultural backgrounds. Consequently, it is important to note that both vary their answers significantly depending on the interviewer's nationality or the nationality of the expected reader. For example, Brodsky, who told an American interviewer: "I was translating all kinds of nonsense. I was
translating Poles, Czechs, brother Slavs....," (Birkerts 1982, 90-91) said to a Polish interviewer: "I was a great admirer of Polish poetry..." (Husarska 1987, 9) Similar examples can be easily found in Miłosz's responses: Miłosz told a Western critic that The Captive Mind was written with the Western reader in mind, but in a statement given for the benefit of Polish readers, Miłosz described his motivation in writing the book as a desire to explain to his compatriots the reasons for his decision to "defect" from his homeland.

Such discrepancies, or apparent contradictions, are quite consistent with those voiced by other emigré writers. This may be illustrated by a quotation from another Polish poet in the West, Adam Czerniawski. In the introduction to his book Scenes from a Disturbed Childhood Czerniawski writes: "in addressing myself to these two readerships [i.e. Polish and English speakers] I would have to put on slightly different voices, contract some accounts and expand others, place the emphasis differently here and there, explain to one group what would be all too obvious to the other." (1991, xvii) Since an author's writings usually address themselves to a specific category of readers, by the same token he takes into account the group's horizon of expectations, however putative that might be. It is clear that in writing poems in their native tongues (though not exclusively so in the case of Brodsky), both Miłosz and Brodsky had primarily the speakers of these languages in mind as their addressees. Their interviews, on the other hand, have been directed at the readers of different
nationalities; thus they take into account various horizons of expectations. As their literary works remain to a large extent the same, even in translations, the poets use direct conversation to present themselves in terms suitable for a specific group of readers. Consequently, the interviews by both Miłosz and Brodsky were meant to act, at least to some extent, as a mediation between their literary texts and the reader. The writer's candour and the arguments he uses in order to stimulate the reader's interest seem to be two different questions, of which the first is of little interest for the purposes of this study.

Miłosz made his prose writings and interviews a major platform for his opinions and for his self-presentation to a larger extent than Brodsky. Reading the interviews with him, one may get the impression that Miłosz seldom goes beyond summarizing opinions and points of view already formulated in his literary works and that he constantly tries to explain their meanings. In 1955, in a letter to a London group of young Polish poets (later known as the Kontynenty group), Miłosz wrote:

The times are such that one cannot state publicly in writing what one really thinks about poetry. Personally I try to avoid doing so. [...] Sometimes I even blame myself for "wearing a mask" or several masks. But for all I know this may sometimes be a necessary condition of effective action. The ketman which I described in my book [i.e. in The Captive Mind] is not confined to one political system only. It is an artistic method par excellence. (9 Nov.1955)¹

¹ This letter, as well as the letter quoted in chapter 4 (dated 27 May 1975), are in the private collection of Professor Bogdan Czaykowski.
In one of his essays Miłosz writes: "Living for nearly thirty years in exile, I had to learn how to keep my mouth shut..." (1979, 60). Interviewed by Victor Sokolov for Kontinent Miłosz said:

I cannot express anything that is really important in a form that is suitable for reporters, for TV broadcasters, because everything I say would be distorted, infected. And as a writer I know that one has to be very careful with words, when talking or writing. When I write I know that I control my words, I know that I say what I mean. But when I talk and they are listening I do not know at all what meaning my words can turn into. (1980, 439-440)

Don Stanley noted the following remarks of Miłosz after an interview in 1982 (that is at a time when public interest in the 1980 Nobel Prize winner had already forced Miłosz to give several interviews to the mass media): "Miłosz is still upset about the CKVU interview: 'It is not a problem of self-esteem,' says Miłosz, 'You should not be too tolerant in this respect'." (1982) He definitely preferred to talk "through" literary texts. Asked by Victor Sokolov about his desire to tell the Western world the truth about the Soviet Bloc Miłosz said: "I was talking, I told the truth. I wrote a book with the title The Captive Mind. I said a lot there, and I said a lot in my books that were written and published quite a long time ago, in the 1950s." (1980, 442).

For Miłosz, the principal means of expressing his views and of self-presentation were his writings. Michał Paweł Markowski in his article "Miłosz: dylematy autoprezentacji" [Miłosz: Dilemmas of self-presentation] writes:

None of the essayistic books of Miłosz is free of gestures of self-presentation. Not only is the Native Realm an autobiographical account -- we can in fact regard as
something constant Miłosz's "desire to present others with a true image of oneself." [...] Between the pole of autobiography (Native Realm) and the pole of self-portrait (Visions from San Francisco Bay) Miłosz has created a generically heterogenous space of self-presentation. (1991, 25)

In fact, one may say that in the case of Miłosz his entire literary oeuvre is a form of self-presentation. His political beliefs, literary views, his philosophy and religious thought -- all these are directly and indirectly present in his poems and prose. Even his novels (Seizure of Power and The Issa Valley) are to a large extent autobiographical. In effect, one gains little new knowledge from interviews with Miłosz. He seldom gives his opinions directly, preferring to refer readers to his essays or poems. Instead of occasional short interviews, he prefers extensive conversations devoted almost entirely to his writings. Similarly, the choice of the interviewer seems to be of importance to Miłosz. For books of conversations he chose specialists familiar with his entire oeuvre as well as its historical and literary backgrounds (R. Gorczyńska, A. Fiut).

For a long time Brodsky, who belongs to a generation much more in tune with the mass media, treated his literary writings as somehow separate from his conversations with interviewers.

Anna-Marie Brumm notes:

He seemed eager to talk and volunteered information willingly at all times. The poet spoke freely, especially when the questions concentrated on general topics or on dealing with poetry as a genre. However, he was somewhat more hesitant when asked to comment on his own poems specifically. (1974, 229)

The interview by Anna-Marie Brumm is long (17 pages) and touches
upon a wide range of topics, from Brodsky's life and writings to his opinions on feminism and the use of drugs by youth. But what is especially interesting and characteristic is that Brodsky seldom uses his poems as an exemplification or explanation of his thoughts. In contrast to Miłosz, Brodsky the poet and Brodsky the interviewee are generally separate. The latter can talk about the former, however often "tentatively" and with a consciousness that he has more to say on various topics than he does about his poetry and would not necessarily like to comment on what "the poet" has said. Many of Brodsky's answers to questions concerning him as a poet begin with "I don't remember" or "I guess", "I would say" or similar expressions. In contrast, whenever he answers other questions he seems to be sure of his opinions. His explanations of his own poems seem to be made from the point of view of a critic focusing on the meaning and structure rather than on recalling a specific atmosphere of the text or the circumstances of its writing (an approach typical of Miłosz). One may even get the impression that Brodsky the human being does not want to limit himself to Brodsky the poet. Obviously his real life is present in his poetry, but only indirectly. Asked about his internal exile in Arkhangel he confesses: "it was part of my life but if I put it into my poetry, it was in a rather indirect way." (Brumm 1974, 245)

The difference in the attitude of the two poets toward the mass media does not entirely explain the already indicated differences between Miłosz's and Brodsky's responses in
conversations. In many respects it is more important to note that this contrast arises from the difference in their treatment of poetry and their understanding of the role of the poet. Whenever Brodsky talks about his poems he almost always analyzes their formal features, while Miłosz constantly interprets his poetry.

In the already quoted letter of 9 November 1955, Miłosz wrote:

A poem or a prose-work is a bit like an iceberg -- only its peak is visible above the waterline, and what's more one is aware to a greater or lesser extent of its hidden layers. A certain esoteric doctrine of poetry (to call it that way) is the opposite of so-called committed poetry. It differs from the latter in as much as some of the "functions" which the poet takes upon himself... are not treated by him too seriously.... It all comes down to the fact that as a young man I met a certain old man, a great (non-Polish) poet who had a considerable influence on me and taught me many things. And it is this fact that lies at the bottom of my long-standing conflict with the literary "milieu," which accused me of arrogance and disdain, because its members sensed that I did not reveal some secrets.

Since Brodsky does not have a "hidden" knowledge to transmit as Miłosz does, he does not "reveal" it in his conversations. Whatever he wanted to say in his poem he did without treating poetry as a veil for more important messages. Miłosz had reached his "hidden" knowledge through the initiation into the mysteries of "an esoteric lore" thanks to his uncle, Oscar de Milosz, a Lithuanian-French mystical poet and then through his experiences of the Nazi occupation. Consequently Miłosz, in his interviews and conversations, usually interprets his writings and partly decodes their message, while Brodsky has a tendency to talk in a straightforward manner about the questions that interest him as a human being.

With time the attitudes (or more precisely: the techniques
of self-presentation) of both poets became more similar. In the late 1980s Brodsky published his first collection of essays, *Less than One*. If we compare the topics covered in the interview by Anna-Marie Brumm (recorded mainly in 1973) with the topics of these essays, they turn out to be (not surprisingly) mostly the same. Gradually Brodsky started to treat his writing as an important platform for his opinions and beliefs.

One of the important elements of Miłosz and Brodsky’s self-presentation to the Western reader was their treatment of other contemporary writers of the same language. Since both of them became exiles as a consequence of the situation of intellectuals and literature in the Soviet Bloc, both of them expressed their opinions about those who remained inside. Miłosz’s *The Captive Mind* became widely known in the West. Obviously, Polish readers did not have any difficulties in recognizing the writers described there. However, from the point of view of the Western reader, who was at that time not familiar with Polish literature, their names were not important. For them, the book was not a personal attack on specific writers; it was a description and an analysis of the communist system and its impact on the intellectuals, literature and literary life in an East European country. In fact Miłosz did not try to attack anybody directly, nor did he try to lower the value of any writer from his homeland. Later he tried to promote contemporary Polish poetry in the English-speaking countries partly in order to provide the Western reader with a literary background to his work. Instead of
promoting Polish poets in his interviews and discussions, Miłosz undertook the task of translating them into English. Contemporary Polish poets were presented by Miłosz selectively, yet the selection gave a picture of the most interesting poets from the English-speaking reader’s point of view.

Brodsky, who was much more outspoken and directly expressed his opinions in interviews and conversations, from the very beginning tried to separate himself from the officially approved poetry in the Soviet Union. In 1972 during a reading in Vancouver, one of his first in the West, he openly attacked poets officially recognized in his homeland. Two Vancouver newspapers quoted his words in their articles about Brodsky’s visit.

In the Soviet Union, according to Brodsky, it is impossible to perform as a honest writer under the restrictions imposed by government. Writers who form the favoured Union of Writers find their works published immediately and there’s no problem finding work. Brodsky says he is not representative of Soviet writers because those who publish regularly must sacrifice their art to a political imposition. He claims, although without universal agreement, that there are no good writers within the Union of Writers. "The works of these favoured poets are on my ---- list," he says.(Chatelin 1972)

It is worth recalling here that a year before Brodsky’s visit to Vancouver, Andrei Voznesensky was there on a visit arranged by the federal government’s external affairs department; he was enthusiastically welcomed by a huge English-speaking audience.

In writing The Captive Mind Miłosz showed his opposition to a system known to the West largely through its ideology and propaganda, which considerably distorted the reality of the system, including its impact on the life of intellectuals. Unlike
Miłosz, Brodsky did not have to argue against a generally false perception of the communist system, but he felt that he had to separate himself clearly from officially published Soviet poets who had gained recognition in the West. The initial situations of Miłosz and Brodsky as exiles were different; hence, their techniques of self-presentation in opposition to official clichés of literary life in their homelands were also significantly different.

In addition to separating himself from officially recognized "Soviet poets," from the very beginning Brodsky tried to revise his image as "one of Akhmatova’s orphans," stressing personal relations with Akhmatova rather than her influence on his poetry. In the beginning he did not talk about his Russian literary affinities, pointing out instead his admiration for certain English and American poets. When asked about Akhmatova, he simply described her as a great person and a great poet; however he did not include her among those who had influenced his poetry.

Interviewed by Anna-Marie Brumm in 1973 Brodsky did not mention Akhmatova’s name on his own initiative. He only answered a few questions about her:

Brumm: What is your opinion of Anna Akhmatova?

Brodsky: Oh, she’s a great poet and a very dear friend. But I don’t think there was any influence from her. I would say, she’s a great human being.

Brumm: She came to your aid, didn’t she?

Brodsky: Yes, she helped me a lot.

Brumm: When you were in prison?
Brodsky: I would say I’ve been released because of her. She initiated all the activity and moved all the people. (Brumm 1974, 245)

With time, Brodsky became less reticent in talking about Akhmatova and in the 1979 interview by Sven Birkerts he mentioned Akhmatova’s name constantly, although never in respect of her poetic influence on him. She was to remain his friend and a great person but not a poet who influenced him or had any special impact on his writing. At one point he said:

One summer, Rein said: "Would you like to meet Akhmatova?" I said: "Well, why not?" without thinking much. At that time I didn’t care much about Akhmatova. I got a book and I read through it, but at that time I was pretty much in my own idiotic world, wrapped up in my own kind of things. So ... we went there, actually two or three times. I liked her very much. We talked about this and that, and I showed her some of my poems without really caring what she would say. (1982, 96)

On a number of occasions Brodsky pointed out that Akhmatova advised young poets not to write long poems, but that he did not follow this advice. Her high opinion of his poetry did not then mean that she influenced his writing. As a person she had an impact on his life but as poets they had very little in common. Instead he recalls names of other Russian poets who influenced his writing. Among them the most important are Derzhavin, Boratynsky, Tsvetaeva and Mandelstam. In the interview with Sven Birkerts Brodsky said:

I don’t know really quite whom I react to most. I remember the great impact Mandelstam’s poetry had on me when I was nineteen or twenty....Another poet who really changed not only my idea of poetry, but also my perception of the world -- which is what it’s all about, ya? -- is Tsvetaeva. I personally feel closer to Tsvetaeva -- to her poetics, to her techniques.... (1982, 104)
When Anna-Marie Brumm asked him which of the Russian poets had influenced his work or which he particularly admired, he answered: "Two or three. The first one is an eighteenth century poet, Derzhavin; another is from the nineteenth century, Baradynsky [sic!] and the third from this century, Tsvetaeva." (1974, 244-45)

Over the years Brodsky became less concerned with the clichés that welcomed him and his writing in the West. Although in 1987 he still did not want to talk about the influence of Akhmatova on his poetry, he openly praised her as a great poet. Asked by Anna Husarska about his "literary masters", Anna Akhmatova and Wystan H. Auden, Brodsky said about the former: "Akhmatova was the best human being I have ever met. Some things influence you - better people, terrific landscapes, I don’t know. I have never seen a more accomplished human being." (1987, 11)

When in an interview in 1986 David Montenegro asked Brodsky about the problems faced by modern writers he answered:

Now one of the main problems that a poet today faces -- modern or not modern -- is that the body of poetry prior to him -- the heritage, that is -- is larger, which makes you simply wonder whether you have anything to add to that body.... But it’s precisely because you have such a great people before yesterday who breathe on your neck.... To think that you can say something qualitatively new after people like Tsvetaeva, Akhmatova, Auden, Pasternak, Mandelstam, Frost, Eliot.... -- reveals either a very enterprising fellow or a very ignorant one.... (1987, 528)

It is hardly surprising to see in Brodsky's answer a mixture of Russian, English and American poets as the greatest predecessors of his poetry. From the very beginning Brodsky tried to emphasize his poetic affinities with the greatest contemporary
Anglo-American poets. In 1972, during his public readings in Vancouver, he "named a few of his favorite English and American poets, but it's obvious that in his work and thought he is still Russian and feels a bit out of place." (Chatelin 1972) When asked in an interview in 1973 about his favourite poets, Brodsky talked almost exclusively about poets of the English language. The same general observation can be made about his other interviews. A large part of his interview for the Paris Review is devoted to his friendship with American and English poets. Sven Birkerts notes: "The walls and free surfaces of his apartment were almost entirely obscured by books, post cards, and photographs. There were a number of pictures of a younger Brodsky, with Auden and Spender, with Octavio Paz, with various friends." (1982, 83) Brodsky thoroughly analyses the impact English and American poetry had on him and shows examples of this influence in his own poems. "I decided to write a poem, largely aped from Auden's structure in 'Memory of Yeats'," (1982, 92) said Brodsky who during the same interview hesitated to talk about the impact Akhmatova's poetry (as well as poetry by other Russian poets) had on him. Significant in this text is also the story of his departure from the Soviet Union. "I never even believed that they'd allow me to go. I never believed they would put me on the plane, and when they did I didn't know whether the plane would go east or west," Brodsky told Sven Birkerts. "All I took out of Russia was my typewriter...., a small Modern Library volume of Donne's poems, and a bottle of vodka, which I thought that if I
got to Austria I’d give to Auden." (1982, 102-3) Then Brodsky told how with the help of Carl Proffer he managed to find Auden in Austria and "stayed two weeks in London, with Wystan at Stephen Spender’s place." (1982, 103) In another interview Brodsky says:

Normally an attachment to this or that poet wears off after a year or so. Well, many years have passed since I read his first lines and exactly the opposite has been the case: My attachment just grows and grows and grows, until sometimes I think I am him. (Husarska 1987, 11)

Comparing Auden’s influence on him with Akhmatova’s he said that "the interplay was less substantial and my feelings about him derive from the printed word rather than personal recollections." (Husarska 1987, 11)

As a result, with time Brodsky was seen increasingly through his poetic links with English and American poetry rather than in the context of other Russian poets; this made it easier for him to acknowledge his Russian affinities without fear of being misunderstood or pigeon-holed. He not only prepared a collection of Tsvetaeva’s prose for the English-speaking reader, but also started to write introductory notes to English editions of other Russian works, such as Platonov’s The Foundation Pit and introduced Ratushinskaya’s poems to the West.

In the late 1980s, after being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, Brodsky treated this as an award for the entire circle of poets. Many years after the initial separation from his native traditions and official contemporary poetry, Brodsky recalled his poetic friends in Russia and presented himself as a
member of a poetic school. Talking to Sally Laird in 1988 Brodsky said:

What I would claim for our school was that our poetry was more restrained, more mature, more forceful in a sense -- while at the same time we kept this terrific elegance in style. So I think this whole business -- you know *le prix Nobel* - is a sort of indication that our team has won. (p. 7)

Sally Laird continues:

I asked who else was in the team, and Brodsky mentioned those who, he hoped, would now 'come to the fore as a result, so to speak, of my humble self'. Aleksander Kushner, Yevgeny Rein, Vladimir Uflyand, Anatoly Naiman...(p. 7)

Milosz's manner of self-presentation has been completely different from Brodsky's, for rather obvious reasons. Milosz could not place himself in an already known tradition; he had to project an image of himself as well as to familiarize the reader with Polish literary traditions. Completely unknown in the West at the time of his break with the Communist government, Milosz was not welcomed upon his defection by the Western public; he was neither interviewed nor asked to give public readings. In fact, as we have seen, he stayed hidden in the Kultura house near Paris for about six months before venturing out. As the initial place of his exile in the West was France, his first Western books appeared in French translation prior to their English versions. To be recognized, Milosz had to make himself become part of Western literary life. Commenting on this process, Stanisław Barańczak pointed out that

after he became an émigré, Milosz sacrificed a considerable part of his time and creative energy to capturing the attention of western audiences by writing essays and works of fiction (*The Captive Mind* and *The Seizure of Power* are
two examples) addressed directly to them and dealing with the most burning political issues of the day, such as the fate of Central Europe under Communist rule and the ominous spread of what was later called the "totalitarian temptation" among western intellectuals. Thus his literary career and reception in the West suffered for many years from a sort of optical distortion: his fame as a political essayist grew disproportionately, while his achievement as a poet was recognized almost exclusively by his Polish readers. (1991, ix)

This description of the beginnings of Miłosz's reception in the West does not, however, explain the entire situation. It does not, for instance, make it clear that a completely unknown Polish poet had little chance of recognition in the West at that time.

In pointing out the inconveniences and distortions of the reception of Miłosz's poetry caused by his political essays and politically oriented fiction, one should not forget that these writings brought Miłosz the critical attention he otherwise would not have had in the years following his defection. And without this attention, a full recognition of Miłosz the poet in the West would probably have been even more difficult. It can be safely assumed that Miłosz was fully aware of this aspect of his situation. One of his first critical texts published in English was an essay about Adam Mickiewicz. In fact, Miłosz started to familiarize Western readers with the traditions of Polish literature (especially poetry) almost immediately after arriving in the West. Both his recognition as a political essayist and his critical works devoted to Polish literature led to a better knowledge of the background of his own poetry among Western readers.

Miłosz was aware that Western readers had difficulties with
understanding the situation in the Soviet Bloc; he also recognized the role that literature could play in conveying a more realistic picture of the Soviet system. In his essay "The Real and the Paradigms" he writes: "It is significant that so many people learned about the existence of Soviet concentration camps only after having read Solzhenitsyn’s G*ulag Archipelago...." (1979, 60) About his novel Zdobycie władzy (The Seizure of Power), Miłosz told Aleksander Fiut: "The choice of the subject was 'utilitarian' in the sense that at the time the world had no knowledge of the tragedy of Poland, and that was not fair." (Fiut 1988, 120) He added: "Then one had to continue on the same lines, keep on publishing, so that the name would not disappear from the public view." (Fiut 1988, 120) He recognized that not all of his writings would be of equal interest to the Western reader: The "Poetic Treatise" (Traktat Poetycki) is of no use to the Western readers' market," he said to A.Fiut. (Fiut 1988, 121) On the other hand, he did not intend and did not want to be recognized primarily as a political essayist.

They wanted me very much to write on political topics, but that is not my metier. The reviews of The Captive Mind, which after all is a very difficult book, were very positive in sociological journals. In sociological journals, in political science journals etc. But that was not what interested me. (Fiut 1988, 121)

As a result, in addition to his writings intended to reach Polish readers, Miłosz managed to publish in English translation Native Realm (recognized in the West as his autobiography) as well as several other essays, using prose as his major medium for speaking to the West.
At the same time he had also undertaken the task of familiarizing Western readers with Polish literature, especially with contemporary Polish poetry. His translations of Miron Białoszewski began to appear in *Encounter* in the late 1950s. In the early 1960s the *Observer* and *Encounter* published several poems by Zbigniew Herbert in Miłosz's translation. The publication of a volume of Herbert's poems in 1968 was also arranged by Miłosz who was a co-translator of most of the poems. In 1965 Miłosz published his pioneering anthology of contemporary Polish poetry in English translation: *Postwar Polish Poetry*, in which he provided Western readers with a panoramic view not only of postwar Polish poetry but also of his native poetic context. The inclusion of a relatively large number of poems by Wat, Różewicz and Herbert clearly showed his preferences. In addition, the anthology gave Miłosz an opportunity to introduce himself to the West as a poet. A selection of his own poems (mostly so-called wartime poems) was accompanied by a bio-critical note about his poetry. There are, in fact, two notes about Miłosz in this book -- one about Miłosz the editor and translator and another one about Miłosz the poet, both of them written by the poet himself. The second one is of greater interest as the earliest attempt at a synthetic characterization of Miłosz's poetry in English, and as an example of self-presentation which, judging by the composition and tone of the note (for example, its tentativeness) must have caused Miłosz a certain degree of unease. The poet refers to himself in the note in the third
person and, to underline further the desire for maximal objectivity, mentions the opinion of "some critics," which he neither rejects nor endorses entirely but juxtaposes with his own view of his poetry.

The landscape of his native Lithuania has always been at the core of Miłosz's imagery [...]. The term "classicism" applied to his poetry probably means that his experimentation is mitigated by an attachment to old Polish verse. His poetic work presents a great variety of forms ranging from mock odes and treatises in the spirit of the eighteenth century to notebooks of dreams. Some critics see in him a symbolist in reverse: in symbolism a poet proceeds from external reality towards the ineffable veiled by it, while Miłosz circumvents with his symbols the essential being of things, which seems to be his main concern. He himself says his best poems are childishly naive descriptions of things. Yet because of his civic passions he has always been the victim of a dichotomy. In 1948 he published a "Treatise on Morals" in iambic verse deriding the rule of terror. [...] (p. 57)

Miłosz's note provided Western critics and readers with an authorial description of his poetry that could serve as a starting point for their own evaluations once there became available a sufficiently representative selection of his poems.

Miłosz's anthology had more than one edition and was received with considerable interest by critics and readers of poetry. One may even say that the anthology constituted a real breakthrough in the reception of contemporary Polish poetry in English-speaking countries, generating not only a widespread interest but genuine acclaim. At the same time, it placed Miłosz's own poems in a fairly wide context of postwar Polish poetry hitherto largely unknown to Western readers.

Miłosz also introduced his own poetry in his The History of Polish Literature, which appeared four years prior to the
publication of the first volume of his poems in English translation.

From the point of view of Miłosz's self-presentation this work is of considerable interest. The short notes included in the 1965 anthology did not give Miłosz sufficient scope for describing his own poetry in the context of modern Polish poetry. However, in the textbook, Miłosz was able to characterize the various stages of his poetic development and to place his poetry in the context of the most important literary trends and events of contemporary Polish literature. The passages devoted by Miłosz to his own poetry are well worth quoting in sequence, as taken together (in the book they appear at different chronological points) they constitute a fairly comprehensive presentation of the poet by himself.

Miłosz introduces himself initially as a member of the Żagary group, which came together in Vilnius in 1931, and then gives a brief characterization of his early poetry that relates the opinions of Polish critics with less than complete approval of some of them:

The youngest of the founders, Czesław Miłosz (1911- ) is the author of this book, and he feels embarrassed to characterize his contribution.... His first slim volume of poetry, A Poem of a Time Frozen.... (1933), was spoiled by social ratiocinations; but the next, Three Winters.... (1936), is considered by literary historian and critic Kazimierz Wyka the most representative work of "catastrophism". Its rush of symbols, set unexpectedly into lines with a classicist ring, alludes to calamities of cosmic amplitude. Critics have tended to see a myth of the earth, a protective deity ever renewing herself, as the core of Miłosz’s poetry, or have been calling him the only true pantheist in Polish poetry. It is not certain whether this is true, since Christian elements are also strong. There is
no doubt, however, that his poetry is permeated with the nature of his native Lithuania. During the war, Miłosz lived in Warsaw, where he edited a clandestine anthology of anti-Nazi poems. His poetic work, collected in the volume called Rescue.... (1945), and published as one of the first books in postwar Poland, marked a new approach to historical tragedy and, together with the volumes of Ważyk, Jastrun and Przyboś, left its stamp upon the development of Polish poetry in the next two decades. (1969, 413)

In the sections of the book devoted to Polish literature under the Nazi occupation Miłosz refers to himself twice:

Poetry was .... the mainstay of the literary Resistance. Seven clandestinely printed anthologies testify to its popularity. The first was a slim pamphlet.... The others were of more conspicuous size: The Independent Song.... (1942), edited by Cz. Miłosz, which included some poems smuggled from abroad...., an anthology of the Jewish tragedy which included, among other works, poems by J. Kott....., M. Jastrun and Cz.Miłosz. (1969, 446)

And a few pages later:

As for poetry, the most talented young beginners had perished. Their heroic deaths gave rise to a legend that still surrounds their poetry; but the protest against inhumanity, as critics agree today, was better expressed by poets already mature at the outset of the war. Not the "Skamander" poets (all were absent from Poland except for Iwaszkiewicz) had the greatest impact upon young readers, but the poets of the First and Second Vanguards -- Przyboś, Ważyk, Jastrun and Miłosz. (1969, 456)

In the chapter devoted to the postwar period Miłosz describes his poetic development in a section subtitled "Poetry and inhumanity," emphasizing the impact of the Nazi occupation on his writing and placing his poetry alongside that of the most prominent poets then writing in Poland. It is significant that he quotes two of his "wartime" poems: "A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto" (1943) and "The Poor Poet" and describes in detail another poem written during the occupation, "Song of the End of the World."
In the final section devoted to his own writing the author discusses his work in the context of the most prominent writers of so called "émigré" literature, while at the same time setting himself apart from the Polish émigrés.

Different mentalities engendered different sensibilities - writes Miłosz - the poetry of Czesław Miłosz, for example, was alien to émigré readers, and the problems that preoccupied him, repellant. Miłosz left Poland in 1951, lived for almost ten years in Paris as a free-lance writer, and in 1960 went to United States, where he has been teaching Polish literature at the University of California in Berkeley. He has always considered himself primarily a poet, although he wrote several books in prose, some of which were translated into many languages. *The Captive Mind*. . . . (1953) is an analysis of the mental acrobatics Eastern European intellectuals had to perform in order to give assent to Stalinist dogmas. It preceded similar denouncements in Poland by a few years, but was attacked in the émigré press as tainted with Hegelianism and Marxism. 

*The Valley of Issa*. . . . (1955) is a novel close to the very core of Miłosz's poetry. It has been called "pagan" because of its childish amazement with the world; but this story of childhood in Lithuania, with its simple images of nature, is somewhat deceptive, as underneath lurks a Manichean vision. 

*Native Realm*. . . . (1959) is written as the autobiography of an Eastern European, conducting him through his native Lithuania, Russia, Poland, and France. An appraisal of Miłosz's evolution as a poet and translator of poetry does not belong here for obvious reasons. In Poland he was a strictly forbidden author from 1951 to 1956, extolled during the years 1956-1958, and again forbidden in the period 1958-1966; despite these fluctuations, his intimate ties with the Polish writers' community have not been destroyed. (1969, 529-530)

*The History of Polish Literature*, in addition to its obviously major role as a textbook, gave its author the opportunity to introduce and describe his own literary career in terms of its connections with the most important historical events as well as literary movements in Poland. The emphasis on the history of Poland and its importance for understanding Polish literature, evident in the entire book, was also an important
element in Miłosz's self-introduction. Actually the major part of his self-characterization is devoted to the historical context of his poetry -- the impact of the Nazi occupation, political treatment of his writings in the postwar period, differences between his and the émigrés' mentalities, and so on.

The focus on history in his textbook provided Miłosz with an opportunity to present the tradition of the seer (wieszcz) in Polish literature which at a later stage enabled Western critics to see Miłosz as a continuator of this tradition, i.e. as someone who understands more than others and shows new ways. In the already quoted letter to the members of the Kontynenty group (1955) Miłosz underlined his affinities with the outstanding Polish Romantic poet, Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855). Referring to what he called "ezoteryczna doktryna poezji" [the esoteric doctrine of poetry] Miłosz wrote: "Mickiewicz knew the esoteric doctrine of poetry, and that is why he is so dear to me." For Miłosz a seer was a poet whose poetry was based on deep understanding and a hidden knowledge. The selection of the poems for the first collection of his poems to appear in English, Selected Poems published in 1973, is an excellent example of how Miłosz attempted to establish his image as a seer in the Western context.

Although the poems are introduced as translated by "several hands" these several hands are mostly Miłosz himself, sometimes as co-translator with P.D. Scott or R. Lourie. Only 13 out of the 54 poems in this collection are translated by other translators.
The selection of the poems in the volume -- along with the way in which they are grouped in separate sections -- are of significance. The poems included in the first two sections were written in various periods, but all of them show Miłosz's concern with his role as a poet who is in possession (as a result of his experiences and initiations) of a hidden knowledge. The third section consists mostly of poems written during the Nazi occupation or shortly afterwards and almost all of the poems included in this section are clearly dated; the section is subtitled significantly: "What did he learn." The last section entitled "Shore," includes Miłosz's "American" poems. This "carefully constructed book" was clearly composed with an eye to the Western reader. For instance, it does not include a number of poems of great importance from the point of view of Polish readers. Nor does it show the development of Miłosz's poetry over time, since the arrangement is not chronological and no dates are given for most of the poems. Instead, the selection and composition of the volume perfectly fit the terms of Miłosz's self-presentation in The History of Polish Literature; the volume projects an image of "wieszcz" (seer) who is preoccupied with history, culture and philosophical ideas of his time.

In his introduction to The Poet's Work, Barańczak points out that

It was not until Miłosz took the promotion of his poetry in the West into his own hands and began to translate it into
English himself (helped by numerous American collaborators).... that it started making its way to international recognition. The publication of his Selected Poems in 1973 marks the beginning of what can be called his career as a poet in America, if not an American poet. (1991, ix)

Until 1988 the Western reader was only provided with selections of Miłosz’s poetry: the sequence of the four collections (Selected Poems, Bells in Winter, The Separate Notebooks and Unattainable Earth) did not fully reflect the pattern of his poetic and intellectual evolution. Knowing how careful Miłosz was with translations of his poems one may speculate about the reasons for this situation. It seems that Miłosz preferred to present an image of himself and of his poetry that he thought ought to draw attention of Western readers to the significant aspects of his work rather than to let the readers and critics discover the "interesting" elements for themselves. Only the international recognition and the lively interest in his poetry that ensued, combined with the already current descriptive categories and formulas (which owed a great deal to Miłosz himself), made it possible and challenging to introduce the Western reader to a comprehensive collection of his poetry presented in chronological order. "After all -- Barańczak points out -- Miłosz’s English output is not just another example of the typical situation in which an exotic author’s work is presented to the audience in some accidentally selected fragments by an accidentally appointed translator who is not necessarily an expert on this particular author’s work." (1991, x).
A *sine qua non* condition of the recognition of a foreign ("exotic") poet are, of course, translations of his poetry. The question of the translations and of their impact on the reception process is so crucial that a separate chapter is devoted to it. However, since both Miłosz and Brodsky were fully aware of the importance of translation, and since both of them reacted to all kinds of problems connected with translating, some of the questions (especially those connected with their self-presentation) will be briefly discussed in this chapter.

Both poets tried to take control of the translations of their poems by working actively with translators or undertaking the task of translation themselves. Although, as we have seen, Brodsky emphasized the influence that English and American poetry had on him and set himself apart from contemporary Russian poetry, he nevertheless always put great stress on the importance of Russian language for his poetry. It may even be said that he treated his native language as his homeland. Although this question is seldom a major point of his interviews, a careful reader will note that for Brodsky poetry is more a matter of playing with forms and language than a presentation of ideas. In contrast to Miłosz, Brodsky has never made a claim to be in possession of some hidden knowledge, or even of seeking to understand reality in the Miłoszian sense, and he does not see himself as carrying out a poetic mission in the West. Instead, he is preoccupied with the formal problems of poetry; on many occasions he emphasizes the impact the poetics of other poets had
on him (e.g. Auden’s or Tsvetaeva’s). In the conversation with Anna-Marie Brumm he said that "poetry is not a question of self-expression. It’s something else. It’s some kind of craft...." (1974, 240-41) In the same interview he described also his favourite verse structure -- the iambic pentameter. He appears to talk more readily about the "technicalities" of poetry than about its meaning.

I would say that the poet worships perhaps only one thing in the final analysis, and that has no embodiment except in words, that is ... language.... Perhaps I am modern in that I am living in my own time and to some extent I reflect -- what I write reflects -- the sensibility of the people who speak my language toward their reality, (p.529)

said Brodsky to David Montenegro in 1986. This interest in poetic structure is highly significant for the way in which Brodsky took care of the translations of his poetry.

Miłosz’s interest in the formal aspects of poetry has been -- not so much less than Brodsky’s, but -- different. Stressing the mimetic function of literature, describing himself as someone who "worships reality," and insisting that "the poet should be also a thinking creature" (for example, in his essay on Pasternak), Miłosz was especially concerned that the translations of his poems should reflect his search for what he called "a more spacious form," one

that would be free from the claims of poetry and prose and would let us understand each other without exposing the author or reader to sublime agonies. (1988, 211)

He wanted to make sure that the balance between the poetic and prosaic, as well as his distinctive voice, would be optimally
The question of poetic form was one of the major topics of Miłosz's *The Witness of Poetry*, a series of lectures delivered by Miłosz as the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard in the academic year 1981-82, and published as a book a year later. In these lectures Miłosz makes clear his somewhat critical attitude toward formal experimentation and in general toward "playing with words" in poetry. This does not mean, of course, that poets should be careless about poetic language and form, but that they should also recognize that -- as he puts it -- "a quarrel exists between classicism and realism." In fact, he asserts, the process of writing a poem consists of "constant clashes" between two principles, namely, between the "dictates of the poetic language and...fidelity to the real," and "every poet is making a choice" between them. During this process "a poet discovers a secret, namely that he can be faithful to real things only by arranging them hierarchically." (1983, 71) Contemporary poets are aware of the existence "of an internal tension between [these] imperatives." Moreover, Miłosz believes that "[s]uch tension does not invalidate [his] definition of poetry as 'a passionate pursuit of the Real.' On the contrary, it gives it more weight."

It is significant that in emphasizing the crucial role of the tension between the dictates of poetic language and of fidelity to reality, Miłosz refers contemporary poets to "the prose writers of the past," especially to Dostoevsky and his kind of realism. Dostoevsky's realism
consisted in the reading of signs: an item in a newspaper, an overheard conversation, a popular book, a slogan, gave him access to a zone hidden from the eyes of his contemporaries. For him reality was multilayered, but not all of its layers provided clues. (1983, 71)

Miłosz argues that twentieth century poets can learn a lot from Dostoevsky's creative effort, especially from his "hierarchization" of reality. In characterizing this creative effort, Miłosz points out that Dostoevsky was helped... by his strong conviction that a purely historical dimension does not exist because it is at the same time a metaphysical dimension. For him, there was a metaphysical warp and woof in the very fabric of history. (1983, 71)

At the same time, while stressing that poets can learn from prose writers, Miłosz emphasizes that poets should also be aware of the fact that poetry is more condensed than prose and hence "the hierarchization.... must be much more condensed" too. Therefore poets face the tension between the imperative of language and the imperative of reality to a greater degree than prose writers do. In describing the objective world, "the poet is left with the bitter realization of the inadequacy of language." Stating that the objective world can be seen "with perfect impartiality only by God," and that "to desire ardently to possess an object cannot be called anything but love," Miłosz describes the poet "as a man in love with the world," who is at the same time "condemned to eternal insatiability because he wants his words to penetrate to the very core of reality." Referring to Plato's Symposium, Miłosz concludes his disquisition on poetic form by stating that every poet is a servant of Eros, that is someone who, in Plato's words
interprets between gods and men, conveying and talking across to the gods the prayers and sacrifices of men, and to men the commands and replies of the gods; he is the mediator who spans the chasm which divides them, and therefore in him all is bound together, and through him the arts of the prophet and the priest, their sacrifices and mysteries and charms, and all prophecy and incantation, find their way.¹

(1983, 74)

The Norton Lectures gave Miłosz an opportunity to fully reveal his attitude toward modern poetry and to present his views about the importance and role of poetry in society. While in his other prose writings Miłosz focused mainly on his own poetry and tried to explain it, in the Norton lectures he presents his criteria for evaluating poetry in general and illustrates his opinions with examples taken from a range of twentieth-century poets. Believing that poetry "is a more reliable witness than journalism" and that "if something cannot be verified on a deeper level, that of poetry, it is not .... authentic," (1983, 16) Miłosz expresses his concern with "what sort of testimony about our century is being established by poetry." (1983, 11) Since, according to Miłosz, "we do not seem to commit an error if we hear a minor mode in the poetry of our century," (1983, 17) the poet tries to answer the question "[h]ow did it happen that to be a poet of the twentieth century means to receive a training in every kind of pessimism, sarcasm, bitterness, doubt?" (1983, 14) And why does contemporary poetry express "despair at the imprisonment of man in an evil civilisation" (1983, 15). To convey his own idea of poetry, Miłosz quotes with approval from

¹ The quotation is taken from Benjamin Jowett's translation in The Portable Plato (New York, 1961).
Oskar de Milosz's *A Few Words on Poetry*, stressing the poet's views on the importance of poetry for the development of mankind.

At the beginning of the text under discussion we read an enigmatic sentence: poetry "appears to us as bound, more rigorously than any other mode of expression, to the spiritual and physical Movement of which it is a generator and a guide"....By its nature poetry engenders Movement, change, and may even be found at the origin of scientific discoveries, if not directly then through osmosis. It also functions as a "guide" to Movement.... (1983, 35)

Miłosz believes that even in our civilization it is not possible for poetry to alienate itself from Movement, since "a link between poetry and Movement is probably inevitable, and hope, conscious or unconscious, is what sustains the poet." (1983, 37)

The eschatological function of poetry lies in the fact that it can preserve the world of imagination and save "man from images of a totally 'objective,' cold, indifferent world, from which the Divine Imagination has been alienated." (1983, 47) In contrast to the scientifically oriented civilization, poetry preserves a system of values and the notion of truth. Thus Miłosz diagnoses the reason for the sombre tone of modern poetry as a general lack of belief in a "true world." "When poets discover that their words refer only to words and not to a reality which must be described as faithfully as possible, they despair" (1983, 49).

Another reason for "the gloom of the twentieth-century poetry" Miłosz sees in the alienation of poets from "the human family" -- their practising of art that is self-sufficient, ignores the needs of readers, and does not relate itself to Reality ("true world"). Blaming the artistic boheme from the end of the nineteenth century for ignoring the needs of readers,
Miłosz gives as an example of poetry united with the "human family" contemporary Polish poetry with its concern for the most important questions posed by the contemporary world for "ordinary people."

What can poetry be in the twentieth century? It seems to me that there is a search for the line beyond which only a zone of silence exists, and that on the borderline we encounter Polish poetry. In it a peculiar fusion of the individual and the historical took place, which means that events burdening a whole community are perceived by a poet as touching him in a most personal manner. Then poetry is no longer alienated. (1983, 94-95)

Consistently with his need for affirmation, Miłosz devoted his concluding lecture to hope. Observing that contemporary readers as products of mass culture "are unprepared to receive nourishment of a higher intellectual order," he nevertheless expresses the hope that in the future a new society with a new science would be "better adapted to the complexity of the world and of individuals." (1983, 109) Recalling Simone Weil's conviction that renewal would come "from the past, if we love it," Miłosz too, places his hope in the healing power of time, in humanity's contemplation of its past through the medium of poetry. According to him, "[p]ronouncements of this can be found in the poetry of the twentieth century." (1983, 110)

Roughly a year before Miłosz delivered his Norton Lectures at Harvard, he published a fairly extensive article on Brodsky's A Part of Speech. The article is of interest not only intrinsically, as a characterization of Brodsky, but for at least two other reasons, both of which concern Miłosz's self-presentation, even if only indirectly. First, it clearly reflects
Miłosz’s own poetic personality and views; second, it uses some of the categories which found their formulation in The Witness of Poetry as criteria for evaluating a contemporary poet. It is, in fact, difficult to avoid the impression that Brodsky not only fitted Miłosz’s own poetic criteria but that his poems helped Miłosz to formulate his opinions expressed in the Norton Lectures.

Miłosz begins his observations on Brodsky’s poetry by stating that "behind Brodsky’s poetry is the experience of political terror, the experience of the debasement of man and the growth of the totalitarian empire." (1980, 23) He further points out that Brodsky not only moved from "one continent to another" but also "from one empire to another" (and "empire," Miłosz notes, is "one of Brodsky’s prankish words"). "The twentieth-century witnesses a struggle between a few centres of control" and Brodsky’s personal experiences have made him especially sensitive to this struggle and to the phenomenon of the quest for power. Nevertheless, despite his exile, Brodsky is not torn between two cultures and two empires (the Soviet and the American). "He accomplishes what previous generations of émigré writers were unable to do: to make the lands of exile, however reluctantly, their own, to take the possession through the poetic word." (1980, 23)

Commenting on the way in which Brodsky understands the role of the poet, Miłosz reveals his own point of view when he writes:

I find it fascinating to read his poems as part of his larger enterprise, which is no less than an attempt to
fortify the place of man in a threatening world. Contrary to the tendency prevailing today, he believes that the poet, before he is ready to confront ultimate questions, must observe a certain code. He should be God-fearing, love his country and his native tongue, rely upon his conscience, avoid alliances with evil, and be attached to tradition. These elementary rules cannot be forgotten or ridiculed by a poet, since absorbing them is part of his initiation, more exactly ordination, into a sacred craft... (1980, 23)

It is also significant that concluding these observations, Miłosz states that "[t]he poet’s task as Brodsky conceives it is to try to preserve continuity in a world more and more afflicted with a loss of memory."

Explaining his particular interest in the poem that gave the title to the entire collection, Miłosz once more refers to the experience of the poet which meets in this poem with "the history of the twentieth century" and notes the poem’s "terse, manly, and vibrant tone." Though Miłosz discusses some of the features of Brodsky’s poetics (calling him "a true descendant of the English metaphysical poets"), he is clearly much more interested in the philosophical and ethical aspects of Brodsky’s writings. Stating that "this is philosophical poetry," which possesses "an intensity that deserves to be called religious," Miłosz sees a deep affinity between Brodsky and Shestov (a thinker he himself found profoundly interesting). Like Shestov’s, Brodsky’s work is imbued with respect "for the Sacred"; it is similarly "haughty, scornful, austere," and there is "a strange convergence in the tactics chosen by these two defenders of the Holy in the age of disbelief." (1980, 25) Comparing both of them, Miłosz states that Shestov, being a philosopher, was less lucky than Brodsky who, as
a poet, is attached to cultural traditions through language. He concludes that

as a defence against despair, we have the oeuvre of a man wholly concentrated on his poetry. Here poems of circumstance, including descriptions of visited cities and countries, have a definite presence and purpose. In his struggle against the Necessity of space and time, Shestov was less lucky [than Brodsky], since he was merely a philosopher. (1980, 25)

Published in 1986, Brodsky's collection of essays *Less than One* may be in many respects treated, similarly to Miłosz's *The Witness of Poetry*, as an expression of its author's point of view on poetry. However, Brodsky is less direct than Miłosz; he expresses his thoughts in essays devoted to disparate topics and authors. Generally, he is mostly concerned with language and prosody. Unlike Miłosz, Brodsky does not relate poetry to the world of imagination and he does not connect the state of contemporary poetry with the general situation of humanity in the twentieth century. While both poets link the role of poetry with reality, their understanding of the term "reality" is strikingly different. Miłosz's point of view is clearly philosophical and for him reality has metaphysical connotations, whereas Brodsky uses the term in a more loose fashion. For Brodsky poetry is the most meaningful protest against reality imposed by politics and the best way of describing this reality. Recalling the political situation since 1917 in which his native literature has been written, Brodsky expresses the view that "[a]t certain periods of history it is only poetry that is capable of dealing with reality by condensing it into something graspable, something that
otherwise couldn't be retained by the mind." (1986, 52) Writing about Akhmatova he points out that only poetry can show reality "first through the prism of the individual heart, then through the prism of history, such as it was. These two perspectives were brought into sharp focus through prosody, which is simply a repository of time within language." (1986, 52) Art of literary language and style (prosody in the case of poetry) is, according to Brodsky, more important than the thematic interest of a work of literature. Judging twentieth-century Russian prose, the poet believes that the reason for its weaknesses lies in its purely thematic response to the political reality of the Soviet Union. "Hypnotized by the scope of the tragedy that befell the nation, it keeps scratching its wounds, unable to transcend the experience either philosophically or stylistically." (1986, 273)

In another essay Brodsky states that "[i]f a poet has any obligation toward society, it is to write well." (1986, 359) Deeply concerned with the devastation of the Russian language and consequently of literature by the Soviet regime Brodsky believes that "the surest defense against Evil is extreme individualism, originality of thinking, whimsicality, even - if you will - eccentricity." (1986, 385) Superiority of a poet (or writer) to society lies in his individualism, in his individual way of using language. "A poet gets into trouble because of his linguistic, and, by implication, his psychological superiority, rather than because of his politics." Such a point of view on literature brings into focus the way in which a poet organizes his poems,
that is prosody. Prosody makes poems eternal, as Brodsky underlined writing about Akhmatova:

her verses are to survive whether published or not: because of her prosody, because they are charged with time in both those [mundane and metaphysical] senses. They will survive because language is older than state and because prosody always survives history. (1986, 52)

It does not mean, however, that the formal features of a poem are just a play with language. Brodsky clarified his point of view on the importance of prosody in his essay about Mandelstam.

It should be remembered that verse meters in themselves are kinds of spiritual magnitudes for which nothing can be substituted. They cannot be replaced even by each other, let alone by free verse. Differences in meters are differences in breath and in heart-beats. Differences in rhyming pattern are those of brain function. (1986, 141)

Not surprisingly then, especially if we take into account problems faced by Brodsky with translations of his own poems, the poet is deeply concerned with translation. He compares translation to censorship since they 'both operate on the basis of the "what's possible" principle, and it must be noted that linguistic barriers can be as high as those erected by the state.' (1985, 48) Brodsky is also doubtful about the possibility of translating the memory of one nation into the memory of another nation. Consequently, the work of translator is not an easy one. "Translation is a search for an equivalent, not for a substitute. It requires stylistic, if not psychological, congeniality." (1986, 140) Brodsky does not expect a translator to perform miracles. "It would be futile and unreasonable to expect a translator to follow suit: the voice one works from and
by is bound to be unique. Yet the timbre, pitch, and pace reflected in the verse’s meter are approachable.” (1986, 141)

Important changes in Miłosz and Brodsky’s ways of self-presentation occurred in the 1980s, partly because of the recognition both poets had gained by this time, and partly as a result of the growing interest in East European poetry (of which they were the most prominent representatives) and the critical discussion concerning its impact on the poetic process in English-speaking countries. Miłosz’s The Witness of Poetry and Brodsky’s collection of essays Less Than One had provided readers both with their points of view on poetry in general and with the criteria according to which they evaluated contemporary poetic trends. The award of the Nobel Prize added to the stature of the two poets and made their opinions both sought and more influential than before. Interest in their views was also enhanced by the far-reaching changes in Eastern Europe. Both poets took advantage of their international reputation to contribute to discussions concerning East European poetry, and to the debate regarding the distinctiveness of Central European culture; and they continued to present other Polish and Russian poets to Western readers. They also employed their position to influence public opinion in the West concerning political changes in their homelands. It is also worth noting that Brodsky’s greater readiness to identify more closely with his "poetic school" in Russia may have been connected with the trend of treating Eastern Europe as a unity that suffered for years under
the Soviet Union and now definitely separates itself from Russia. It is difficult to predict the consequences this development may further bring to the reception of Brodsky’s poetry, but there is little doubt that the new situation will be reflected in Western criticism.
Much of the critical discussion concerning the poetry of Miłosz and Brodsky has focused on the question of translations. Since most Western critics had no knowledge of Polish or of Russian, their ability to discuss and evaluate Miłosz's and Brodsky's poetry was naturally limited by this fact. The critics, conscious of the fact that they were dealing with texts which could have undergone significant distortion in the process of translation, often felt compelled to make clear the tentativeness of their opinions.

The problems facing the translators of Miłosz's and Brodsky's poetry were quite daunting. In the first place they had to cope with the considerable differences in the structures of the respective languages (Russian and Polish being inflected languages, and English being a positional language). Second, there was the question of what Jurij Lotman called "the common memory" involved in every type of communication, including literary:

Communication with another person is only possible if there is some degree of common memory. . . . [T]he memory-capacity of the addressee is presumed to be common to any person who speaks the same language and belongs to the same culture. . . . Naturally the poorer the memory the longer and more detailed the message must be, and the less comprehensible will be its ellipses and silences, its rhetorics of hints and complex pragmatic-referential associations. (1990, 63)
Third, there was the problem of the poetic form: highly traditional and at the same time employed with the skill of a virtuoso in Brodsky's case, and, except for his early poems, consciously anti-modernist in that of Miłosz. Finally, there was the question of the proficiency of the various translators and their ability to render justice to the original poems.

The two poets also showed considerable concern for the quality and faithfulness of the translations; both expressed their views on translation of poetry in general and of their own poems in particular; and both eventually took almost complete control of the process. Unlike most critics, both Miłosz and Brodsky were able to compare the translations with the originals, as both had acquired a good knowledge of English. This fact not only enabled them to make their opinions known about the work of their translators, but to co-author translations and to translate their own work. In the end both poets exercised such control over the publication of their work in English that almost no unauthorized versions appeared in print, and most earlier translations prepared by others were excluded from later volumes, with new translations, sometimes done by the poets themselves, taking their place. This situation, in turn, did not go unnoticed among the critics, raising new issues which influenced the process of reception.

Another question concerned the role that translators played in the literary process which came to the fore especially in the context of the widespread interest in contemporary East European
poetry in the West. As Jerzy Jarniewicz noted in his essay "Translators and the Destruction of Eastern Europe":

> [i]t is a dangerous fallacy to assume that translators quietly working in their book-stuffed studies are doing nothing more than rendering literary texts from one language into another. No matter whether they are aware of it or not, they are involved in much more: they perform the manifold roles of literary critics, historian, promoter, market researcher. (1994, 52)

The article deals primarily with translations of contemporary Polish poetry, but the author expresses the view that his remarks are "especially true in the case of translating contemporary poetry from the less known languages," and thus have a more general import. According to Jarniewicz, in the case of such languages as Polish, translators also perform the additional role of literary historians:

> [i]t has to be stressed that translators working on a contemporary Polish poem are also writing, or helping to write, a history of contemporary Polish literature for English readers, since the idea the latter have of Polish writing depends almost entirely on the decisions and revisions made by the translator....(1994, 52)

In the past critics seldom paid attention to the roles of translators described by Jarniewicz, but limited their remarks to the question of the renderings themselves. Beginning with the 1980s, however, other roles of translators have become part of the discussions concerning the success of contemporary East European poetry in the West. Given Miłosz and Brodsky's comments on translations of other poets, their literary essays, as well as Miłosz's translations of contemporary Polish poets, and the extent to which both Miłosz and Brodsky have participated in the translation of their own poetry, it is clear that they, too,
performed the broader role of literary historians and critics.

II.

The first few translations of Miłosz's poems were published in periodicals in the early 1960s. It is significant that the translators were mostly of Polish origin. In addition to a few translations done by the poet himself, a number of Miłosz's poems were translated by Adam Czerniawski, Jan Darowski, Andrzej Busza, Bogdan Czaykowski and John Carpenter. The first four were noted Polish poets who also translated other contemporary Polish poets into English.

Unlike Miłosz's poetry and despite the well-known difficulty of translating Russian poetry into English, Brodsky's poems from the very beginning gained the interest of quite a few English and American translators. They included George L. Kline, Carl Proffer, George Reavey and Nicholas Bethell. Their translations appeared when the poet was still in the Soviet Union; therefore he was unable to have any influence on the translations. Beginning in 1964, Brodsky's poems were published in various periodicals and anthologies, and in 1967 Longmans (London) published his first collection of poems in English translation, *Elegy to John Donne and Other Poems*. The volume, edited and translated by Bethell, however, was hardly noticed by the critics. By 1973, Kline (who published his translations of Brodsky in the *Russian Review* as early as 1965) not only became
the principal translator of Brodsky but may also be said to have established a "standard" for translating his poetry, which held its place until Brodsky himself took control of the translation process. Two of Kline's translations, "Elegy to John Donne" and "Verses on the Death of T.S. Eliot," met with general critical acclaim and acquired a "canonical" status in Brodsky's translated oeuvre.

In general, Kline's method of translating Brodsky was to try to preserve the formal features of a poem while recognizing that some of its elements, especially the play on words and sound orchestration, could not be fully reproduced in English. Features lost in translation that were important for the meaning and style of the poem were indicated in notes appended to translations, and some poems (for example "Elegy to John Donne") were prefaced by critical mini-essays which included information on the choices the translator had to make between different solutions of particularly troublesome problems.

Brodsky's first noted collection of poems in English, the Selected Poems, was translated exclusively by Kline, who thus consolidated his position as the chief mediator between Brodsky's poetry and the reading public. Subsequent to the publication of the Selected Poems, Brodsky took increasing control over the translation process, abandoning Kline's "model" of translation. Instead, he adopted the practice of moving from one group of translators to another, as if searching for the best way of rendering his poetry into English, while at the same time
exercising increasing supervision over the translators’ work. Each new group of translators introduced a somewhat different way of translating Brodsky’s poems, none of which, however, seemed to have fully satisfied the author, who showed an increasing tendency not only to co-author translations but to be his own translator. In the end Brodsky did not establish a new model for translating his poetry, and his chief influence on the translation process consisted in the choice of translators.

As previously mentioned, Brodsky’s first poems appeared in English before he was exiled from his homeland and he naturally did not have any influence on their translation. Even many years later Brodsky pointed to such translations with disapproval. "It was kind of nice, that piece" - he told Sven Birkerts about one "unapproved" translation - "except that I never got proofs to read and quite a lot of mistakes crept in, misspellings and all those things. It matters to me." (1982, 87) One of his first translators, Kline, wrote at least three times about his own work with Brodsky, pointing out the difficulties of translating from Russian into English and stressing Brodsky’s strictness regarding the translation of his poems.

Brodsky and I are in full agreement on the principle that translations of formal poetry, such as the Russian, must convey as much as possible of its form -- its meter, assonance, alliteration, etc., and, where this is possible without recourse to padding or other artificialities, its rhymes and slant-rhymes as well. (1983, 159)

In several cases Brodsky made revisions to earlier versions, and Kline, in Modern Poetry in Translation describes in detail how he worked with Brodsky on such revisions:
Brodsky had, of course, approved the earlier versions.... of all these translations before their first publications.... But in coming years his command of literary English had deepened and become richer and more subtle. Furthermore, when the proofs of *A Part of Speech* began to cross his desk he took the fresh critical look, in some cases with the counsel of English and American poets or critics, at translations which he had last scrutinized several years earlier. (1983, 159)

Brodsky paid a great deal of attention to the translation of Russian poetry in general, and of his own poems in particular, explaining his involvement at times by his "love affair with English language" and at other times by his desire to give readers the best and most faithful renderings of the Russian originals.

My main argument with translators is that I care for accuracy and they're often inaccurate.... It's awfully hard to get these people to render the accuracy as you would want them to.... Some translators espouse certain poetics of their own. In many cases their understanding of modernism is extremely simple. Their idea, if I reduce it to the basics, is "staying loose." I, for one, would rather sound trite than slack or loose. I would prefer to sound like a cliche.... an ordered cliche, rather than a clever slackness. (1982, 87)

On a number of occasions Brodsky pointed out the importance of meter for his own poems as well as for twentieth century Russian poetry and expressed his desire to preserve it in English translation. This attachment to the more traditional forms was probably one of the reasons why Brodsky did not really want to be translated by recognized English poets whose poetics reflected the poetics of modern English poetry and who, in addition, imposed their own individual styles on his poems. In fact, as was pointed out by critics, the translations done by English and American poets at times read like variations in verse on the
themes of a Brodsky poem. Asked by Sven Birkerts about the most famous among his translators, Brodsky said:

I was quite lucky on several occasions. I was translated by both Richard Wilbur and Anthony Hecht.

Interviewer: Well, I was at a reading recently where Wilbur was describing to the audience -- quite tartly, I thought -- how you and Derek Walcott were flying in a plane over Iowa, re-correcting his translations of one of your poems -- which did not make him happy...

Brodsky: True. The poem only profited out of that. I respect him enormously. Having asked him to do certain passages three, four or more times, I merely felt that I had no human right to bother him that one more time. I just didn't have the guts. Even the uncorrected version was excellent. It's more or less the same thing when I said to Wystan Auden when he volunteered to translate some poems. I thought, "Who the hell I am to be translated by Wystan".

Interviewer: that's an interesting reversal -- the poet feeling inadequate to his translator. (Birkerts, 1982, 88)

Kline was much more specific about Brodsky's dissatisfaction with his translations. His articles provide many details about Brodsky's objections to the consecutive English versions and illustrate how difficult working with him was for his translators. They also give the reader a good idea of how strongly Brodsky felt about preserving all the formal features of his poems, without at the same time losing any elements of their meaning.

Miłosz was no less concerned about the translations of his poetry than Brodsky, and versions not approved by the author were seldom published. Miłosz was careful about the selection of his poems for translation as well as about the translations themselves. The majority of his poems were actually translated by him personally or co-translated. Others were translated under his
personal "supervision." However, the poet seldom openly talks about problems with the translations of his poems and only sometimes "secondary" sources reveal the extent of the control he actually exercised over his translations. An American poet and translator, Wayne Holder, wrote to Bogdan Czaykowski after Miłosz's visit to Vancouver in 1981:

> It is becoming increasingly clear to a number of people that Miłosz's translations are not doing justice to his poetry. It can only be hoped that eventually he will see the light and allow you and others to publish their efforts. I wonder how Robert Hass will make out with the great man. (20 June 1982)

A rare opportunity to show how differently the same poem can be translated, and what Miłosz's preferences were, is provided by different versions of the same poems: "On Angels" and "Bobo's Metamorphosis" in Miłosz's own translation (in Selected Poems) can be compared with "Angels" and "Gus Spellbound" in Busza and Czaykowski's translation (in Modern Poetry in Translation and Gathering Time: Five Modern Polish Elegies, respectively), which did not gain Miłosz's approval. In a letter to Busza and Czaykowski, Miłosz insisted on publishing his poems in his own translations:

> Comparing the two versions I came to the conclusion that I prefer the one in the book. The situation is to some extent peculiar since, as I have already said, I am still alive, and what's more, I do not live in Poland, which means that I take greater responsibility for translations of my poems being able to translate them myself.... No, I cannot agree to the publishing of a translation that has not come out of my own workshop. (29 May 1975)

These words fully reveal his attitude toward "uncontrolled"

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1 In the private collection of Professor Bogdan Czaykowski.
translations and their publication.

The initial stage, marked by a fairly weak control of the poet over the translation process, was comparatively short and ended with the publication of Miłosz’s Selected Poems (1973). Moreover, the very limited number of translations done without Miłosz’s cooperation made this initial stage relatively unimportant to the process of assimilating Miłosz into the English idiom. Miłosz prepared the Selected Poems himself and exercised virtually complete control over the selection of poems for inclusion, as well as over their translations. He excluded from the volume the majority of the translations already published, with the exception of some translations done by Jan Darowski and John Carpenter which had appeared previously in "author-approved" versions, and substituted his own versions for several other already translated poems.

Miłosz formulated his reasons for insisting on exercising control over the translation of his poems in the letter quoted above to Czaykowski and Busza. They translated Miłosz’s major poem "Gucio zaczarowany" ("Gus Spellbound," known more widely in Miłosz’s own translation as "Bobo’s Metamorphosis"), although Miłosz’s own translation had already appeared in the Selected Poems. The poet wrote:

For many years I did not do anything to have my poems published in English... There were various reasons for my reluctance or neglect. One of them was a kind of, so to say, stylistic idiosyncracy, that is the fact that translations of my poems done by others, often quite good, did not satisfy me on account of their being rhythmically alien to the very system of my breathing. And it so happened that during the long discussions with Rexroth concerning my
volume.... he recognized my translations as the best. They often require corrections but the rhythmic flow of my English does convey the voice of the original poems. (29 May 1975)

According to Miłosz, the role of the various co-translators of his poems was limited to a few grammatical and stylistic corrections of his English:

By the way, those translations in the Selected Poems which are signed jointly are, in fact, my own as far as their rhythmic contour is concerned; the contribution of the co-translator is limited to grammatical and stylistic corrections within the rhythmical shape which is mine. (29 May 1975)

For Miłosz, then, one of the most important features to be preserved in the translation of his poems was the rhythm of the poem through which the poetic voice of the original was conveyed. In fact, the poetic voice in Miłosz’s poems had gained considerable critical attention, especially in the later stages of the reception process. Although the majority of critics referred to poetic voice as to an element well preserved in translations and of crucial importance for appreciating Miłosz’s poetic mastery, there were also some critics who felt that it was precisely the element of poetic voice that got lost in translation.

The importance Miłosz attached to rhythm does not mean, however, that his primary concern was with the structural elements alone. As will be shown, in Miłosz’s view, the main problem confronting the translator of Polish poetry into English was the relatively low degree of common memory of Polish and English speakers.
Despite the attention Miłosz and Brodsky paid to the translations of their poems, the question of how their poems were rendered into English initially appeared only marginally (if at all) in Western critics’ reflections about their poetry. As has already been shown in the previous chapters, the initial formulas used by reviewers to characterize Miłosz the poet were not based on even a rudimentary acquaintance with the texts of his poems but on his prose. The few critical essays devoted to Miłosz’s poetry which appeared before 1973, were written by critics who knew Polish and who based their opinions on a thorough knowledge of the original poems and of the entirety of his poetry. Since the few published translations did not gain the critical attention of the non-Polish critics, the question of the faithfulness of the translations did not arise. The situation changed significantly only after Miłosz had been awarded the Neustadt Prize, when the question of the real value of his poetry came to the fore of critical attention.

In contrast to Miłosz, from the very beginning Brodsky was presented to the reading public not only through politically oriented formulas but also through fairly numerous translations of his poetry. In general, the reception of Brodsky at the initial stage developed along two distinct lines. As we have seen, mass-oriented paraliterary criticism focused principally on his trial in the Soviet Union in 1964 and on his subsequent expulsion in 1972. At the same time, Brodsky’s poetry was presented in periodicals, anthologies, collections of poems and
scholarly publications. The latter route and especially Kline's attempts to make Brodsky's poetry available in adequate translation were, of course, crucial to the reception of Brodsky the poet.

Unlike Miłosz, Brodsky never became a major translator of his own poetry. Nor did he, in contrast to Miłosz (a major translator of Polish poetry), translate other Russian poets into English. However, even before being recognized as a major poetic talent, Brodsky expressed his opinions in print about the existing English translations of Akhmatova's and Mandelstam's poetry, which he found in many respects wanting. Thus his views on translation in general, and on the need to reproduce in English formal aspects of the original Russian poems, were well known to his translators.

The appearance of Selected Poems of each of the poets did not become an opportunity for a critical discussion of the quality of the translations. Both poets had already gained considerable public attention and the two collections were perceived as at least a partial closing of the gap between the critical formulas already in circulation and the actual knowledge of their poetry. The appearance of English translations of their poems was seen as more important than the question of the quality of the translations and of their faithfulness to the originals. In general, critics just appeared to be grateful to the translators for having made Miłosz and Brodsky's poetry available to the English-speaking reader. The problem of the quality and
faithfulness of the translations did not become topical until the time when the very high but formulaic recognition of both poets was confronted with a substantial body of their poems in English translation. There were, however, reviewers who were critical of the translations included in Brodsky’s Selected Poems. For instance, Reeve in his article "Additions and Losses" wrote:

In Selected Poems, the translations and their footnotes seem full of rectitude but lacking poetic rigor. Translating is difficult, I know, and thankless....I think these translations are soupy. Because they seem okay, they make Brodsky seem as interesting and as dated as, but less imaginative and resourceful than, Phelps Putnam. In fact, they screen the Russian original from us, neither taking us toward it nor supplying a reliable substitute (1975, 43)

Eventually, the wide critical discussion which developed concerning the question of translation, began only after the appearance of the second volume of translations of each of the two poets.

The appearance of Brodsky’s A Part of Speech marks the beginning of the poet’s control over the translations and the transition from "a single poetic voice" to "a variety of translators' interpretations." The poems included in the collection were translated by a number of translators who, in general, instead of producing translations according to already known standards (introduced by Kline), tried above all to make good English poetry of their translations. The shift was noticed by the majority of critics. The fact that Brodsky became one of the translators of his own poems and took control over translations done by others also became an important element of critical reflection. In this respect, A Part of Speech initiated
a fairly wide critical discussion about the translation of Brodsky’s poems into English. Clarence Brown in his review of the volume wrote:

This is Brodsky’s second collection of poems to appear in English. The translation of Selected Poems (1973) was the work of one man, George Kline, who was for long Brodsky’s single English voice. The present volume contains translations by no fewer than 10 English and American poets, to say nothing about Brodsky himself, who singlehandedly translated two poems. (1980, 11)

Most opinions expressed by reviewers about the poetic quality of the translations were extremely positive. Schmidt stated that "While Kline makes sense of Brodsky, Richard Wilbur makes extraordinary poetry of him." (1980, 25) Brodsky was called "fortunate in his translators" and critics expressed appreciation of the fact that the translations preserved both poetic meaning and the features of Russian verse forms. D.M. Thomas, following the opinion of H. Gifford, was very enthusiastic about the poetic quality of the translations and underlined the benefits of Brodsky’s collaboration with the poet-translators. The critic wrote:

He [Brodsky] demonstrates as much command of English as of Russian. He has been the controlling hand in the excellent translations of the new book; of several of the poems he is the sole translator; in other cases he has, where he felt it desirable, amended translations by the fine poets who have collaborated with him....As Henry Gifford has remarked....‘every poem in this book reads as if English has been its first home’. This alone would make the book remarkable. With most good translations of great poets, we sense (rather than see) the presence of greatness. In A Part of Speech, we see it directly. (1981, 49)

While a number of critics reacted positively to the translations, others expressed doubts about the benefits of the
transition. Some critics especially questioned the translations done by the poet himself. In his article "A Murder Is a Murder" Anthony Astrachan noted:

The poems I have mentioned come close to meeting Brodsky's standards. Others do not - particularly, I am both saddened and amused to see, some that Brodsky has translated or helped to translate himself...There are several...poems where Brodsky cheapens his work by inserting words alien to his original thought in order to reproduce the rhyme. (1980, 325)

Michael Schmidt in his review in the New Statesman wrote:

There are ten translators here, none of them without some merit. Then there is an eleventh, the author himself. Brodsky is, no doubt, a fine linguist.... All the same, he is his worst translator. When he collaborates with a good translator, as he does with Weissbort, those versions published by Weissbort earlier are invariably more direct and lucid than the elaborated joint versions. (1980, 25)

The critic also pointed out that some of Brodsky's poems might not be translatable and that the poet should take this into account when preparing collections of his poems in English.

"Kline, in the 1973 selection, declared 'A Song to No Music' to be important but untranslatable. Brodsky and David Rigsbee expend much energy in the new book and prove Kline conclusively right."(1980, 25) Robert Hass in his article "Lost in Translation" was, in turn, concerned primarily with the problem of preserving the tone of Brodsky's poetry in translation:

The translators have clearly struggled with tone. Should Brodsky sound like Lowell? like Auden? Byron? Pope? A preferred solution, because Brodsky is an ironist, is that tediously bouncy rhythm produced by clever young men of indeterminate age down from the university and set to make a splash....Another is to make him sound like an 18-century hack rewriting Shakespeare....(1980, 36)

The discussion also focused on the two ways of translating poetry (especially Russian poetry), one represented by the standard
introduced by Kline and the other one introduced by Brodsky and his collaborators in his second collection. A major issue concerned the degree to which a poet’s own poetics influenced his translation of another poet, especially when the aim was to produce translations which read "as if English had been their first home."

Some critics, however, while not questioning the poetic value of the translations, raised the question of "how much of the brilliance.... comes from the original, [and] how much from the translators?" (Encounter, 1981, 68) Peter Porter, writing about A Part of Speech, pointed out that

too many of Brodsky’s translators have had the ambition to write like Auden, Cavafy and others, and, not being willing to do so in proprìa persona, have managed it via their versions of Brodsky’s poems. (1980, 28)

Reeve criticized the translations done by the poets for being too much like their own poems, almost variations on themes taken from Brodsky.

Anthony Hecht and Derek Walcott.... inevitably bend Brodsky to their favour. Such is their talent they can’t do less, especially out of admiration for the original. It gives us not the many facets of Russian, however, but five fine poets’ readings. (1981, 36)

The strongest criticism, however, came a few years later, after the appearance of To Uranía (translated by a new group of translators). Reviewing the collection Donald Davie wrote:

When poets as accomplished as Wilbur and Hecht undertake to translate a Brodsky poem, their versions turn out to be at their best, almost inevitably, poems that might have been written by Wilbur or by Hecht. (1988, 1415)

The critic noted the change in Brodsky’s policy of choosing
translators of his poems.

[In To Urania he [Brodsky] calls on, or collaborates with, translators altogether less distinguished as poets on their own account....This change in policy turns, we may suspect, on an issue that is painfully interesting. (1988, 1415)

In fact, the question of whether Brodsky’s assumption of control over the translation process proved beneficial to his poetry became especially topical after the appearance of To Urania. And since this control entailed Brodsky’s insistence on the preservation of the verse structures of his poems, the question of the poetic form of translations was also raised by the critics.

In the case of Miłosz, the question of the translation of his poems came up for broader discussion only after the award of the Neustadt Prize to the poet, which is when the poet had already managed to exercise considerable control over the translation process. Initially the critics simply accepted the author’s control without evaluating it. It was the character of his poetry and its "translatability" that came to the fore of the discussions, something Miłosz himself had brought up on various occasions.

Critics who dealt with the question of translation emphasized that Miłosz’s poetry did not translate well; however they differed on the question of how much was lost in translation and on the quality of the translations. Thomas Venclova, for instance, while stressing that "it is necessary to read....the poetry in the original; a good translation is also a poem, but a different poem," came to the conclusion that it was "still
possible to say a few words about the construction of this
[Miłosz's] poetry, about its course and flow" on the basis of the
available translations. (1978, 393) The question acquired a
sharper focus in the reviews of Miłosz's second collection of
poems in translation, Bells in Winter (1978). While critics, in
their occasional essays that followed the Neustadt Prize, did not
evaluate any specific translations, but rather expressed their
general opinions on the matter, in the reviews of Bells in Winter
the translations included in the volume were discussed. Since the
volume was published shortly after Miłosz had been awarded the
Neustadt Prize, and the critics tried to confront the high
recognition accorded to Miłosz with the texts of his poems, the
problem of how much was lost in translation gained special
significance. In fact, this was the first time critics tried to
assess the quality of translations and not just the
translatability of Miłosz's poetry.

Richard Howard, in his very positive review of the volume,
stressed the fact that he was, after all, dealing with
translations. He referred to Miłosz's poems as to "translated
poems" or "translated poetry." The reviewer called the book "the
triumph of Miłosz and his fellow translator Lillian Vallee"
mostly because he could not see what was "especially Polish" in
the poems. In his opinion the translations were "apparently
perfect in that they close over whatever has been 'lost' in them
without a seam, a revealing scar...." (1980, 46). Howard raised
the question of the Polish contexts of Miłosz's poetry, stating
that the translations enabled the English reader to deal with it without having to feel that some of the contexts had been lost. Similarly, Jonathan Galassi in his review of the collection was very positive about the translations, pointing out that

The translations in "Bells in Winter," made by Mr. Miłosz in collaboration with Lillian Vallee, reveal a voice that is unadorned and discursive, yet capable of powerful (and delicate) poetic effects; it is a voice that works through traditional forms to transform and revivify tradition. The occasional stiffness of the English I take as a kind of tacit reminder of a wealth of allusion and linguistic play in the original Polish that is impossible to re-create in translation. (1979, 14)

The major problem for the critics, at least after the publication of Bells in Winter, concerned the question of the actual poetic quality of Miłosz's poems and the extent to which it was preserved in translation. The question of the Polish contexts of his poetry did not, as yet, arise in a major way, possibly because the collection consisted almost entirely of Miłosz's poems written in California (note that the version of Miłosz's long poem "From the Rising of the Sun" omitted a number of the Lithuanian-Polish sections of the poem which would have been "exotic" to the non-Polish reader). Thomas in his review surmised that the translations probably differed significantly from the originals and did not preserve the "stylistic magnificence" of the original Polish:

There well may be - Brodsky hints on this - a huge gulf between the "stylistic magnificence" of his native Polish and unadorned style of the translations. Certainly not an ounce of excess flesh clings to the bones of Miłosz's English; and the unvaryingly end-stopped lines have - too often for my liking - the rhythm of the metronome or the typewriter. (1981, 49)
The problem, however, was not limited to the translations of Miłosz's poetry. In 1986 Donald Davie in his evaluation of the English translation of *The Issa Valley*, pronounced its translator, Louis Iribarne, "plainly incompetent":

> The translator of *The Issa Valley* was.... plainly incompetent. To see this, one need not have the original Polish in hand; simply as an English-speaker knowing only English, one perceives that *The Issa Valley* in English does not hang together. Some reviewers - in truth, depressingly few - recognized that the translator's English wobbled uncertainly between American and British idiom and achieved consistency in neither. (p. xi)

In voicing his critical opinion of Iribarne's translation, Davie touched upon several important questions. As we have seen, the quality of translation was often ignored or treated only marginally in the reviews of Miłosz's works, principally because the actual text of Miłosz's works was not at the centre of critics' attention, who tended to evaluate his writings in extra-textual terms. Moreover, the lack of possibility of comparing the translation to the original made many of the critics feel unable to evaluate the translations. Stating that no knowledge of the Polish original was necessary to evaluate Iribarne's translation of Miłosz's novel, Davie focused on the English text alone and evaluated it without comparing it to the original, that is as a work in its own right. Paying special attention to the language of the translation, Davie emphasized that Miłosz's way of using language was crucial for the artistic values of his writings. According to Davie, these artistic values, if present in the original, were lost in the translation of *The Issa Valley*:

> He was rather obviously translated word for word, or phrase
for phrase, rather than envisaging the actuality that the
Polish words registered and then finding the English words,
whether American or English, that would convey it. In
consequence one personage after another in the narrative,
one description after another, one event after another, is
rendered in such a way as to defeat the earnest reader's
wish to see, to envisage. Time and again, for instance, the
spatial disposition of people and things is, in the English
version of The Issa Valley, so unaccountable as to be
surreal. (p. xi)

Comparing high critical evaluations of the novel with the text
available in translation, Davie concluded:

And so what John Bayley wants us particularly to esteem in
this book, the alleged solidity of things and persons and
scenes in a lovingly re-created provincial milieu - this may
or may not be present in the original, but from the English
version that most of us must consult it is conspicuously
absent. Contours flow and melt, people behave in
unaccountable ways, and in the outcome rural Lithuania
between the wars comes to seem a landscape painted by
Salvador Dali. (p. xi)

The English-speaking reader dealing with translations alone had
to rely on the critical opinions and descriptions of the mastery
of Miłosz's works and of their artistic values instead of dealing
with them fully in the translated texts. And the same was true of
critics who, if they were unable to read Miłosz's writings in the
original, had to rely on mediators. The problem proved especially
important for evaluations of Miłosz's poetry. As has already been
mentioned, the text of Miłosz's works was treated as secondary to
the general formulas, with most critics preferring to fall back
on general statements concerning the high artistic values of
Miłosz's poetry. For this reason, critics often cited Josif
Brodsky, who described Miłosz as "one of the greatest poets of
our time, perhaps the greatest," or - less frequently - referred
to the opinions of those critics who knew Polish and were thus
able to form a judgment of the quality of Miłosz’s poetry without having to rely on translation.

This need to take on faith the opinions of critics who knew Polish led some critics to wonder what was the point of publishing translated poetry if the reader could not appreciate it in translation. "The predominant pattern" -- wrote Helene J.F. De Aguilar --

in Miłosz’s commentators is the expenditure of disproportionate amounts of critical energy in explaining just why the reader won’t be able to appreciate the poetic miracle before him but must believe it anyway. (1983-84, 129)

In fact, De Aguilar was one of the very few critics who questioned the value of Miłosz’s poetry in general solely on the basis of translations ("I do not think Miłosz is a Great Artist and I would be very much surprised indeed were he to prove an enduring one"). Most, however, did not feel that they had the requisite knowledge to make such sweeping statements. For instance, Alfred Corn, while expressing some misgivings about the translations, preferred to suspend judgment on the value of Miłosz’s poetry. In his review of Miłosz’s collection the critic wrote:

No translation ever conveys much of the real poetic power of the original. The poems translated here sound like English, which is itself a notable achievement. The pity is that they cannot sound like Polish; therefore no decisive conclusion can be reached by the present reviewer about the poems as verbal artifacts. (1979, 407)

Nevertheless, Miłosz’s poetry, irrespective of the actual quality and faithfulness of the translations, gained increasing interest among Western critics. Donald Davie devoted a large part
of his book *Czeslaw Milosz and the Insufficiency of Lyric* precisely to the problem of what it meant to have to deal with Miłosz's works in translation and wondered how representative Miłosz's poetry available in translation was in comparison to the entirety of his poetic output. Since Miłosz himself was responsible for the majority of the translations, critics such as Davie were put in the somewhat uncomfortable position of having to evaluate his poetry through the "authorial" versions of the originals. Nevertheless, although aware of the fact that the translations did not do full justice to the originals, the critics recognized that they were good enough to confirm Miłosz's stature as one of the world's leading literary figures. This opinion was expressed by John Bayley in his *Selected Essays* and further developed by Davie, who noted:

Bayley writes 'A poet so good that he can be translated is a supreme paradox, one which many poets of today, and many readers of poetry, would refuse to recognize, so strong is the tendency now for poetry only to congeal and inhere in the carefully exploited accuracies and idiosyncrasies of language'.... When Bayley claims that 'In the case of Miłosz experience emerges as a quality that overrides the impossibilities of translation', what he is saying in fact is that genius....can override or overcome not just translation but also mistranslation. (1986, xii)

Bayley's opinion is in many respects similar to Auden's evaluation of Brodsky's poems in translation. Both recognized the value of translated poetry which, although it may not have preserved fully the artistic mastery of the original, was good enough to have an impact on the reader. As the overriding value that emerges from the translated text, Bayley mentioned Miłosz's "experience" perceived by the English-speaking reader as a
quality in its own right. Bayley's observation may be supported by many critical texts in which Miłosz's poetry was evaluated primarily in terms of its response to the historical experiences, rather than of the artistic qualities of the text. Robert Hass, describing his work on the translation of Miłosz's poem "The World," clearly stated what, in his opinion, made this particular poem one of the poet's masterpieces:

Of all the responses to the European horror of the years 1935-1945 -- Eliot's "Little Gidding", Akhmatova's Requiem, Vallejo's Spain, Let This Cup Pass, Celan's "Todesfuge", Pound's Pisan Cantos - it is perhaps the most radically strange. In the middle of the horror, when the whole world seemed to be playing out the most terrible of the songs of experience, Miłosz, beginning with a glimpsed image of a schoolgirl's hat on a wooded path in the early spring, wrote what has been called "the most serene poem in the Polish language". (1981, 37)

Thus, in the opinion of a number of critics, the "experience" and Miłosz's response to it seemed to be of greater interest than the text as such and its literary values.

All the consecutive volumes of Miłosz's poems in English were prepared by the poet in cooperation with his translators. With the growing recognition of Miłosz, his poetry attracted new translators, among them Renata Gorczyńska, Robert Hass, Robert Pinsky and Leonard Nathan. In his description of working on the translation of "The World" Hass has related some of the major difficulties he faced during the translation of the poem. However, the extra-textual values, emphasized by Hass as the element that initially attracted his attention to the poem, proved easier to describe than the formal problems posed by the
This translation was born of intense curiosity. Robert Pinsky and I had heard about the poem and we wanted to read it. No translation into English had been published because the author believed it was untranslatable, a fact we may have succeeded in demonstrating. It is written in extremely simple language; the various poems are rhymed, with different rhyme schemes; and the meters resemble those of a child's primer. The trouble begins there. (1981, 39)

In their work the translators focused on the content and on the "sound" of the Polish original relying to a large extent on their native informants. They had Renata Gorczyńska read the poem aloud several times and used her literal translation along with the one provided by Lillian Vallee to get the fullest possible understanding of the poem. Trying to render the poem into English, Pinsky and Hass were looking for an English poem that could serve as a model but finally Hass had to admit that there was no English poem that could be used for this purpose.

Describing the meter of the original in terms of the rich rhyming possibilities of Polish language and versification, Hass also noted that the sound of metrical Polish "is not much like the sound of metrical English." In fact, the translators recognized that their translation could, at best, only suggest the qualities of the original, especially in respect of the poem's formal features. The method Pinsky and Hass used was described by Hass as "rhyme and near rhyme, a lapidary tone not too near and not too far from iambic meter, enough polysyllables to suggest something of the movement in Polish." (1981, 40) According to Hass, the problem did not lie in rendering separate elements of the original, such as the poem's diction or meter, but in
preserving its tone which was described to the translators "as absolutely seamless, fresh, natural and unforced." (1981, 39)

The translation by Hass and Pinsky was later replaced (in the Collected Poems) by the author’s own translation of the poem. One may only speculate why Miłosz did not feel happy with the translation already available since the poet did not comment on his decision. While Hass and Pinsky’s version relates to the Anglo-American tradition of "naive" poems (though, as has been mentioned, they were unable to find an English model for the poem), Miłosz attempted to render the poem in what may be described as his own English idiom, which he had been trying to develop in other translations of his poems, rather than in some recognizable tradition of English or American poetry. There is little doubt that, by controlling as much as he did the translations of his poems, Miłosz wanted to achieve precisely that: an authorial English idiom that satisfied his sense of poetic equivalence. However, the authorial translation of "The World," as well as more generally the almost full control the poet took over the translations, was not always seen by critics as a benefit. Reviewing The Poet’s Work by L. Nathan and A. Quinn, Donald Davie returned to the problem again, questioning the value of Miłosz’s insistence on being his own translator. In Davie’s view, for instance, it was doubtful whether the substitution in the Collected Poems of the poet’s own translation of "The World" for the version of Hass and Pinsky (published in 1984 in the Separate Notebooks) was, in fact, to Miłosz’s
advantage. It should be added that most of Miłosz's poetry did not present the same level of formal and tonal difficulty for the translators as his "The World." Nor did all critics feel the way Davie did about the results of Miłosz's insistence on being his own translator. "Of course Miłosz -- wrote John Bayley -- is, as it were, a poet in English as well as in his native tongue, and his translations are in one sense new poems," although -- he added -- "it is vital to their poetry that they could never have been written as poems in English. They carry their singularity with them into the other tongue..." (Bayley 1991, 96)

In the case of Brodsky, the issue was not only the problem of translating poetry from the Russian language, but also the importance of poetic form, and especially of the use of "strict metres," for his poetry. It was the volume A Part of Speech that exemplified to several critics the general difficulties of translating Russian poetry into English. In his review of the collection, Gifford wrote:

Translating verse from Russian presents two main difficulties. One is the language which almost invariably fills out a line of specified length with fewer words. This encourages the austerity that so often breaks into good Russian poetry, a purity of outline according well with a language which, being for the most part Slavonic, is unusually limpid. The other problem is one of approximate form. Russian poetry has not yet very significantly opened its gates to free verse. The whole variety of traditional forms, refreshed earlier this century by an experimental freedom with rhyme, is available to the poet, and almost obligatory for the translator of foreign poetry that has used such forms. (1980, 1159)

Considering the degree of the difficulty, truly adequate translations were almost impossible to achieve. The English
reader was then left with a version of distorted poetic form and, in many cases, it was impossible to have a sense of the mastery of the original poem. Hass detailed some of the deficiencies in the English versions:

there are the clichés of iambic rhythm, like the excessive use of the possessive case: "retreating north before winter’s assault," "closed to the clash of day’s discord," "July’s conclusion merges with the rains," "rubbed by the light on space’s surface." It is like reading a book that keeps sneezing. And the absurd poetic diction: "the vast wet of ocean," "a strengthless breeze." There is padding for the sake of rhyme..., the padding to which translators are tempted because there are so often fewer words in a line of Russian verse than in an English equivalent. This leads fairly often to massive redundancy. (1980, 36)

Similarly, Reeve in his review of A Part of Speech made it clear that the translations failed to present faithfully Brodsky’s poetry for the English reader. Evaluating the work done by translators the critic concluded that

[t]heir versions of him, however, like his own translations that are paraphrastic explanations, keep him from us - or vice versa. You can’t rhyme in an uninflected language with rigid rules about sequence of tense and syntactic order the way you do in a richly inflected language with no sequence of tense, loose syntactical construction, and different accentual patterns. (1981, 36)

A few years later, reviewing To Urania, Donald Davie noted that when he [Brodsky] speaks of "strict metres" he has failed to notice how Russian meters can be strict in a way no English meter can....Our rhythms....are far more wavering and variable then in the most often used trisyllabic metres of Russian classical poetry. If this is so, the consequences are momentous; for it means that the pounding Russian line can master and carry along with itself a clutter of exuberant tropes and "physical detail", under the weight of which the lighter English line stumbles and hesitates and is snarled.(1988, 1415)

According to Davie, the English reader was given either a formally faithful translation that did not show the mastery and
merit of Brodsky’s poetry or a less faithful one, which, however, made better poetry.

The question, however, was even more complex in view of the semantic function of the formal aspects of Brodsky’s poems. Stanisław Barańczak, in his review of To Urania, wrote:

In virtually every poem in this collection, the art of juggling rhymes and other formal constraints verges on the impossible and thus attracts the reader’s attention, as if the poet wanted him not to overlook the fact that his devices serve as a means to tame and overcome reality’s threatening pressure rather than merely describe it. This is exactly Brodsky’s point, and this also explains his stubbornness in translating his own poetry with such an emphasis on strict subservience to the demands of the original rhymes, meters, or stanzaic patterns. In his case, these supposedly external, detachable props are an intrinsic and irremovable part of the poetic statement as a whole. (1990, 144)

David McDuff, in his review of To Urania, brought out another important feature of Brodsky’s poetics, the fact that "[l]anguage for Brodsky is equivalent to what used to be called ‘inspiration,’ and each poem of his is a kind of seance or trance that really works only in Russian," and concluded that "[f]rom this point of view, the translations here [in this volume] are mostly inadequate, though the ones by Brodsky himself are important as linguistic experiments." (1990, 16)

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Brodsky’s poems became in the later stages of his poetic development largely "untranslatable." Since the poet himself took almost exclusive control over the translations, the critics not only questioned his concept of preserving all the formal features in translation, but also pointed out the fact that English was not his first
language. The problem of how to render poetic form in translation has been, of course, discussed for years without having been resolved in a satisfactory manner. One may get the impression that Brodsky, insisting on the preservation of formal features of his poems in English translation, refused to recognize the fact that Russian poetry was something of an exception in that it preserved classical meters and other conventions at a time when such traditional forms have been largely abandoned in English and American poetry. Consequently, his desire to preserve the original meter of a Russian poem in its English translation could be regarded as formally questionable, since forms which appear modern in Russian do not necessarily appear modern in English; the insistence on preserving them may in fact have the opposite effect on the reader to that intended. As a closing argument concerning Brodsky's view of translation, the critics began to question his understanding of the differences between the two languages, and even his mastery of English. According to Davie, the translations did not profit from the control of Brodsky "possibly because Brodsky is less inward with English - especially with its rhythms and intonations - than he supposes." (1988, 1415) This observation was supported by Kline who, describing his work with Brodsky on the translations of his poems, pointed out how the poet insisted on the preservation of elements of poetic structure that did not work in English.

As we have seen, Brodsky's views about translation were not limited to his own poems, and the poet criticized all attempts to
translate Russian poets (especially Akhmatova and Mandelstam) into free verse. His general views on translation coupled with his control over the translation of his own poems made Brodsky, in the eyes of some critics, fully responsible for the translations that did not do justice to the originals.

Many critics, however, failed to notice the fact that, while Brodsky's early poems were comparatively easy to translate, his poetic development and the increasing importance in his poetry of "playing with language," paronomasia, and metrical virtuosity, made his later poems much more difficult (if not impossible) to translate adequately. This fact, too, marks an important difference between translations of Miłosz and Brodsky's poems into English. When the first translations of his poems appeared, Miłosz was already a mature poet with an established poetic voice and his poetic development tended toward a simplification of poetic form. Moreover, Miłosz was presented to the English reader mostly through texts that, in his opinion, were well translated and comprehensible to the reader.

Some of the problems faced by critics also arose from the selection of poems of Miłosz and Brodsky available in English translation. The two poets chose different approaches in this matter. Not only did the selections of Miłosz's poetry leave out a large body of his work, but they did not represent its chronological development and this resulted in at least some critical confusion. In contrast, Brodsky's consecutive volumes consisted not only of his new poems but also of selections of his
previous works. In his case, a degree of critical confusion arose largely from the consecutive transitions in Brodsky's policy of choosing translators, which made it difficult to trace his poetic development without the possibility of sorting out what came from the original and what came from the translators. Consecutive changes in translators and their ways of translating poetry, along with the publication of re-worked versions of previously translated texts in new volumes of poems, made it difficult to decide which changes came from the development of Brodsky's poetry and which from the differences in the method of translation.

With the growing recognition of the two poets and the increasing availability of their poetry in translation, the problem of the common memory of the speakers of the respective languages came to the fore in critical reflection. Miłosz took the problem into account before it was noticed by critics. Miłosz's comparatively late recognition as a poet in the West is sometimes explained by the "untranslatability" of Polish literature in general and thus also, presumably, of Miłosz's poetry. Critics often stressed the fact that Miłosz himself considered his poetry untranslatable. Nevertheless, as has been mentioned, Miłosz translated other contemporary Polish poets into English prior to the publication of his own poetry in English. Therefore the poet was familiar with problems which translators of Polish poetry had to face, including difficulties with translating poetic form. In spite of the fact that the formal
features of at least some poems by contemporary Polish poets made their poetry extremely difficult (if not impossible) to translate, Miłosz himself stressed primarily non-linguistic problems. The poet seemed to be concerned with the fact that Polish literature had long been considered rather incomprehensible to the non-Polish readers. In The History of Polish Literature, Miłosz emphasized the historical context of Polish literature. The entire literary process is shown through its connections with political and social events in Poland. In his speech at the Nobel Prize ceremony Miłosz said:

I am part of Polish literature, which is relatively unknown in the world on account of the fact that it is almost untranslatable. Comparing it with other literatures I had the opportunity to realize its incomparable and often bizarre strangeness. It is a kind of a secret brotherhood which has its own customs of consorting with the dead, when crying and laughing, pathos and irony coexist on equal terms. Deeply implicated in history, always allusive, this literature in our century as in the past always accompanied the people in their plight. (1981, 27).

In spite of this opinion, contemporary Polish poetry was successfully promoted and translated in the West. The availability of a truly large body of translations of contemporary poetry, in contrast to the lack of translations of poems written prior to 1945, was noted by many critics. Commenting on the situation, Davie wrote:

we have been invited to think that the Poles in 1945 ‘started afresh’, cancelling out as irrelevant....all the previous centuries of poetic endeavour....for Polish poetry since 1945, so it was maintained, had cut out linguistic idiosyncrasy to the point where the new Polish poetry was infinitely translatable... (1993, 51)

Thus, in Davie’s opinion, contemporary Polish poetry was
successfully entering the Western market in a distorted version, perceived mainly through elements "understandable" for the non-Polish reader. Hence, it was not so much that the differences in the collective and cultural memories of speakers of both languages were obliterated, but rather that the speakers of English became interested in some elements of the common memory of Polish speakers preserved in the English versions of contemporary Polish poetry. In the case of the most prominent poets -- especially Miłosz, Różewicz and Herbert -- critics pointed out different aspects of their writings that made their poetry understandable for the non-Polish reader. Noting the large number of translations of Różewicz's poems, Davie observed, somewhat gratuitously, that Różewicz "wrote to be translatable." Touching upon the more general question of "translatability," Jarniewicz pointed out that the picture of contemporary Polish poetry, which the Western reader obtained from the selection of poems available in English translation, was significantly distorted. Referring to various reasons for choosing poems for translation, the critic notes that several divergent motives contribute to the British view of what Polish poetry is, a view which is not, and cannot be in this context, satisfactorily representative. Poles looking at the list of Polish poets available in English translation may be taken aback by the arbitrariness of the selection. Very often translators select 'translatable' poets and anthologies suffer from the surprising absence of original writers whose poetics cannot be easily, if at all, rendered into English. (1994, 53)

According to Schmidt, the poetry of Miłosz and Herbert was fairly easy to understand for the English-speaking reader because both
poets "are part of the beleaguered catholic European tradition" and so their poems are "translatable" in as much as "their allusions, ironies, formal choices have parallels or equivalents in English." (Davie 1991, 29)

Several years earlier, in his essay 'The "Still Point" in Miłosz's Native Realm', Alexander Coleman wrote:

....I do count myself as at least one of those who have devoured all the [Miłosz's] texts that finally have appeared in English, and perhaps it may be useful to explain the peculiar magnetism that such a text as Native Realm can have over a reader who has no Polish, who has only the most perilous command of central European history, and who is a reader wholly innocent of the most basic presumptions of what it is to be an Eastern European.... I know almost nothing of the most elementary realities and their contexts that Miłosz spins off on every page of his memoir. Nonetheless, the text "works" in English; it has a peculiar power and majesty....[P]art of this subterranean attraction....lies in the book's presumptions about man in society - man not as individual worthy of the most intense psychological scrutiny in the Western mode, but rather man whose self melts into the background....(1978, 400)

However, Miłosz's poetry, as was remarked by some critics, to a considerably greater extent than the poetry of Herbert or Różewicz, preserved continuity with the traditions of Polish poetry and was thus considered by the poet as untranslatable. The reasons for this belief were perhaps best explained by Aleksander Schenker in his introduction to Miłosz's Utwory Poetyckie - Poems. He stressed the fact that cultural allusions were present in Miłosz's poems on the very basic, linguistic level and were even more "incomprehensible" if not entirely lost in translation. Miłosz gave the same reasons for the difficulty of presenting his poems in translation in his "Words of Acceptance" of the Neustadt Prize. Emphasizing the limitations of the translated versions of
his poems, the poet said:

In my case it [the Neustadt Prize] goes to a poet who can be read only in translation and whose poems do not translate well because of many cultural-linguistic allusions in their very texture. (1978, 369)

Consequently, Miłosz tried to introduce the English reader (at least to some degree) to Polish literature and contemporary Polish poetry by translating it into English and publishing The History of Polish Literature prior to the publication of his first volume of poems in English. His works in prose, too, presented his point of view on poetry and the role of the poet. Miłosz treated his essays as, among other things, an introduction to his poetry and especially as a way of extending and enriching the memory of the non-Polish readers of his poems with Polish literary and cultural history. It is rather obvious that Anglo-American publishers, at first, were not interested in Miłosz’s poetry. Miłosz, in fact had to create a need for (and an interest in) his poetry in the English-speaking critics and readers.

For the reception of Brodsky’s works in the West, the problem of the common memory has had a different meaning and significance. On the whole, the incomprehensible contextual elements of his poems were simple enough to be explained in the translators’ notes appended to the translations. In his note to the translation of "The Funeral of Bobo" Carl R. Proffer wrote:

Vital phonetic associations (bobobabochka) disappear in English (Bobo-butterfly). Among other problems are the English reader’s lack of familiarity with Leningrad architectural monuments and such things as the Russian word "sleza" (tear) also being the word for the hole in cheese. (1974, 270)
Such explanations were needed principally for Brodsky's poems connected with specific places in Russia; they concerned mostly the translations of Brodsky's poems written prior to his exile. More difficult was the problem posed by the semantic associations evoked by Brodsky's rhymes, as well as his penchant for phonetic wit. The most difficult for translators was, however, the fact that Brodsky incorporated elements of Russian literary tradition into the formal features of his poems, including their versification.

By insisting on the preservation of the formal elements of his poetry in translation, Brodsky failed to take into account the fact that such features touched upon the reader's associations with the most typical versification of the poetry of a given language, and therefore was a matter of the common memory of readers of poetry. Regular meter has acquired a different "meaning" in the development of the poetry of the two languages, since modern Anglo-American poetry is written predominantly in irregular or free verse. Thus attempts to render the regular metres of contemporary Russian poetry into regular metres in English translation have usually proved unsuccessful. The common memory of readers of English poetry placed poems written in regular meters in historical contexts rather than in the context of contemporary Anglo-American poetry. As Robert Hass put it in his article in The New Republic:

> English poetry is a much older art. Metrical poems in English have been written for over 400 years, in Russian for something like 200. That is, in terms of exhausting the
resources of meter and rhyme, Russian verse could be said to be fresh as English poetry was at the end of the age of Pope. In America, a metrical poem is likely to conjure up the idea of the sort of poet who wears ties and lunches at the faculty club. In Russia it suggests the moral force of an art practiced against the greatest personal odds, as a discipline, solitary and intense. As a result, the kind of poem that Brodsky writes, difficult to render anyway, has to be rendered with attention to the preservation of its form when that form, translated into English, is in danger of being transposed at the same time into another key altogether. (1980, 36)

Brodsky’s opinions about translation -- especially about translating Russian poets into English, were noted and discussed by some critics. Yves Bonnefoy in his essay "On the Translation of Form of Poetry" argued that the regular metre in Russian poetry should be treated as "metaphor" and thus a translator should be free to render it in free verse. Criticizing Bonnefoy’s point of view, Keith Bosley noted that

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\text{[t]he degree to which a translator should "naturalize" his original, fit it into an existing mold in his language, or conversely the degree to which he should expand his own language to accommodate newcomer, has been widely discussed: one usually begins by attempting the former, and if the attempt fails one resorts to the latter. (1981, 53)}
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Both critics did not limit themselves to Russian poetry but quoted examples from different languages and periods. They both brought to the discussion their own experiences with translating poetry. Nevertheless, the critics did not solve the problem of how to translate "fixed forms." Bosley concluded that "we translators must never forget that only with God are all things possible" and that translation was an act of art and as such defied generalization. Moreover, some poets required so much talent and skill from the translator that they were almost
"untranslatable". (1981, 55)

In spite of all the above differences, the most important critical question was the same in the case of both poets. Is it possible to experience the mastery of their poetry through translation and thus what is the impact of translated poetry on readers whose language and cultural memory are different? Furthermore, with the growing Western recognition of non-English poetry, the problem of translation became one of the more important questions for criticism. Noting the limitations of translations, critics also noted the impact of translated poetry in the West. Seamus Heaney was one of the first critics who emphasized that in the end, given all the problems with translation (including differences between the cultural memories of readers), it was not possible for English-speaking readers to experience translated poetry the way the native speaker experienced the original poems. In his essay "The Impact of Translation," Heaney stated that

[It seems self-evident that what the reader who does not speak Russian experiences as the poem in translation is radically and logically different from what the native speaker experiences, phonetics and feelings being so intimately related in the human makeup.... For that [what a native speaker experiences], we take the word of the best poetic intelligences of their time and tongue. (1986, 4)]

Heaney, however, failed to consider the fact that critics presenting their opinions about Miłosz and Brodsky's poetry had to support their ideas with examples from their poems, and in the late 1980's and early 1990's it was the poetry itself, not the earlier general formulas, which became the basis for critical
reflections. Hence translations, that were at best "suggesting" the form and content of the original, were not good enough to provide the critics with sufficient exemplification of critical readings of Miłosz and Brodsky's poetry.

In this respect, the way critics treated translations of Miłosz and Brodsky's poems to support their analyses and interpretations seems to be of critical importance. Not criticizing the translations directly, critics, however, showed the limited usefulness (and limited faithfulness to the original) of the translations either by referring constantly to the original or by becoming translators for their own use. Therefore translations, which were good enough to gain readers' interest in Miłosz and Brodsky's poetry, were not good enough to render "the meaning" of their poems and often proved inadequate for analytical and interpretive purposes. The problem was in general the same in the case of both poets; there were, nevertheless, significant differences in the way in which critics tried to cope with the problem in each case.

As has been mentioned, beginning with the mid 1980's, Brodsky's poetry has become a subject of scholarly studies based on the originals. Critics in this group (such as Polukhina, Loseff, Kreps, Scherr, Smith and Bethea -- to name only a few) seldom referred to translated texts only, and often exclusively quoted the originals, assuming that their criticism was primarily directed to the specialists who would be able to deal with the original. Critics who chose to use translations of Brodsky's
poems in their works, especially if they wanted to discuss or define a specific idea expressed by the poet, often had to provide the reader with their own, more precise translations of separate words or lines. In spite of the poet's insistence on the semantic importance of the formal aspects of his poetry, critics had to struggle with the meaning of individual words and phrases and their significance in a poem. For example, writing about the question of exile in Brodsky's poetry, David Patterson had to indicate, after almost every quotation of an English version, the meaning of specific words used by the poet in the original. The reason for this need to provide closer equivalents is explained every time in a similar way.

To be sure, the Russian word "bespochvennost" 'groundlessness', literally means without "pochva," 'being without the soil'. That the breakdown of the illusion implies a need for return is more clearly seen in the original Russian verse. (1993, 366)

A few paragraphs later the critic wrote that "[t]he flaring up of the poem takes the place of a star, as we see upon the examination of the Russian version of these lines." In some places Patterson had to point out words missed in translation, writing that the "line contains an important word left out of the English translation." (1993, 375) Though the critic referred to the original as "Russian verse," all his remarks touched upon problems with rendering individual words. It thus became obvious that translations could substitute for originals only to a certain extent, that they could give the reader only an approximate and general idea of Brodsky's poetry. For more
specific studies, critics had to rely on the "original Russian verse."

As for the formal aspects of Brodsky's verses, they were comparatively easy to describe in scholarly essays since the critics could use terminology understandable to the specialists in the area of Russian poetry. However, his attempts to introduce formal features of Russian verse into English became openly criticized and David M. Bethea, in a very recent study of Brodsky's poetry, has pointed out poems in which rhymes that work perfectly in Russian are "predictable" and "clownishly self-parodying" in English.

An interesting point of view on Brodsky's literary works in translation was presented by Tomas Venclova who, in his essay devoted to "A Journey to Istambul," proposed to treat its two versions, Russian and English, as texts that should be taken on their own terms. Noting that this is "characteristic of many of Brodsky's recent works, perhaps the majority of them" (1990, 135) Venclova was the first to point out differences between Brodsky's early works and the ones written in the later stages, especially in most recent years. The most interesting are Venclova's remarks about "different literary subtexts" toward which both versions are oriented, since they open up a new question about the translation of Brodsky's literary works.

The control Miłosz and Brodsky exercised over the translations produced "approved versions" of their poems in English. Critics were placed in a situation in which their
critique of translations reflected the way in which the poet exercised his control over the process of translation. Moreover, the poets' insistence on their control resulted in the appearance of "canonical" translations that were to be treated as the "approved" versions and therefore treated differently from other translated versions of the same poem. The control over translations allowed both poets to publish translations that did not fully coincide with the originals; however, this fact was commented upon only by Venclova in the case of Brodsky's prose. Although several critics took into account different translations of Miłosz's poems, so far not a single critic has commented on the nature of the differences. However, Miłosz, in contrast to Brodsky, also translated other poets; as a result he was evaluated as translator not just in connection with the translations of his own poetry.

Miłosz became known to the English-speaking reader as a translator of contemporary Polish poetry even before his own poetry came to the attention of Western critics. In the review of the anthology *Postwar Polish Poetry*, a Polish critic and poet, Bolesław Taborski, wrote:

Mr. Miłosz is very faithful to the words; some poems read almost like philological translations. Stylistically, they could be improved here and there, but this is not the point. Faithful renderings on the whole, yes, rather than inspired, imaginative transfers of the emotional mood, of the imagery, into another language. The spark of poetry is missing from so many of them. Strange, considering the translator is a poet.... (1970, 57-58)

Though as a translator of his own poems Miłosz was also "very faithful to the words," the English versions of his verse were of
limited use for critical studies of his poetry. However, in contrast to criticism of Brodsky’s poetry, Miłosz’s critics seldom had to translate individual words from the original fully to explore and elucidate the meaning of his poetry. It became rather clear over the years that different translations provide critics with different arguments. As in the case of Brodsky’s poetry, translations published in consecutive volumes were only of limited use to the critical analysis of the text. The number of critics able to deal with Miłosz’s poetry in the original was, however, considerably smaller than the number of critics able to read Brodsky in Russian. In fact, the original Polish verses of Miłosz were only seldom used by English-speaking critics as a basis for their opinions. With the growing interest in his poetry it became clear, however, that the single authorially “approved” versions of his poems were not able to provide texts adequate for an analysis of his poetry and in some cases the critics provided their own translations. Leonard Nathan, in the footnote to his analysis of “Ars Poetica?” wrote:

The reader will note that I am not using Lillian Vallee’s excellent translation (Bells in Winter, New York, 1978) but one that is the result of collaboration between me and Renata Gorczyński. Some points in my essay are made a little clearer by this, slightly more literal translation. (1981, 120)

Thus the author suggested that different translations may provide critics with different arguments in their description and interpretation of Miłosz’s works.

On the other hand, the translators of Miłosz’s poems, aware of problems in rendering his poems into English, suggested that
more than one translation of the same poem should be available to
the reader. Robert Hass concluded his essay about translating
Miłosz's "The World" with a statement about the limitations of
his and R. Pinsky's translation; he predicted that "[t]here will
no doubt be other English versions of this poem". (1981, 40) Some
critics expressed misgivings about Miłosz's authorial control
over the translations, as presumably limiting the number of
translations to "approved versions" only, not all of which were
necessarily regarded as superior. In recent years critics have
begun to refer more frequently to different translated versions
of the same poem. Writing about Miłosz's poem "Encounter," T.J.G.
Harris confessed that he did not know Polish, but he also pointed
out that

[t]here is another translation, slightly different, of the
poem by Adam Czerniawski: both 'transcriptions' for the
English zither are good in English, though I prefer Miłosz's
own. (1993, 77)

Thus it was not so much the question of which translation was a
better one but which of the good translations suited the taste
and needs of the critic. The possibility of dealing with more
than one translation was especially important for those critics
who did not know Polish. In his essay "The Poetry of Leśmian, Wat
and Miłosz" Czaykowsi wrote:

[W]hat is an admirer to do when he cannot quote in the
original language? It will be enough, to illustrate the
problem, to juxtapose two English versions of a few of
Miłosz's lines from a poem which is undoubtedly among his

Stating that "the two versions are certainly very different in
the way in which they attempt to recreate in English the effect
of Miłosz's original lines," Czaykowski also noted that "[t]he reader can choose the version he or she prefers." Moreover, by dealing with more than one version, the reader becomes more conscious of the limitations of the translations, as well as more aware of the complexity of meaning of the same lines in the original Polish version. So even when not knowing the original Polish text, the reader becomes able to approach the text by its different 'transcriptions' into English. In fact the reader can, in this way, build his own "image of the original text."

The problem of translations and the control Miłosz and Brodsky exercised over their translations, not only appeared differently in the case of each of the two poets, but also brought different results. In general, it became obvious that the translations were good enough to make their poetry influential in the West, even if they did not preserve and convey the full mastery of the original poems and refracted meaning in a variety of ways. On the other hand, the translations were inadequate for detailed critical analysis, which required an intimate knowledge of the original text. In the case of Brodsky, despite his own control over the translations, critics had to use the original Russian verses. In the case of Miłosz, the critics referred not only to "authorial" translations but also to different versions of the same poem or even prepared their own translations.
Chapter 5

MIŁOSZ AND BRODSKY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE RECEPTION OF EAST EUROPEAN POETRY

I

Several crucial aspects of Miłosz and Brodsky's reception in the West have been revealed, not in the critical writings devoted directly to them, but in general articles and discussions occasioned by the Western interest in East European poetry and the question of its value for the Western reader. In the late 1970s the growing interest in the literature of Eastern Europe provided one of the most interesting "frames" for the reception of both poets in the West. Miłosz and Brodsky, as we have seen, contributed substantially to the changes in the Western perception of East European literature (especially poetry), but interest in the poetry of the East European nations had its own momentum and, in turn, affected the reception of both poets.

This is especially true with regard to Miłosz, whose native literary tradition and affinities with other contemporary Polish poets were virtually unknown to the Western reader when the poet entered the Western reader's market. At least from the late 1970s onwards, Miłosz's success in the West and the increasing recognition of his poetic achievement coincided with the growing interest in contemporary Polish poetry (to whose success Miłosz himself contributed significantly by his translations) and the
similarly successful appearance in English-speaking countries of
the work of other contemporary Polish poets (such as Zbigniew
Herbert, Tadeusz Różewicz, Wisława Szymborska, and Aleksander
Wat).

I do not, however, intend to present and analyze all the
issues that arose during these discussions. Of the two major
questions raised, namely, the nature and value of contemporary
Anglo-American poetry and the phenomenon of the wide-spread
Western interest in contemporary East European poetry, it is the
latter that is of greater significance in this context.

In the 1980s the still broader question of the
distinctiveness of Central Europe and its culture also became
topical in the West. The two poets not only expressed directly
political and literary views on the matter, but their literary
works, especially those of Miłosz, played a significant role in
the discussion. Since the Western interest was at least partially
the result of the political changes in Europe (such as the
Solidarity movement in Poland and Gorbachev's reforms) and of the
erosion and collapse of the Soviet Bloc, the discussions
concerned not only literature and culture but, to a large degree,
political issues. It is hardly surprising that even articles not
concerned primarily with literature quoted Miłosz's poems and
referred to his The Witness of Poetry. These questions, however,
will concern this study only marginally.
II.

Beginning with the late 1960s East European poetry became influential in the West. In 1975 Bogdan Czaykowski noted in his introduction to the Polish issue of Modern Poetry in Translation:

We have been witnessing in the past decades the emergence of the cultural periphery as an active force in modern intellectual and artistic life, and a much greater readiness on the part of the hitherto dominating nations to look beyond the confines of their cultural traditions and presumptions. (1975, 1)

The sheer number of translations, which became available over the period of roughly twenty years in periodicals and books, facilitated a wider reception of East European poetry and raised issues about its impact not only on readers but also on critical criteria and even on poetry-writing and the status of poetry in English-speaking countries. At the same time, the availability of relatively good translations of Miłosz and Brodsky's poetry appreciably changed the nature of their reception, adding new elements to the hitherto mainly mediatory, efferent, and often formulaic treatment of their work.

One of the first English-speaking writers to reflect on the impact of translated poetry in the West in general, and in the British Isles in particular, was the Irish poet Seamus Heaney. In his essay "The Impact of Translation," Heaney emphasized that translated poetry had not only brought new literary traditions to the attention of the Western reader, but had made a difference to the poets writing in English; furthermore, he analyzed the nature
of the Anglo-American poets' response.

What translations have done over the last couple of decades is to introduce us not only to new literary traditions but also to link the new literary experience to a modern martyrlogy, a record of courage and sacrifice which elicits our unstinted admiration. So, subtly, with a kind of hangdog intimation of desertion, poets in English sense the locus of poetic greatness shifting away from their language. (1986, 4)

Tracing the nature and importance of this phenomenon in his article, Heaney focused on the great Russian poetry of the interwar period, Polish poetry of the postwar period, and the poems of Josif Brodsky. The Western interest and admiration arose, in his view, from the fact that such poetry "not only witnesses the poet's refusal to lose his or her cultural memory but also testifies thereby to the continuing efficacy of poetry itself as a necessary and redemptive mode of being human." (1986, 3) He observed that the East European poets' resistance to political power was not necessarily political in nature.

The poets are more concerned with the authenticity of their creative process than with the success or failure of state policies - and most people who are aware of the nature of a writer's martyrdom are aware of this. (1986, 5)

Heaney was not alone in recognizing that East European poetry had become a factor in the way in which contemporary English-speaking poets were regarding themselves and their work. Referring to Polish poetry, David Morley went even further, asserting that

[T]he poetry of Poland has transformed itself and, by a kind of sustained osmosis, is transforming Western poetry into something more relevant to the circumstances of the late twentieth century. (1992, 441)

Heaney characterized the two main features of Anglo-American
poets' response to East European poetry as "envy" and "identification": "Their envy is not at all for the plight of the artist but for the act of faith in art which becomes manifest as the artist copes with the tyrannical conditions." (1986, 6) Although, in his view, the poets of Eastern Europe did not change the prevalent styles of Anglo-American poetry, the Anglo-American poets have, nevertheless, been "slightly displaced from an old at-homeness in their mother tongue and its hitherto entirely adequate poetic heritage" (1986, 7) by the impact of translated poetry. The critic's remark about the responses of Anglo-American poets applies to some extent to Western poetic criticism, especially in the case of those critics who recognized the validity of Alvarez's dissatisfaction with postwar English poetry.

Beginning with the late 1960s, Anglo-American critics involved in the dissemination of East European poetry in the West introduced descriptive categories that became increasingly popular in the 1970s. Among the most compelling of the descriptive categories (which, at some point, and with some critics, acquired evaluative connotations) were "poetry of survival", "poetry as witness" and "poetry of the oppressed." These critical formulas focused primarily on the response of the East European poets to the historical and political circumstances of the region rather than on the artistic and philosophical values of their poetry. B.F. Murphy discerned the main aspect of such influence in the West of these partly philosophical and
partly moral categories, when he wrote:

> The mythology of our freedom, unbounded and unmediated, depends precisely on this other world, on what happens over there....Whether writing poetry or writing about poetry, one might recall the price that has been paid by the unrecognized individual for our lack of historical "depth," and what the luxury of our individualism, the absence of a shared history, has cost others. (1990, 173)

This critical perspective resulted in descriptions of East European poetry as superior to the contemporary Anglo-American poetry. Reviewing Brodsky’s *Selected Poems* in 1974, Roger Garfitt wrote:

> What one notices in looking at English poets of Brodsky’s age is that achievements tend to fall within one or another of several distinct and very narrow bands. There is an increasing tendency to specialize in particular areas of experience, and equally in particular areas of language. The danger is of a decline into what one might call partial sensibility, a state of vertical fission that could be as dangerous to English poetry as the earlier dislocation between the mind and the emotions. Because Brodsky’s poetry has moved outside such narrow bands, it deserves the closest attention. It is one of the most important bodies of work to become available in English in recent years. (p. 106)

Commenting further on the importance of Brodsky’s poetry for the poets and readers in the West, Garfitt noted that

> It is valuable from time to time to have from outside English poetry an impulse of new energy, an example of the sort of ambitions which causes us to reconsider the possible range of contemporary poetry, and the scale on which it can be built. (p. 105)

A few years later, in 1980, Henry Gifford in his review of Brodsky’s next collection of poems, *A Part of Speech*, made a similar observation about the importance of Brodsky’s poetry, and of East European dissident poetry in general, for the future of poetry in the West.
The poetry of dissidence from Eastern and Central Europe has gone through politics to another region....[I]t seems likely to form the nucleus of a human and unflinching poetry for the coming age. [...] We are all shuffling down the road to barbarism now; but we can learn from the missionaries who arrive among us, with their capacity to make old things new, and to bind together the two halves of that European culture which poetry at least can never forget. (p. 1159)

As a result of the increasing popularity of this point of view, some Anglo-American critics began to evaluate contemporary Western poetry using standards derived from East European poetry. Not surprisingly, categories based on "experience" almost automatically made East European poetry superior to Anglo-American poetry. The adoption of standards of evaluation derived from East European poetry enabled critics to view contemporary Anglo-American poetry as less important and less interesting than East European poetry. Sven Birkerts, for instance, noted the comparative lack of political relevance of and public interest in Anglo-American poetry, which seemed to be dominated by private confessions and personal trivia. While Birkerts believed that the reason for this narrowing down of focus was the lack of weight of History as the experience of the entire community, Bruce Murphy thought that

[t]he problem for American poets is not that there are no such events that ought to be of collective concern to our community, but rather that they are not perceived by the poets as touching him or her in that "personal manner." (1990, 163)

As a result of using categories facilitating such unfavourable comparisons, a major concern of several critics has become the status of contemporary Anglo-American poetry and the fact that it came to be overshadowed by the poetry based on East
European experience. Some critics felt that they needed to come to the defence of their contemporary native poetry, which did not measure up well against formulas such as "poetry of survival," "poetry as witness" and "poetry of the oppressed." Recent years have thus brought a wave of criticism opposing the usefulness of extra-textual values, particularly of political values for the evaluation of poetry. The primary focus of the promoters of the descriptive formulas on oppression was ridiculed in the Editorial to the Mar./Apr. 1992 PN Review:

Some critics in the West expressed almost nostalgia for life under a system which took poetry sufficiently seriously to censor it, to kill, imprison or expel poets. (p.2)

There were even doubts expressed about the motives of those critics who brought East European poetry to the attention of the Western reader and the way in which they mediated it to him. Donald Davie, in the London Review of Books, accused the promoters of East European poetry of making a career out of its dissemination.

Since the British poetry they inherited in the Sixties required of them a longer apprenticeship than they could contemplate, there was every reason for the careerists (who included A. Alvarez and Ted Hughes, along with Daniel Weissbort) to look for, and claim to find, a short cut. And, brilliantly, they found that there was indeed one such simpler model on offer: in translation, poetry from the Soviet Union’s satrapies in Europe. (1992, 3)

The most important development, however, for the reception of Milosz and Brodsky, was the fact that, as a result of their reaction to the thematic and experiential criteria, critics began to re-evaluate the categories used to describe East European poetry, finding them too restrictive and misleading, since they
were too exclusively limited to the experiential factors. This development led to a fuller appreciation of the poetry of Miłosz and Brodsky.

The various descriptive formulas and their functioning were thus less important for the reception of Miłosz and Brodsky than the process of overcoming them. To prove their limited descriptive and interpretive value, critics drew on the texts themselves for arguments and ideas and thus contributed to a better understanding of the two poets' writings. This is especially true of Miłosz's poetry, since Polish poetry contributed extensively to the Western appreciation of East European poetry; for years it was described in terms of the already mentioned formulas. In the process of challenging and modifying them, critics not only quoted but analyzed a number of Miłosz's poems, showing the limitations of the descriptive formulas and focusing on the artistic values of his poetry. Russian poetry, by contrast, was mentioned less frequently in the context of such discussions. The most commonly mentioned names were those of the greatest poets of the interwar period, especially Akhmatova and Mandelstam, both of whom served as well known examples of "poetry of the oppressed." The postwar generation of Russian poets was seldom mentioned in the discussion -- with the sole exception of Josif Brodsky. One may find several reasons for this situation, the most important of which was the fact that since Russian literature was comparatively well known in the West there was already a critical
"tradition" of looking at this literature before the thematic formulas were introduced.

The question of the usefulness of the hitherto widely accepted descriptive formulas came to the fore especially after the publication of Daniel Weissbort's anthology The Poetry of Survival: Post-War Poets of Central and Eastern Europe (1991), and of several similar anthologies published in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Scrutinizing the criteria current in the evaluation of Eastern European poetry, James Sutherland-Smith wrote:

There is a tendency to present them [sc. East-European poets] as exemplars of a kind of romanticism in which art is made out of suffering. This notion comes down to us from Al Alvarez's anthology The New Poetry (1962), where psychic pressure, personal loss and risk are the criteria by which worthwhile poetry should be judged. For this kind of reader the most important circumstance is that Eastern European poets write or wrote under conditions of censorship and at personal risk. This is almost socialist realist criticism in reverse: conditions must create poetry not the talent of the poet. Eastern Europeans are not read in terms of how they might survive and still make good poetry which could stand with anything written in democratic circumstances, but in the knowledge that the poet was and is a victim. (1991, 45)

And Lawrence Sail made a similar point:

[i]n the case of recent poetry from Central and Eastern Europe, judgement is further complicated by the temptation to validate poetry - or more subtly, in some way to make allowance for any shortcomings in the poetry as poetry by reference to hardship and oppression, a conflation of aesthetic and moral considerations. (1992, 53)

The point that undue emphasis on experiential content could lead to the neglect of artistic quality was already made by Bogdan Czaykowski in 1975, when he wrote flatly that "experience alone cannot produce poetry." (1975, 1)
Some critics used examples of Miłosz and Brodsky's poetry to show how damaging these formulas could be for the Western understanding and appreciation of their writings. The author of the Editorial to the Mar./Apr. 1992 PN Review expressed admiration for the way in which Miłosz and Brodsky, whom he called the "greater exiles," dealt with "a gulf of incomprehension, bridged by openhanded and largely uncritical adulation, not for their work as much as for their heroism." The critic found the adulation of the two poets somewhat ironic, considering their critical attitude to contemporary Western culture. Brodsky, for instance, was scathing about the land he fled from, was even more scathing about the land he fled to, its passive, consumerist culture, its unbounded ignorance. His was another form of tendentious nostalgia, for a hierarchy in which culture had an acknowledged and prominent place. (p. 2)

Czesław Miłosz and his poetry were mentioned mainly in the context of the discussion concerning the description of the poet as "witness," a formula Miłosz strongly opposed after the publication of his Collected Poems (although he himself had contributed to its success). In their essays critics frequently quoted The Witness of Poetry and the Harvard lectures had considerable impact on critics' arguments in the late 1980s. Miłosz's criteria for evaluating contemporary poetry, especially his thoughts about the role of the artist, became quite influential in the West. In fact, some of the critics simplified Miłosz's ideas into ready-made formulas, despite the fact that Miłosz not only opposed limiting the understanding of poetry to
such formulas but that his own poetry clearly demonstrated their limited applicability. But there were also instances of critical reflection which combined recognition of his views with assessments of his place in the modern poetic tradition. Donald Davie's book *Czesław Miłosz and the Insufficiency of Lyric* and his subsequent articles are prime examples of this approach. Interestingly enough, Davie found an ally in Miłosz for his own kind of cultured traditionalism:

> the end of his [i.e. Miłosz's] re-thinking, his re-appraisal, is a re-assertion and vindication of the artist's office as traditionally conceived, "classical" as Miłosz uses the term -- that is to say, as mediated to us from the world of the ancients through the Renaissance. (1986, 21-22)

And David Morley found a "lesson" for English-speaking poets in Miłosz's poetic style:

> The stylistic excavation which Miłosz brought to poetry also provides the English "tradition" with another lesson in poetic engagement. I am talking about the manner in which Polish poets such as Miłosz have allowed themselves to engage with innumerable voices while maintaining a discrete way of communicating... (1992, 438)

An interesting example of the treatment of Miłosz's evaluative categories, formulated in *The Witness of Poetry*, is E.D. Blodgett's essay (one of the most acute discussions of the central themes of Miłosz's book) published in *Between Anxiety and Hope*. Blodgett, a noted Canadian critic and poet, attempted to "discuss...some of the ways in which contemporary [Canadian] poets have passionately pursued the Real as Miłosz describes it." (1988, 146) Trying to come to grips with Miłosz's idea of poetry as a "passionate pursuit of the Real," the critic stated that the renewal that Miłosz requires of poetry is so profoundly
implicated with the renewal of the world (in Heidegger's sense) that we must, especially those of us who are poets, consider very carefully what poetry - and what poets - are for. (1988, 146)

The "summoning" to poets that The Witness of Poetry is in Blodgett's view, is a "summoning" to "great poetry," which "is great precisely because it has surpassed the small pleasures of yet another psychological insight and speaks to a condition that the world, not the poet, faces." (p. 150)

The critic's choice of Canadian poems in which, in his opinion, one may find "the Real", nevertheless, raises some questions about Blodgett's use of Miłosz's concept, namely, to what extent his point of view is unduly influenced by the category of "experience." Ignoring the artistic quality and focusing on the content of the poems, the critic found himself questioning the critical usefulness of Miłosz's category.

Blodgett concluded his search for Canadian poets who "pursued the Real" with the observation that "pursuing the Real" did not necessarily determine the artistic value of a poem, although he did not deny that there was a relationship between "writing well" and "the level of the pursuit."

[Can one, after all, distinguish writing well from the level of the pursuit? Are there not some pursuits, when pitched at the right level, that begin to design their own curve of excellence? Thus we should, perhaps, modify Merton's comment, for so long as serving God is distinguished from taking pains to write well, there will always be some measure of failure on either side. (1988, 151)

Trying to come to terms with the challenge of Miłosz's ideas, Blodgett also raised the question of the status of poetry in his
own culture, a theme that often surfaced in the critical writings in Britain and the U.S. devoted to East European poets. Blodgett admitted that it was
difficult to know how wide the appeal of poetry has ever been in Canada, and whether it is possible to discover a national poet that reaches what Miłosz means by humanity in the way Neruda has, for example, spoken for Chile. (1988, 147)

In effect Blodgett tried to link the question of "the Real" and its importance for the appeal of poetry with the readers' interest in poetry in general. Though at least some of the elements of his conclusion are interesting, and while the question of poetry "alienated from the human family" was undoubtedly one of the most important issues that Miłosz raised, Blodgett's essay may serve as an example of the difficulties Western critics had with Miłosz's categories, as well as how pervasive was the appeal of the descriptive formulas which directed the readers' attention to the experiential content (often defined historically or politically) of East European poetry.

Perhaps the most prominent proponent of the view, that at least some of the critical writings devoted to East European poetry limited the understanding of its poetic value, was Donald Davie. Davie pointed out that the concept of the poet as witness not only made experience the chief criterion of poetry but, in the case of translated poetry, ignored the question of the quality of translation. Recalling Miłosz's protest against Alvarez's review of the poet's Collected Poems, Davie noted that
the formula of "witness" was useful for the critics but damaging to a real understanding of the poetry they promoted.

In their mouth, 'witness', often stepped up as 'agonized' means, in effect, when they address the foreign poets they have anthologized: 'You know what happened to you, but you don't understand it. We'll supply the understanding, if you'll give us a happening.'...Consider only Weissbort's cool assumption that he knows the position that history has thrust on Miłosz, whereas he (Miłosz) cannot know it. It is a weakly politicised version of....: the critic is superior to the poet, because the critic can interpret what the poet (poor inspired zany) can only report. (1992, 3)

Davie argued that Miłosz's poetry was perceived in the West through formulas which ignored the development of the poet and his place in his native literary tradition. All that the West wanted to see was the experience this poetry was based on. A year earlier, in the Poetry Review, Davie wrote:

...Michael Schmidt has - almost alone in this - asked what it is we do when we read still living foreign poets in translation: "They exist for us as talismans. Their word is not exemplary, but their presence is. Poets can learn only from poems; to adopt talismanic models is to adopt postures, to import anxieties and other cultural curios. (1991, 29).

In his essay devoted to The Witness of Poetry, Davie went beyond the existing simplifications of Miłosz's ideas noting that

[s]urprisingly these Harvard lectures, loose-jointed and rambling as they are, have the effect -- which Miłosz himself may not be wholly aware of, and may not willingly acknowledge -- of establishing that, when all is said and done, the World War II experience of Eastern Europe, not excluding the appalling experience of East European Jewry, does not compel us to conceive of the office of poetry in some unprecedented, disillusioned, and peculiarly exacting way. (1986, 21)

He pointed out that one of the most important issues of Miłosz's lectures concerned the "office of poetry" and the poet's role in contemporary society. This observation was linked with the fact
that in contrast to the marginal interest in poetry in the West, contemporary Polish poets have been extensively held up as examples of writers who have managed to retain close ties with their nation and to gain wide interest among readers. Thus the phenomenon of poetry alienated from "the human family," a notion highlighted not only by some Anglo-American critics but emphasized earlier by Miłosz in his Harvard lectures, became yet another significant issue in Western criticism. Discussing Miłosz’s point of view on "what we had taken for granted as the 'office' of poetry" Davie concluded that

Miłosz certainly would agree that the experience such as he lived through in Warsaw in the 1940's does exact of us a radical, even corrosive re-thinking of what we are doing when we create art or respond to it....Yet the end of his re-thinking, his re-appraisal, is a re-assertion and vindication of the artist's office as traditionally conceived, "classical" as Miłosz uses that term - that is to say, as mediated to us from the world of the ancients through the Renaissance....[B]y the end of his lectures Miłosz has argued himself into a position that is, as regards poetics, strikingly conservative. (1986, 21-22)

Davie thus reiterated the view that the tendency to focus on historical and political contexts overshadowed a critical understanding of Miłosz’s idea of poetry and reduced the interest in his poetry to the value of experience. According to the critic, the issue of the "office of poetry" as well as that of Miłosz’s sceptical attitude to formal experimentation, were of considerably greater importance for the understanding of Miłosz’s point of view on contemporary poetry than the external context of Miłosz’s poetic work. In effect Davie asserted the centrality of the artistic text in contradistinction to contextual
considerations.

Since the descriptive categories focused on historical experiences common to the entire region, East European poetry was presented to the West for a considerable period of time without awareness of the diversity of national literatures and cultures of Eastern Europe. Noting that contemporary Polish poetry began to stand out from the writings of poets from other countries of Eastern Europe as well as its great intrinsic interest, some critics began to express concern about the "homogenized image of the great diversity of Eastern European literature." Birkerts noted that Western criticism was "lumping together very disparate voices in a confused bolus - anything, as long as it is 'oppressed' and foreign." (1987, 56) However, since the interest was primarily directed to the entire region because of the political and cultural similarities of countries covered by this term, the question of differences in the historical and literary development of each of the nations was only slowly coming to the fore of criticism. Nevertheless, the broad discussion of the concept of Central Europe, fuelled by the erosion and collapse of Communism in the region, had the effect of underscoring not only the similarities but also the political and cultural differences between the countries of the region. This resulted in the heightened awareness that the term "Eastern Europe" covered a multiplicity of national cultures and literatures, each of which, in fact, deserved separate treatment.

The cultural diversity of Eastern Europe was recognized even
earlier, in the 1970s, by at least some critics interested in the literatures of Eastern Europe but not satisfied with the limitations imposed by descriptive formulas in vogue at the time. However, insufficient Western knowledge of the various national literatures of the region made it difficult for critics to reject the simplifying formulas. Generalizing about the history and literatures of several nations living in the region covered by the term Eastern Europe, Ivar Ivask, editor of World Literature Today, had already made the point in 1978, when he felt obliged to emphasize a distinctive feature of Polish literature which, in his view, made it significantly different from all other literatures of the region. This feature was the long and uninterrupted continuity of its development. "As a matter of fact, not even Russian literature -- wrote Ivask -- can claim a similar continuous tradition of five centuries." (1978, 359) As the number of publications, both in book form and in periodicals, showed, from the mid-1960s onwards, Polish literature, especially poetry, had finally become not only recognized but also influential in the West. Ivask's remarks, overshadowed for years by critical formulas of "survivalism," were further developed by critics in the 1990s. Bruce F. Murphy deplored the fact that contemporary Polish poetry was seen in the West without any interest in or knowledge of the literary tradition from which it developed. Murphy quoted in his essay a statement by Czerniawski that it is "remarkable for a country whose poetry reaches back into the Middle Ages" that Zbigniew Herbert is "the first Polish
Commenting on the same phenomenon, Davie put the blame for this situation on those critics who developed formulas of reading contemporary Polish poetry that dispensed with the need to take into account its poetic past:

we have been invited to think that the Poles in 1945 'started afresh', cancelling out as irrelevant, or irremediably tainted by ancient injustices, all the previous centuries of poetic endeavour. (1993, 51)

Davie pointed out that Western criticism failed to take into account that contemporary Polish poetry, and especially the poetry of Czesław Miłosz, had its roots in a long literary tradition. To show that this was a serious deficiency, Davie emphasized that the language Miłosz used in his poems was inherited from his great poetic predecessors and that Miłosz's "traditionalism" made his own language different "from the Polish of some of his successors, which lends itself so happily to translators." (1993, 51) Therefore, he argued, the readings of Miłosz's poems in the context of their literary tradition, and not the inattentive application of various critical formulas, should direct critics' approaches to Miłosz's poetry. Actually, the need to see contemporary Polish poets in the context of their poetic tradition became one of the most striking critical postulates of the 1990s.

Although for the rather obvious reason of lack of translations, the latter approach still remains a postulate only, a comparatively good knowledge of contemporary Polish poetry in the West made it possible for critics to discuss Miłosz's poems
in comparison with at least some of the major contemporary Polish poets. Since Czesław Miłosz, Zbigniew Herbert and Tadeusz Różewicz did not constitute a poetic school and their poetics were quite (if not strikingly) different from each other, Western critics began not only to analyze but also to compare and contrast them. This led to a deeper interest in the texts of their works, since the general formulas already in circulation limited, rather than facilitated, the comparison. The lively interest Polish poetry continued to evoke in the West made the critics conscious of their limited understanding of a poetry whose literary tradition they did not know.

Accusing Weissbort and even Davie of using arguments that had "more to do with political and historical attitudes than with poetry," the author of the Editorial in the Sept./Oct. 1992 PN Review pointed out some of the major differences in the poetics of Czesław Miłosz and that of Tadeusz Różewicz. While in the case of Różewicz's poetry "the 'pressure of history'.... apparently emancipates the poet from the pressure of his own literary tradition," Miłosz, according to the critic, "is reluctant 'to accept the position that historical and personal circumstances have thrust upon him'." In his essay in the same issue of PN Review Daniel Weissbort compared Miłosz with his contemporaries from Eastern Europe, especially with Herbert and Różewicz, noting the differences in their poetics, in their treatment of historical and personal experiences and in their poetic development. The critic confessed that Miłosz's protest against
treated him primarily as a "witness" had helped him to understand his poetry better, to move beyond the formulaic treatment of his poetry. Bringing to the attention of the reader the Romantic tradition of suffering and its importance for Polish literature, Weissbort noted the Romantic roots of Miłosz's concept of the poet as seer and its development in his poetry. "[T]here are two kinds of seer: those who see from above, and those who see from among," (p. 35) and Miłosz's poetry combines both.

The recognition, that there was a literary context and background, not only a historical or political one, to the postwar poetry of Eastern Europe, had its parallel in the new wave of critical writings about the poetry of Brodsky. His poetry, hitherto seen mainly through its affinities with the traditions of English poetry and in opposition to contemporary Russian poetry, was analyzed in the 1980s in various other contexts, such as the context of East European poetry and of so-called "Fortunate Travellers." As was shown in chapter 2, in the 1980s Western critics were struggling with various ideas of establishing the most suitable literary context for the presentation and analysis of his poetry, but were unable to find a satisfactory solution to the problem. One of the reasons for this situation was probably the politically motivated interest in Brodsky, especially his persecution in the Soviet Union, that overshadowed all other aspects of his poetry. The problem was recognized by some of the critics conversant with his poetry in
the early stage of the reception process. After the publication of Brodsky's *Selected Poems*, Roger Garfitt in his article "Near and Far East" pointed out that "[t]here is nothing peculiar to the Soviet situation in Brodsky's achievement, and certainly no simple ratio between persecution and poetic development." (1974, 105) Similarly, the critic reviewing the collection in *Choice* wrote that

> [p]olitical facts have given him a reputation but obscured his poetry. He himself has skated between the self he would like to be and the image which politics has conjured....Emblematic is what is lost in the absence....of the original text. (1974, 266)

Though some critics already recognized the problem in the early 1970s, for years the text of Brodsky's poems was treated secondarily to the political elements of his biography and these elements played a role in the various attempts to establish a literary context for his poetry. The critical recognition in the late 1980s of the importance of placing East European poets in the context of their native literary traditions may have, however, helped in the development of a similar approach to Brodsky's poetry. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Brodsky was finally presented in the context of twentieth century Russian poetry. Since, however, from the beginning, Brodsky was proclaimed in the West as a continuator of the greatest traditions of Russian poetry, the shift occurred in a new treatment of an already established general context.

In the initial stage of the reception of Brodsky's poetry, critics were usually content to cite -- as proof of Brodsky being
a continuator of the "silver age of Russian poetry," his friendship with Akhmatova and her high opinion of his poetry. In the late 1980s and early 1990s critics, such as David Bethea and Leon Burnett, directed their attention to the actual affinities between the poetics of Brodsky and of Mandelstam, while others, such as Barry Scherr and Gerald Smith, turned to a detailed analysis of Brodsky's versification. The early 1990s brought the first attempts to see Brodsky's poetry in the context of contemporary Russian poetry, of which the most comprehensive was the collection of interviews by Valentina Polukhina with a number of Russian poets concerning Brodsky's poetry and his poetic achievement. Like Miłosz, Brodsky himself contributed extensively to this shift not only through the influence of his literary essays but also through his insistence on the importance of poetic form, including versification, for the understanding of his own and of contemporary Russian poetry. The poet's views of translation must have also played a role, since the question of the importance of translation became another feature of the discussions.

The growing critical interest in Polish literature, especially poetry, brought recognition to its translators, who instead of dealing in formulas provided readers with texts. Taking into account the impact contemporary Polish poetry had on the English-speaking world, David Morley noted that the long-time efforts of Czerniawski were in fact more fruitful than those of Alvarez and his "survivalism." Instead of introducing this poetry
through critical formulas, Czerniawski in his anthology *The Burning Forest* (1987) and a "companion volume" of critical essays *The Mature Laurel*, published in 1991 -- which, Morley thought, "more than matches up to the changing readership for Polish poetry in a post-communist world" (1992, 441) -- introduced the English-speaking reader to a wide cross-section of Polish poetry of the modern period. "In this way," Morley added, emphasizing the role of translations, "a translator-poet like Adam Czerniawski....is as influential a figure as Eliot was in the 1920s." In his review of *The Mature Laurel* Donald Davie noted that the successes of Polish poetry in English-speaking countries were to a large extent due to the efforts of members of the Anglo-Polish community:

But if the Poles deserve [...] special treatment, it's surely because there exists an Anglo-Polish community, lively and sufficiently numerous, of which Adam Czerniawski is an ornament, as is Bogdan Czaykowski also - both of them Polish-born but British-educated. (1991, 29)

Thus the mediating role of translation was recognized as especially crucial. And in his review of L. Nathan and A. Quinn's *The Poet's Work: An Introduction to Czesław Miłosz*, he noted the change in the approach to Polish poetry in the West and the important role played not only by critics but also by translators in this process.

The discussions of the late 1980s and early 1990s concerning East European poetry reveal an important shift in the character of the reception of the poetry of Miłosz and Brodsky. Critics have not only turned increasingly to the texts themselves as the
basis for their critical reflection, but have also become interested in the artistic values of Miłosz's and Brodsky's poems, which have now assumed greater importance than the previously emphasized thematic aspects and extra-artistic contexts. The shift was to a large extent possible thanks to the increasing availability of high quality translations, although in the case of Brodsky, original texts rather than translations became the principal basis for the discussion of the character and artistic merit of his poetry.

During the critical debate of the early 1990s it became clear that Miłosz’s work had finally earned for itself a place independent of the various critical categories which Western critics have used to describe East European poetry in general:

[T]he pressures of history have made a stable lyric voice almost unattainable for Miłosz. As Davie indicated in his monograph, Miłosz's authentic response to history is audible in the disruption of the lyric voice, the plethora of perspectives, in the poems....If Miłosz is in the foreground of his poems, it is as a self so divided and multi-vocal as to make the word 'self' almost meaningless. (PN Review Sept./Oct. 1992: 3)

Further arguments against treating Miłosz's poetry as representative of the "poetry as witness" or of any other general formulas can be found in the reviews of The Mature Laurel, which took care to present Miłosz in the context of Polish literary tradition, and of Nathan and Quinn's The Poet's Work: An Introduction to Czesław Miłosz. In the reviews of The Mature Laurel, Miłosz is no longer discussed as a "witness" but as a distinctive poetic voice, whose poetry has relevance beyond the East European context. In the words of David Morley (quoted in
Milosz adopted a discrete voice, a voice in which several voices can fuse and transmit.... I am talking about the manner in which Polish poets such as Milosz have allowed themselves to engage with innumerable voices while maintaining a discrete way of communicating.... (1992, 438)

Thus the poetic achievement of Milosz's poetry, and especially his distinctive poetic voice, began to be recognized by a number of critics whose views were informed directly by their readings of Milosz's poems.

It is interesting to observe, however, that while extra-poetic values were found wanting in the evaluation of poetry, the question of the value of experience and of the poet's philosophical pursuits as constitutive elements of poetic quality kept reappearing in the discussions of East European poets, and especially of Milosz. For instance, and perhaps paradoxically, the Polish poet and critic Stanisław Barańczak seemed more ready to dismiss the importance of the thematic factor than Anglo-American critics. Taking into account Milosz's reaction to Alvarez's review of his Collected Poems, as well as Brodsky's insistence on the "ethics of language," Barańczak wrote:

A poet who is offended by the course of modern History doesn't even have to write political poetry to find an appropriate response to it. It's enough that he writes his poem well. (1990, 207)

The British critic, T.J. G. Harris, in his review of Milosz's Provinces: Poems 1987-1991, also felt the need to emphasize what he called the "intrinsic worth" of Milosz's poetry as a sufficient reason for being interested in his work.

What, surely, is so admirable about Milosz is that he is not
simply an "Eastern European" poet or writer of 'the poetry of survival' or 'the poetry of witness', to list three categories so dear to the hearts of those critics and journalists who.... are more interested in the provenance of a poem than in its intrinsic worth, and who, with the help of various philosophers and anthropologists, have established in the public mind the idea that poetry is no more than the 'expression' of a group, and poetic fame merely the result of a group's capacity for influence or of successful marketing.... So that it was not any belief in the inherent and necessary superiority, whether moral,'experiential', aesthetic or otherwise, of Eastern European poetry that brought me to Miłosz. (1993, 76)

Yet wasn't it precisely the fact that Miłosz's poetry exhibited quality in the full spectrum of aesthetic reception that made him recognized as one of the leading poetic voices of the twentieth century? Or, to put it differently, didn't the authority of Miłosz's poetic voice rest not only on the how of his poetry but also on what it was able to convey thanks to the author's personal and historical experience and the quality of the thought and understanding that he brought to bear upon it? In the already quoted article "The Impact of Poetry," which began with a reading of Miłosz's poem "Incantation" in Robert Pinsky's translation, Heaney stated that the impact the poem had on him did not

....reside in its contents alone. The artfulness of its diction, rhythm, and tone is primarily what secures our attention and assent. It is a feat of rhetoric, and I can imagine a perverse resourceful critic arguing for the unreliability of the performing voice here. But even so, given that the poem's rhetoric and content are truly bonded, should it matter at all who composed it? (1986, 3)

Nevertheless, he went on, "[t]hat very bonding, however, is surely effected in great part by our awareness of the context from which Czesław Miłosz's text emerges." (1986, 3) The
knowledge of the biography of the author and of the historical circumstances of his life constituted, according to Heaney, an essential factor in the reception of Miłosz's poem.

It counted for much that this poem was written by somebody who resisted the Nazi occupation in Poland and broke from the ranks of the People's Republic after the war and paid for the principle and pain of all that with a lifetime of exile and self-scrutiny. (1986, 3)

Recognizing the artistic quality of Miłosz's poem, Heaney, nevertheless, insisted on the importance of the context, biography and authorial personality for the full appreciation of its worth.

That perceptive scholars and critics of East European, including Russian poetry, found themselves more than reluctant -- even unable to dismiss biographical, contextual and thematic factors from the practice of criticism, can be further illustrated by two remarkable passages from David Bethea's book-length study of Brodsky's poetry.

Those of us who study Russian poetry are made frightfully uncomfortable by notions of the "death of the author" and the "pleasure of the text" when applied, say, to Mandelstam.... who died a terrible death in a Stalinist camp and was last seen alive foraging about in refuse in a state bordering on insanity, his fabled birdlike features realized in a gruesome metaphor come to death-in-life. Given a political system that could do this to a poet, and given Mandelstam's own beautiful plea to "preserve my speech" even as he provides the axe handle for his own execution, how can we write him and his life off? (1994, 11)

Instead of the "death of the author" and similar terms from the arsenal of most recent literary theory, the critic proposed another "set" of critical terms:

For such poets as Mandelstam, Tsvetaeva, and Brodsky, who have, consciously or unconsciously, cultivated a mystical
connection between the actual facts of their lives (byt) and their created legends (the poet-martyr), the terms of Boris Tomashevsky (biographical legend), Yury Tynyanov (literary fact, literary evolution), and Lydia Ginzburg (lyrical hero) work better. They do so because they are context-sensitive and because they presuppose a genuine semiotic bond between the charismatic poet who suffers in life for the sake of Culture (the enabling myth) and the people (narod) who are continually "redeemed" by the spectacle of suffering in which they participate and for which they are to some extent responsible. (1994, 11)

The direct and indirect debate concerning East European poetry helped to clarify a number of crucial textual and extratextual categories of critical description of contemporary East European and Russian poetry. Moreover, the points of view of Miłosz and Brodsky on the character and value of poetry (including contemporary Western poetry) expressed in their literary works and critical essays were finally taken into account by critics conversant with their writings, which resulted in a greater readiness to treat the work of the two poets in terms of their own criteria and to view their oeuvre as a whole and in its intertextual complexity.
1. The process of critical reception belongs to the sphere of communication and as such can be analyzed in terms of the elements that constitute a communication model. The basic model consists of three main components, namely: Sender - Message - Receiver. In the case of literary communication, the Message usually has the form of a written Text coded in a language which is known to both Sender and Receiver. The Receiver of such a Text may be further defined as Reader and the Sender is usually designated as the Author. In this case the Text presumably has artistic value.

This model of communication is obviously a simplification of a process which, in practice, is much more complicated. However, even without further development, this model can be used to show how approaches toward literature have historically singled out, principally, if not exclusively, its individual components. Before the rise of formalist schools of criticism in the first decades of the twentieth century, critics and researchers focused on the author, believing that the literary work should be studied as a projection of the author’s mind and psyche; consequently the key elements of the study and discussion of literature were the author’s biography and the circumstances of his life (that is,
the author's context and that of the work), although philological, rhetorical and stylistic studies were also important. Modern literary theory, exemplified by Russian formalists and American New Criticism, moved its interest to the text itself on the grounds that a literary work has a life and meaning of its own, that it establishes its own "inner context," and that it should be studied separately from its author and his intentions. More recently, with the rise of reception and reader-response theories in the 1960s and 1970s, the focus has moved to the reader and his active participation in the process of reading.

The simplified communication model used here primarily has an "operational" value. Taking into consideration various elements of the reception of Miłosz and Brodsky in the West, this basic communication model will be applied and developed in this chapter. The use of this model will help to sort out various aspects and elements of the reception process and to clarify relations between them, as well as to define their role in the process.

2. Although Miłosz and Brodsky's fame in the West rests primarily on their poetry, both of them published literary works in prose. Brodsky's literary prose appeared after he had become well known to the Western reader; therefore the reception of his prose was, at least to some extent, enhanced by the interest in his poetry. The reverse is true in the case of Miłosz. It was his prose that first became available in translation, in fact,
several years before the appearance of his poetry in translation. Moreover, given the nature of Miłosz's prose that became available to the Western reader in the 1950s, its reception had primarily a thematic and political character. With the increasing availability of his poetry in translation and his growing recognition as a poet, Miłosz's "political" prose was re-evaluated in the 1980s and began to be read for the light it threw on his poetry.

Additionally, prose writings of both poets provided critics with insights and arguments for the analysis of their poetry, irrespective of the fact that each of the poets used a different technique of self-presentation. While Miłosz referred to his poetry directly -- and frequently explained it in his essays and interviews, Brodsky's prose touched upon various aspects of his own poetry indirectly, through comments on the works of other poets. It is significant that, in the later stages of the reception process, it was Miłosz and Brodsky's prose that has contributed to the increasingly intertextual treatment of their works and to attempts to view their writings in their entirety.

While I have given ample attention to the reception of the prose writings of both poets in the earlier chapters, my analysis in the present chapter will focus primarily on the reception of their poetry, not only because it is their poetry that has evoked the major critical interest in the West, but also because the reception of poetry poses questions of particular complexity. Nevertheless, I will take into account the reception of prose in so far as it will be pertinent to my analysis.
3. The model of literary communication presented at the outset of the chapter becomes more complicated when the author and the reader belong to different cultures and use different languages, which is the case in Miłosz and Brodsky's reception. In such a case the Message in the process of communication is often not the original literary text but its translation. As a result, the communication process may involve at least two (or more) texts (the literary work in the original and its translation or translations), and it may not always be clear which text the critic refers to in his discussion. In fact, the reader and the critic (who, of course, is also a reader) could very well be dealing with two different texts. The overview of the reception of Miłosz and Brodsky has shown that some of the critics based their opinions on the original texts when introducing the two poets to prospective readers, while others had no choice but to rely on texts available to them in translation only (which, of course, was also the situation of almost all "ordinary" readers).

The existence of more than one text, the original poem and its translation(s), proved of particular importance to the textual reception sensu stricto, especially with respect to the artistic value of the poetry. Since in most cases the translation did not preserve all the artistic features of the original, at least some of the critics felt compelled to point out the existence of a problem and to base their opinion on the original text. With the growing recognition of Miłosz and Brodsky's poetic
achievements, the problem became increasingly important for those critics who were unable to deal with the original poems. Hence, the textual reception of each of the poets was further complicated by the fact that critical opinions of their poetry were sometimes based on the original poem, sometimes on its translation(s), and sometimes involved a comparison of the two and were thus based on two closely related but still different texts.

The question of translation became especially topical in the later stages of the reception of Miłosz and Brodsky, and it led to a more general discussion concerning the rendering of formal features of poetry. Although the quality of translation did not become an issue in the critical evaluation of Miłosz’s poetry, translations of Brodsky’s poetry did raise the question of the value of the original poems; moreover, the need to address the problem of translation enabled critics to exemplify some of the formal features of Brodsky’s poems to those readers who had access to translations only. In comparison with Miłosz, critics dealing with Brodsky’s poetry have also felt a greater need to turn to the original texts, in some cases stressing the differences between Russian and English versions.

4. It is seldom the case that works of non-native contemporary authors are presented to the reader in their entirety or in the sequence in which they appeared in the original language. This fact raises the question of the criteria used by translators and publishers in the selection of both
authors and works for translation, which are not always based on artistic value alone but on other considerations, such as, for instance, the anticipated interest of prospective readers in a different culture. The interest of readers may also be motivated by a variety of non-artistic factors, such as ideology or politics.

The disparity between what is available in translation and the entire opus of a given author may contribute to differences in opinion among critics, since those who deal with the original text are not restricted to the translated texts only. Moreover, the available translations may not reflect the literary development of the author. The chronology of works and of their original appearance may be distorted by the chronology of the appearance of translations and by the selection of works (as was the case with Miłosz’s poetry in translation before the appearance of The Collected Poems). Therefore, the sequence of the appearance of works in translation and their selection may have a considerable impact on the reception process and lead to differences in critical opinions.

Overviews of the reception process of the two poets in this respect reveal considerable differences. Presentation of Brodsky’s works to the Anglo-American readers was almost concurrent with the publication of his works in the original; the appearance of translations reflected, on the whole, the chronology of the writing (or publication) of his works. The consecutive volumes of Brodsky’s poems, which not only included new poems but also some of those which had appeared previously...
(sometimes in a new translation) provided the reader with a sense of the development of his poetry. In this respect the presentation of Brodsky’s poetry to the Anglo-American reader resembled the normal process of the reception of a native writer. The opposite is true of Milosz who was presented to the Western reader in carefully chosen selections; his situation has been typical of foreign authors whose translated works do not reach the reader in the sequence of their original appearance or as part of a larger opus.

5. The process of the reception of both Milosz and Brodsky had begun before the presentation of their poetry to the English-speaking reader. This fact raises the question of what elements were used by the critics to introduce the reader to Milosz’s and Brodsky’s poetry to stimulate interest in their work and to create a need for the text. In other words, it is a question of what elements were used as substitutes for the text and in what ways they contributed to the reader’s further interest in and understanding of the text once it became available. Initially, information about the poetic text was largely contextual and the text only slowly began to emerge as the main point of interest. Thus the reception process had two main stages, namely pre-textual reception (focusing on elements other than the literary, or more strictly, the poetic text) and textual reception proper. It should be noted that textual reception proper did not exclude extra-textual aspects in so far as it often, at least initially, comprised elements of pre-textual reception.
Because of the limited availability of translations, the reception of both poets' work was limited to substitutes of the text for a fairly long time. The first translations of Milosz's poems appeared in periodicals ten years after he had become known in the West. The first volume of his poems in translation appeared twenty years after the publication of The Captive Mind, and it took fifteen more years for the first comprehensive collection of his poems to reach the Western reader. There was no such delay in the case of Brodsky, as translations of his poems appeared in print almost immediately after the first reports of his political trial had reached the Western reading public in 1964. Nevertheless, the first noted collection of his poems in translation appeared in 1973, after the poet had been exiled. Elements of pre-textual reception were also present in the later, textual phase, when despite the availability of Brodsky's poems in translation, some critics continued to bring to the attention of the reader not the text but its various (in most cases political) contexts.

In the pre-textual phase of the reception of Miłosz (and especially of his poetry), and of Brodsky, various contexts acted as substitutes for the text. Here substitutes of the text refer to messages that are not works of a literary character (in this case, the poetry of Miłosz and Brodsky), and as such cannot convey an artistic value to the Receiver. However, in the absence of the literary text, such messages provide readers with information about various aspects of the literary work. Contextual elements, that are of interest to prospective readers,
act as substitutes.

6. Irrespective of the specific point of view of a critical or literary school, external context has continued to play an important role in the process of reading, as well as in the critical interpretation of literary works. However, different critical approaches to literature place different emphases on contexts and define them differently. Since, in the process of the critical reception of Miłosz and Brodsky, various contexts played a significant role not only in the pre-textual but also in the textual phase of the reception process, it will be useful to classify them initially according to their connections with one of the main components of the communication process; although, as will be seen, in practice the distinctions are not as clear-cut as one would wish them to be. Thus one may distinguish:

a) the context of the Author,
b) the context of the Text, and
c) the context of the Reader.

The context of the Text is determined, on the one hand, by the text’s relation to other literary works (intertextuality) and, on the other, by the relation of the Text to the extra-literary world it "describes" or refers to (or comes from). The context of the Reader comprises the concept of the common memory of speakers of a given language (Lotman), of the available codes (Mukarovski) and the horizon of expectations understood as the nexus of the reader’s anticipations with respect to a given literary work (Jauss). In other words, the context of the Reader
includes personal experiences of readers, the circumstances of their lives, and the general "historical" situation and cultural climate of their time. Moreover, elements of the Reader's context coincide and overlap with the all-embracing context of reception. The concept of Authorial context may be used in two different senses. If it is meant to stand for the "historical" context of the author, then its elements may overlap both with the context of the Text (in as far as both involve the same elements of the extra-literary world) and of the Reader. If it is meant to stand for strictly biographical elements (that is, circumstances surrounding the writing of a literary work, personal experiences, and so on), then Authorial context should be understood as the biographical context of the Text. When biographical elements appear in the author's literary writings (as in the case of Miłosz's prose), they acquire an intertextual character. The same element may thus have different contextual functions depending on its relation to one of the components of the communication process, and may be used accordingly in literary criticism. Not all possible contextual elements are activated at any given time, and the use of one or another context will depend on a number of factors which may be different at different stages of the reception process.

7. Since contexts are always chosen from a range of possibilities, there is the question of which elements were used by critics in the process of the reception of Miłosz and Brodsky. In general, the choice seems to have depended on the immediate contexts of the reception, and especially on events and
discourses taking place at the time of the reception that were regarded as being of interest to the reader.

The fact that the reception of the two poets in the West was taking place during the Cold War (with its different stages) determined, to a large extent, the selection of contexts chosen to introduce the two authors to the readers; the same overall context contributed to the selection of more specific contexts used for the interpretation of their writings in the later stages of the reception. Consequently, the political aspects of the biographies of the two authors and of their writings played an important role in the reception process and the politically motivated interest of prospective readers was one of the most important factors contributing to the selection of contexts. Also, literary discourses taking place in English-speaking countries during the reception of Miłosz and Brodsky, especially the counter-culture movements and the impact of East European poetry in the West, were important elements of the overall context of the reception. With the gradual decrease of interest in political aspects of Miłosz and Brodsky's writings, the context of literary discourses became the most important factor determining the choice of activated contexts.

The role of the overall context in the reception of Miłosz and Brodsky was not limited to elements which determined the readers' understanding and appreciation of their works. For a fairly long time, the role played by the text in the stimulation of interest and publication was secondary to various "events" in the poets' lives. The appearance of Brodsky's first poems in
translation followed the widespread publicity concerning his political trial. Similarly, the first volume of his poetry in translation was published after his exile from the Soviet Union. The politically motivated interest resulted in an increased availability of Brodsky's poetry to the English-speaking reader.

There is no such obvious correlation between political events and the presentation to the reader of Miłosz's poems. The significance of political elements was suggested by the poet himself in his prose written in the 1950s; the experiences of Miłosz's life became interesting for the reader only after the publication of his first works in translation. Biographical factors were later recalled constantly in the criticism devoted to Miłosz's writings in which he himself extensively drew on the experiences of his own life. Thus his biography (and its connection with politics) was initially brought to the attention of the reader by the poet himself. Moreover, it was the context of literary discourses and Western literary prizes (especially the Neustadt Prize and the Nobel Prize) that had the most striking impact on the number of published translations. It remains, nevertheless, open to conjecture to what extent the awards themselves were based on the recognition of the intrinsic quality of the text and how significant the contexts of Miłosz's writing were.

The overview of the reception processes shows that elements of Miłosz and Brodsky's biographies, especially the impact politics had on their lives, were of the greatest importance for their pre-textual reception. The lives of both poets, however,
continued to play a significant contextual role in the textual
phases of Miłosz’s and Brodsky’s reception.

Miłosz’s biography played an important role because it was
constantly recalled in his works in prose; therefore it did not
have to be brought from outside the strictly literary context. At
the same time, however, it became a substitute for his poetry
which was based on the poet’s experiences. Miłosz’s life, later
extensively used by critics in their essays, became a point of
interest only after the publication of his works in prose. Thus
the elements used as substitutes for Miłosz’s poetry were taken
from his prose -- not just from outside his writing. These
elements eventually contributed extensively to the understanding
of his poetry, although they limited the aesthetic response to
his œuvre and directed readers’ interest to the historical
events of his generation. In the textual phase of the reception,
elements of Miłosz’s biography were not seen in their political
aspects, but rather it was the "experience" of the poet that
gained critical attention. Over the years it also became obvious
that the context of historical events witnessed by the poet has
been an important context of the text which contributed
extensively to the critical treatment of Miłosz’s œuvre.

Various aspects of the Soviet system and of Brodsky’s
biography were brought to the readers’ attention, not as thematic
elements of his poetry, since the poet did not, on the whole,
refer to them directly in his poems, but as their significantcontexts, which evoked general interest in their own right. A
relatively widespread knowledge of Russian poetry among the
educated Western readers, however, and the very fact of his being named a poet, made it possible for critics to place Brodsky in the tradition of Russian and Soviet poetry, and thus to provide a sort of substitute for a direct aesthetic reaction to his poems. At the same time, English-speaking readers' inability to compare his poems with works of the greatest Russian poets of the inter-war period (many of the translations available at that time were widely criticized for not doing justice to the originals) was somewhat compensated by biographical information about Brodsky's friendship with Anna Akhmatova. The fact of his being a friend of one of the greatest modern Russian poets was taken by the Western critics as an indication of his poetic affinity with the great Russian poetry of the inter-war period and suggested that Brodsky continued the great tradition of modern Russian poetry.

The political trial, and especially the way in which the Soviet authorities characterized his poetry during the trial, set Brodsky apart -- in the eyes of Western critics -- from contemporary Soviet poets officially recognized in their homeland. In fact, what aroused special interest in Brodsky, in addition to his persecution, was that his political crime consisted -- in the eyes of the Soviet authorities -- precisely in his being an apolitical poet. This meant different things to different people, but there was a common element to the way in which the apolitical character of Brodsky's poetry was understood, namely, that years of communist indoctrination did not succeed in preventing the emergence of independent thinking and free imagination, and that this was a hopeful sign.
Since in his poems Brodsky seldom refers directly to events of his life, his biography acted for years as a context of the Author. It was Brodsky's prose, and especially his autobiographical essays, that placed his biography in the context of the text. Brodsky's prose also enabled critics to see and "decode" autobiographical elements in his poems and refer to his biography as to the context of his poetry. Biographical elements contributed substantially to the interest in seeing his works in the context of his entire oeuvre. With the rising interest in poetry based on historical experience, the biographical context of his works also enabled critics to present his poems in the context of Eastern European poetry and the Russian poetry of the inter-war period, as well as to analyze the text as a response to circumstances of the poet's life. This, in turn, has led to attempts to challenge some of the notions of contemporary literary theory, especially the notion of "the death of the author."

8. From the very beginning press notices, reviews and articles referred to Miłosz and Brodsky as poets. Calling the Sender a poet had significant implications for the reception of Miłosz and Brodsky in the West given the fact that the presentation of the two poets to Western readers was not initially based on the text of their poems. Brodsky's name initially appeared in the West in the reports of his trial; the interest in a specific poet (in this case Brodsky) was thus secondary to the main interest in the political aspects of
literary life in the Soviet Union. While Brodsky's poetry appeared in translation only after the publicity concerning his trial in the Soviet Union, interest in Miłosz arose after the publication of his works in prose, especially after the English translation of The Captive Mind. Thus the interest in Miłosz's poetry came largely from his own literary work. Although Miłosz was recognized in his homeland as a major poet as early as the 1940s, in the West he was called poet on the basis of his prose works and not of his poetry. The term "poet" was used of Miłosz to signify certain features of personality and of social function usually associated with the name of poet, and not because critics had read Miłosz's poetry. This use of the term was in fact, at least partly, a reflection of readers' interest in non-literary aspects of his writings and of a lack of interest in the poems themselves.

It may be argued that, in the cases of Miłosz and Brodsky, the name of poet was used for a considerable period of time to underline their special roles in society. Since Western readers were quite familiar with the notion of a poet in Russian society, Brodsky was, not surprisingly, almost immediately placed in the tradition of Russian poets who stood for their beliefs embodied in their literary works and whose writings articulated moral values to contemporary readers, as well as preserving them for future generations. In this respect, poets played a special social and even political role in Russian society. As for Miłosz, since Western readers were not familiar with the role of the poet in contemporary Polish society, critics referred to the Romantic
concept of the poet as "seer". Only in the later stages of the reception process, with the rising interest in East European poetry in the West, did critics begin to note the socio-political role of poetry and of poets in the societies of the region. Miłosz's literary works contributed extensively to the Western interest in this matter.

Assigning the name of poet to the Sender places him and his works in the literary context and results in an intertextual treatment of his writings. However, since Miłosz and Brodsky's writings did not initially evoke sufficient critical interest, the critics' treatment of the literary contexts of their works poses an interesting question. Since Russian literary tradition was quite well known to Western readers, Brodsky's poetry was from the beginning characterized by its comparisons with poetry of other Russian poets. Initially Brodsky was described in terms of his similarities with the greatest Russian poets of the interwar period and in opposition to the most prominent contemporary Soviet poets. The fact that Brodsky wrote at least some of the first works chosen for translation under the influence of well-known Anglo-American poets, made it easier for critics to direct the readers' attention to the artistic value of his poetry. In the absence of the original text of Brodsky's poems, critics tried to compare his works to poetry already known to the reader to convey the poetic value of his writings. Therefore substitutes were also used to indicate to the reader the aesthetic value of Brodsky's poetry. In the later stages of the reception process, however, there was no consistent treatment of the literary
context of Brodsky's works. This lack of consistency was probably connected with the difficulties of establishing the primary reader of his works and with the problems posed by the translation of his poems.

Since Polish literary tradition was virtually unknown to Western readers during a considerable period of Miłosz's reception in the West, it could not serve as the literary context for his works. Miłosz's poems were thus initially introduced by referring readers to his prose; the intertextual treatment of Miłosz's works was limited to references to his other works and almost without any connection with the Polish literary tradition. In the later stages of the reception process, critics began to view his poetry in the context of other East European poets, thus placing Miłosz's poems in the literary context of the "poetry of survival" and of similar categories of description of East European poetry. However, with Western readers' growing interest in contemporary Polish poetry, and the increasing availability of translations, a "horizon of expectations" toward Polish poetry gradually emerged and Miłosz began to be seen in the context of contemporary Polish poetry.

9. With the increasing availability of the text, the translated poetry of each of the authors began to function as Message in the communication process, which resulted in the elements substituting for the text in the pre-textual phase of reception being treated as contexts. Nevertheless, various contexts continued to be taken into account by critics presenting
and evaluating Miłosz and Brodsky's poetry. These elements also played a role in the efforts of both poets to act as mediators of their own work (for example, in their interviews and through controlling the publication of their works in English translation).

Miłosz assumed almost exclusive control over the translations and presented his poetry in 1973 in a selection which, in effect, confirmed and reinforced the image of Miłosz-the-poet as it had developed in the pre-textual phase of the reception. The authorial approval of the translations published in the Selected Poems probably contributed to the almost complete lack of discussion with regard to the quality and faithfulness of translations of Miłosz's poetry. However, the fact that the pre-textual reception of Miłosz developed an image of his poetry that focused principally on its content rather than on its artistic qualities was undoubtedly also a factor. The question of the literariness and the artistic value of Miłosz's poems arose in critical writings only much later, after the poet had become recognized as one of the major literary figures of his time.

The question of the artistic value of the texts presented to the reader was one of the crucial questions of Anglo-American criticism of Brodsky almost from the very beginning. Since the pre-textual reception comprised at least some attempt to deal with the aesthetic aspect of his poetry, the critics had to take into account not only the content of his poems, but also their literariness. As a result, they had to reevaluate translations and their faithfulness to the original. Thus, the question of the
quality and faithfulness of the translations was raised for Brodsky's poetry much earlier than for Miłosz's.

10. It is clear from the discussion so far that the critical mediation between text and reader proceeded along two different lines, depending on what functioned as the text -- the original or the translation. The latter was of course already a mediation between the original text and the linguistic and poetic potential of the target language, as well as a function of the translator's understanding of the text and of his abilities. Since the majority of critics had to rely on translated text (for the reader could deal with translations only), the question of mediation of translators is of crucial importance.

It would be difficult, however, to talk about a community of translators playing the role of mediators in the case of the two poets. Neither of the poets managed to find a translator (or a group of translators) who could serve as his "poetic voice in English" (and Miłosz seemed to have assumed quite early that only he himself was capable of re-creating his poetic voice in English). Such a role was initially played by G.L. Kline who introduced Brodsky's poetry in translation to the Anglo-American reader and at the same time wrote critical essays devoted to his writings. Subsequent collections of Brodsky's poetry, in contrast to his Selected Poems, which was translated exclusively by Kline, were translated by "several hands," with the groups of translators changing over time and with Brodsky assuming increasing control over the English text. This situation resulted
in some confusion and a lack of consistency in the presentation of Brodsky's poetry in English. It also resulted in a failure to develop an English idiom most suitable for his poems. Thus, although Brodsky's poetry attracted many translators and the poet's insistence on the preservation of formal features in translations evoked a general discussion, the mediating role of translators showed the limited value of the translated text. Finally, critics had to turn to the original Russian text. It may even be said that, in the case of Brodsky's poetry, the mediating role of translation has failed because of the inconsistency of the various methods of translation. This failure does not necessarily reflect on the abilities of the translators but on the difficulty of the task.

The mediating role of translation with regard to Miłosz's poems shows a different course of development. Though Miłosz's poetry evoked some interest among translators, the poet himself assumed at quite an early stage almost complete control over the translation of his poems. He has co-authored most of the translations and he translated a number himself. In effect Miłosz established a consistent model of translating his poems. Avoiding idioms that would relate readers to their own tradition of poetry, Miłosz managed to forge his own poetic idiom in English, as well as to preserve his poetic voice in translation. Although renderings of Miłosz's poems were at times openly criticised, on the whole the translated body of Miłosz's poetic work did not lead to the confusions characteristic of the reception of Brodsky's poetry. The critics' discernible hesitations in
recognising Miłosz as a poetic master arose principally from Miłosz's "apartness" from the prevailing poetic modes.

The difference in the role which the translated text played in the receptions of both poets was also due to factors not related to the problem of rendering the text from one language to another. Miłosz's poetry, unavailable in translation for a considerable time, gained the interest of a limited circle of specialists dealing with his poetry in the original. The first critical opinions about the text of his poems were formulated on the basis of the original poems before they became translated and appeared in English. In contrast, from the beginning, translations of Brodsky's poetry formed the basis of the critical statements and opinions about his literary achievements. Though a number of critics conversant with his writing knew Russian, from the beginning criticism referred the reader to the text already available in translation. Over the years, however, it became obvious that the high opinion about his poetic achievement in Russian was not borne out by the English translations and critics had to turn to the Russian original. While in the reception of Miłosz's poetry translated text has often played a secondary role to the original Polish poem, Brodsky's reception may be characterized by an inconsistent treatment of relations between the original and its translation as a basis for critical reflection.

11. As the names of Miłosz and Brodsky acquired increasing recognition and value in the Western world, and as the number of
their works available both in the original and in translation grew, there gradually emerged what may be termed an interpretive community dealing with their writings. An analysis of the interpretive community -- in this case primarily, though not exclusively, the critics who wrote about the two poets, should then focus on the origin and background of the critics, and their knowledge of the common memories of the speakers of the languages in question and the respective literary traditions. I will treat these elements as major factors shaping the critics' ideas of the text and contributing to the dynamics of "internal mediation" that took place within the community. And since both poets took an active role in the mediation process, not only by translating or co-translating their poems into English, but also addressing prospective readers directly (including critics), their role will also be taken into account.

The first group of critics presenting Miłosz's works to the reader in the 1950s focused entirely on his most recent works in prose, especially on The Captive Mind. Since the group consisted mostly of critics of Anglo-American origin, the poetry of Miłosz was not only unavailable to them but was not in the sphere of their interest. Nevertheless, although they referred to Miłosz-the-poet on the basis of his prose, their writing contributed significantly to the image of the poet developed during the pre-textual reception.

The second group of mediators which began to introduce Miłosz's poetry in the 1960s consisted mostly of critics of Polish origin living in the West. All of them knew Polish and
read Miłosz's poetry in the original. Their writings were thus based on the text unavailable at that time to the speakers of English. Their mediation was aimed, not so much at the general audience (which had no access to any volume of Miłosz's poems in translation), but rather at a limited circle of specialists, whose articles appeared in periodicals of limited circulation. It is rather difficult to evaluate the impact their critical attempts had on the wider interpretive community (English, American and Canadian critics and scholars dealing with literature), since there are no clear references to their writings in any later reviews of Miłosz's works. Nevertheless, as has been noted, Contosky's essay was the first attempt to trace Miłosz's preoccupations with the moral values of the contemporary world and to treat Miłosz's prose and poetry as a unity. A similar approach did not become common among other critics (especially those of non-Polish origin) until the late 1970s. Czaykowski's essay was the first critical work in English based on a close reading of a poem by Miłosz in translation; it was the first attempt to introduce Miłosz's poetry in comparison to the two contemporary Polish poets best known in English-speaking countries, that is, Różewicz and Herbert. Folejewski's article was the first attempt to provide a comprehensive account of Miłosz's poetic development.

The appearance of the Selected Poems did not constitute a breakthrough in the critical treatment of Miłosz's poetry. The contents of the volume, the relatively small number of poems which it comprised, and even its composition, supported the
formulas introduced in the early phase based on Miłosz’s prose, and did not seem to require any significant change in the critical focus. Reviews of the collection, mainly written by critics of Anglo-American origin (an indication of the growing interest in Miłosz’s poetry among readers in the West), basically repeated previous critical formulas and did not attempt any close reading of the texts.

The main strands in the presentation of Miłosz’s work changed a few years later, in the late 1970s, when at least two new groups of mediators began to be active. The somewhat unexpected appearance of their articles in print shows the limitations of analyzing mediation on the basis of the written text only, and may be treated as a sign of mediation occurring in non-written form. The first group consisted mostly of Miłosz’s former students who were introduced orally, in lectures, conversations and readings, to his own poetry and to contemporary Polish poetry in general by the poet himself. At the same time, essays written by Polish critics living in Poland began to appear in English translation.

Miłosz’s former students were raised in the prospective reader’s culture and language and hence their point of view was already a mediation between their own cultural memory and expectations as well as the poet’s view of his works. In contrast, Polish critics living in Poland, whose essays began to appear in English translation in the late 1970s, hardly took into account the English reader’s expectations and their opinions reflected the "Polish" view of Miłosz’s poetry. Their mediation
was important at the stage when Miłosz was highly regarded as a poet, yet little of his poetry was available in translation; it lost much of its significance with the increasing availability of translations.

The Polish perspective became less important with Western critics' growing interest in Miłosz's writings. Since 1951 Miłosz's poetry has been written outside his homeland and the poet has been exposed to the culture of his English-speaking readers, including their cultural memory, and thus the purely Polish perspective was of only limited value to the Western reader. Furthermore, Miłosz's consecutive literary prizes recognized his contribution to world literature, making the Polish perspective on his writings of limited interest. Moreover, the majority of Polish critics were unable to take part in the most important discussions then taking place about East European poetry and about Miłosz's poetic achievement as seen from the Western point of view. In fact, beginning in the early 1980s, only critics of Polish origin living in the West were able to have an impact on the reception process.

Apart from these two groups of mediators in the 1970s, a group of critics, who were active in introducing and promoting "translated poetry," began to publish critical essays on and translations of poetry of Eastern European poets, including the poetry of Miłosz. Their interest resulted, at least partially, from their assessment of the situation of their native Anglo-American poetry which, in their opinion, was stagnant and uninteresting or inconsequential at the time. The group, which
began to form a critical current in the 1960s and 1970s, clearly
directed its interest to East European writers. Thus the
mediation focused on the model of poetry based on historical and
political experiences that, in their opinion, made East European
poetry more interesting than the poetry in their own language.
Their mediation differed from that of the other groups since they
did not focus on Miłosz’s works alone, but introduced him along
with other East European writers. Moreover, their critical quest
for a poetry with social and political values that were
apparently lost in their native literature set them apart from
the other groups. However, a similar point of view on Anglo-
American poetry was presented by at least some of Miłosz’s other
critics, among them some of his former students. It should be
added that Miłosz himself expressed directly and indirectly
negative opinions about modern poetry (including poetry in the
English language) both in his critical writings and in some of
his poems.

Beginning in the early 1980s, the mainstream of mediation
was formed by Anglo-American critics drawing their ideas from
translations; hence they dealt with the text that was already a
mediation. The Nobel Prize was followed by publication and
republication of several of Miłosz’s literary works, and critics
who had to rely on translation only were able to acquire a fairly
comprehensive knowledge of Miłosz’s poetic oeuvre. In addition,
several essays giving Miłosz’s authorial interpretations of his
poetry, as well as collections of conversations with Miłosz
became available to English-speaking critics which enabled them
to deal with Miłosz's own views of his works as well as their philosophical and literary background. Perhaps the most important fact, however, to stimulate the discussion of Miłosz's poetry was the impact East European poetry began to have on literature in English speaking countries. The growing availability of Miłosz's works in translation and his high reputation, along with the rising critical recognition of the importance of East European literature for the development of Anglo-American poetry, gradually made Miłosz an important international literary figure.

There were also groups of mediators who escape classification because of their origin and major literary preoccupations. This category comprises critics who were also translators (or co-translators) of Miłosz's poetry and who based their opinions on a thorough knowledge of his texts. Their mediation was twofold: they helped to make Miłosz's poetry available in translation and they provided critical treatment of Miłosz's writing. Another separate category of mediators not affiliated with any specific critical orientation comprised critics who were also poets. Their judgement of Miłosz's poetry was usually influenced by their view of poetry manifested in their own literary writings.

This overview of the different groups of mediators, who presented different points of view on Miłosz's poetry and used different arguments while introducing and evaluating his works, shows that the mediation took place not only between the text and the reader but also between different groups of mediators. The result was the concurrent appearance of critical texts aimed at
different types of readers. Criticism based on original texts unavailable to the general reader was primarily addressed to specialists in literary studies who did not necessarily know Polish. These specialists, in turn, based their understanding, and thus a further mediation, on already available criticism and texts published in translation.

In the case of Brodsky’s poetry, there was no such variety of critical groups taking part in the process of mediation. From the beginning, Brodsky and his poetry were promoted almost exclusively by Anglo-American critics; Russian criticism, in as far as it dealt with Brodsky at all, had almost no impact on critics in the West. The presentation of a "Russian" view of Brodsky was limited, for almost twenty years, to the characterization given by the Soviet authorities during the poet’s trial, and Akhmatova’s highly positive opinion of his poetry. Only in the 1980s did critics of Russian origin (almost exclusively living in the West) begin to publish in English their works devoted to Brodsky. However, their critical essays and books were aimed not at the general public but primarily at the specialists. Their works played the role of mediation aimed at the interpretive community and were especially important because of the uncertainty prevailing at that time about the quality of translations of Brodsky’s poetry. Differently than in Miłosz’s case, the original text became an important basis for critical reflection -- not because of lack of translations, but because of what was or could have been lost in the process of translation.

Also differently than in the case of Miłosz, the division
between Brodsky's critics was not drawn along the line of their origin, but, rather, depended on their acquaintance with Russian language and culture. To a large extent this was due to the fairly wide knowledge of Russian (at least in comparison with the knowledge of Polish) and of the Russian literary traditions in the academic community. The second major factor contributing to differences between the two groups of critics was their view of contemporary Anglo-American poetry.

Since Brodsky's poetry was presented in translation almost concurrently with its appearance in Russian, critics not knowing Russian could gain an idea of Brodsky's poetic development, and hence the question of the quality of translation was much more important than the question of the availability of translations and of selection. From the beginning critics referred to the artistic values of Brodsky's poetry, and hence the question of how well they were preserved (or represented) in translation was of considerable relevance. All these factors, along with the better availability of Brodsky's poetry to the readers in the West than to readers in his homeland, made the process of reception significantly different from that of Miłosz. In fact, the readership of Brodsky was considerably wider, and the number of critics writing about him was much larger in the West than in the Soviet Union, thus making the reception of Brodsky's works in English-speaking countries more important than their reception in his homeland.

Another important difference between the interpretive communities of Miłosz and Brodsky is marked by the interest their
poetry evoked among Anglo-American poets and concerns the degree of the critical mediation performed by critics who were poets themselves. Brodsky's poetry was referred to and promoted by Anglo-American poets primarily in the pre-textual phase of the reception process and, especially, by Western "underground" poets of the late 1960s. His first noted collection of poems was introduced and highly evaluated by Auden, one of the major twentieth-century poets. Later, although Brodsky's poetry gained interest and was translated by several noted Anglo-American poets, they seldom commented on Brodsky's poetry as critics. The most prominent critics who were also poets writing about Brodsky's poetry in the later stages of the reception process were other East European poets in exile, such as Stanisław Barańczak and Thomas Venclova.

The critical interest of Anglo-American poets in Miłosz's poetry shows a different course of development. While initially there was almost no criticism devoted to Miłosz written by poets, over the years a group of critics emerged who were themselves poets and who were active as promoters and critics of Miłosz's poetry; the group constitutes a separate category of Miłosz's interpretive community. This active interest of Anglo-American poets in Miłosz's poetry became especially noticeable and significant in the 1980s.

All these factors contributed to major differences in the way in which Miłosz's and Brodsky's works were received. The overview of both receptions shows that the reception of Miłosz is marked by the gradual overcoming of various formulas based on
critical description rather than on a thorough knowledge of the text. In contrast, criticism devoted to Brodsky's poetry can be described as a constant search for appropriate categories of description of his poetry including its artistic values. In fact, Brodsky's reception was in many respects similar to the reception of a poet writing in the reader's language.

12. Critics not only play the role of mediators but are, of course, readers themselves. Their opinions reflect their own readings and horizons of expectations, as well as their sense of the horizon of expectations of prospective readers. In fact, the term "readers" comprises several different categories of readers. In the communication model, Reader is described as a receiver of the text and thus is defined by his relation to the text. However, in practice, relations between a reader and the text can be of at least three different types. Critics as readers should be treated differently than the readers belonging to the category called "the reader," which in turn should be differentiated from general readership. As Michał Głowinski noted with respect to the first distinction:

Here is the basic problem: in what way is a critic, producing interpretations, different from a reader, who, in reading a text, is under no obligation to explain it or to comment upon it, and generally satisfies himself with a modest, unassuming comprehension, for his own use and his own measure. (1979, 78)

Głowinski pointed out that a critic differs from the reader because of his position of mediator between the text and the reader. A critic mediates between the literary text and a group
of readers who share the same (or at least a similar) system of values and codes.

The overview of the reception process of Miłosz and Brodsky shows that one should distinguish between at least two categories of readers (in addition to readers as critics), namely: the reader and general readership. The reader is here understood as a category that refers to a group of prospective or actual readers of literary works. The reader's interest in a specific writer is directed to his works, and his reading should be seen in terms of the aesthetic reception of the text. On the other hand, general readership as a category is understood here as applying to people who, although they read books, do not show any particular interest in reading poetry or artistic prose. Their interest in a specific writer usually comes from factors external to his writings, such as, for instance, the political circumstances of his life and writing or literary prizes. Readers of this kind are not oriented toward the literary text and their reception of a writer usually has an extra-textual and, at best, an efferent character. In fact, the major differences between these three categories of readers arise from the differences in their relation to the text and its substitutes.

Since the critical mediation depends, at least to some extent, on the anticipated reader, major differences in criticism arise from aiming at different categories and groups of readers. The internal mediation taking place within the interpretive community differs from the critical mediation directed at the reader and the mediation directed at general readership.
My overview of the reception process shows that for a long time the circumstances that brought the name of either of the two poets to the readers' attention usually involved elements of what I have called a pre-textual reception. With the growing recognition of the two poets and the increasing availability of their poetry in translation, critics became more aware of the actual text and elements substituting for the text began to play a secondary role. However, since the names of Miłosz and Brodsky were brought to the attention of the reading public not only because of their published books, the critics referred constantly to the codes of description that were already established in pre-textual stages of the reception process. This was especially striking in the later stages of the reception process when the Nobel Prize brought the name of each of the poets to the attention of the general readership and the elements of biography and politics were constantly present in the notices and articles which appeared in the newspapers. With the growing recognition of their poetic achievements, both poets were presented to the reading public in different ways, depending on the category of the addressee.

The critical writings devoted to Miłosz and Brodsky may be thus divided into categories based on the criterion of aiming at one of the two groups of readers. Criticism directed to the reader has literary character, while criticism directed to the general public should be described as para-literary. The two categories are defined in accordance with their treatment of the literary text and its substitutes. From the point of view of this
study, para-literary criticism is of considerably lesser importance, since it usually repeats the arguments used in the initial stage of the reception process or borrows them from criticism proper. The initial stage is usually characterized by a very limited interest in the poet's writings as well as a very limited availability of the text, and thus critics use general formulas of description to gain the interest of potential rather than actual readers. However, para-literary criticism is an important sign of the rising popularity and importance of a writer, since the occasions on which he is brought to the attention of the general public have a character secondary to his writing. The important difference between the formulas developed in the early stage of the reception process by literary criticism and formulas of what I call para-literary criticism does not lie in their character but in their different functions. While, from the point of view of literary criticism, elements other than the text are treated as substitutes for the text, para-literary criticism does not direct readers to the actual text, but satisfies their interest in the specific writer by providing general information about him and his writing. Thus the fact that the text is replaced by its contexts has a different function. In literary criticism contexts are used as substitutes because there are few or no translations and they help to establish codes of further reception of the text. In para-literary criticism the elements of extra-textual reception, that is, those focusing on contexts, are more interesting to the addressee than the text itself; it is the interest of the general public, rather than the
stage of the knowledge of the author and his work, that is the major factor contributing to the use of formulas which are remote from the text.

In the context of this study, para-literary criticism and the interest of the general public in the two poets is of marginal importance. The most obvious value of para-literary criticism is found in the appearance of criticism aimed at the general readership, that is, as an indication of the rising general interest in the writers in question. However, its nature, secondary to literary criticism proper, and the lack of interest in the text makes it of marginal importance for the understanding of the poetry itself and of the evolution of the aesthetic reception.

In my description of Miłosz and Brodsky's reception I have focused on literary criticism aimed at the reader, assuming that critics have to take into account the horizon of expectations of the reader. Critics are the only readers whose readings are available for perusal and analysis. Their critical writings can be treated as a basis for the reconstruction of the expectations of the reader, his cultural memory, interests and systems of values. Any attempt at discussing the reception not recorded in written form by a representative group of readers would have to be speculative.

13. Since the literary text differs from all other kinds of text because of its literary, and thus aesthetic character, the most important question of Miłosz and Brodsky's reception
concerns its aesthetic character. To discuss the aesthetic character of reception of literary texts, the communication model has to undergo a further modification if it is to account for features usually absent in the process of non-literary communication. In some structuralist and semiotic theories (for example, Mukařovsky, Lotman) a text which is literary is usually called an artistic text, an aesthetic object or aesthetic sign. However, theoreticians have argued that what makes a literary text or any artistic product (or sometimes a non-artistic object) an aesthetic object is the response of the perceiver, which concretizes the aesthetic potential of the object in the process of its perception and cognition. The concretization of the aesthetic potential of an object is sometimes called aesthetic experience. Since concretization of the aesthetic potential implies an active role on the part of the Reader, who must bring to the artistic object his culturally endowed ability (such as codes and norms) to constitute it as an aesthetic object, the Reader of a literary text has to be re-named in such a way as to distinguish him from Reader as a mere decoder of the non-artistic features of the text. Thus both the Message (Text) and the Receiver (Reader) have to be redefined as Artistic Object and Aesthetic Reader respectively.

By the term aesthetic I mean a reception directed not only to the thematic or informative value of the text (as in the case of efferent reception) but "the full absorption in the rich experience of thought and feeling during the reading itself." (Clifford 1991, 20).
In his paper "The Significance of Aesthetics," Jan Mukařovsky makes clear that, in his view, the discipline of aesthetics embraces with its interest phenomena which are not limited to artistic objects only:

Aesthetics itself, as the general philosophy of aesthetics, serves the function of a connecting link, and... its interest goes far beyond the realm of art itself.... [While] instances of aesthetic systems being founded on the premises of a particular art, though they include the whole range of aesthetics, will always recur....aesthetics stands on a great many boundary lines: it relates to various aspects of practical life, to art and artistic creation, and to concrete studies of the individual arts. (1977, 27)

Nevertheless he argues that, from the point of view of aesthetics, art should be treated as a separate category in accordance with the intentional character of its objects:

Here we are no longer dealing with phenomena which acquire an aesthetic function only as a concomitant to the main function, and which sometimes acquire it accidentally, but with products created with the intention that aesthetic effect be their main task. (1977, 24)

According to Mukařovsky, the aesthetic value of the text has a potential character which becomes concretized in the act of reading. The reading, in turn, always depends on the codes available to the reader. Thus, in the words of Jurij Striedter, the "act of aesthetic concretization and valuation is possible only because the perceiving subject refers to the system of aesthetic norms and aesthetic values shared with the other subjects of the historical and social collective to which he or she belongs." (1989, 103) According to Mukařovsky, the aesthetic value of the literary work resides in the conglomeration of extra-aesthetic values and is "nothing other, actually....than a summary term for the totality of their interrelations."
(Striedter 1989, 103) But it is precisely the interrelations, the way a work is made, that constitutes the aesthetic potential of an artistic object.

Efferent reading, that is, reading principally for the informative value of a literary work, differs from aesthetic reading by its limited character, but the efferent factor (understood broadly) may be, and one can safely assume, often is, present in aesthetic reading as one of the elements of the full spectrum of absorption in the act of aesthetic reception. The aesthetic reception is actually a conglomeration of responses to various elements of the literary text. Because of its artistic character, a literary work is commonly evaluated in terms of artistic value. By artistic value I will mean here specifically aesthetic qualities of the work of art or aesthetic potential of the text which become realized in the process of aesthetic reading. Consequently, critical evaluations of the artistic values of Miłosz and Brodsky’s poetry will be treated here as evaluations of the aesthetic potential of their works.

Critical texts devoted to Miłosz and Brodsky and their writings fall into three broad categories: book reviews, critical articles and essays, and scholarly works of literary and interpretive analysis. The aim of each of these categories of critical writings is different and involves a different approach to the literary text, and thus the information they provide about the aesthetic potential of the text and the aesthetic experience of the reader is also different. Using reviews, critical articles and studies as a means of ascertaining that aesthetic reception
has, indeed, taken place, may be viewed as problematic, since the aesthetic experience is never given as such, but is only reflected in critical discourse. However, it can be argued that there are at least three types of statements found in critical literature which may be taken as evidence of aesthetic reception. In the first place, there are instances of impressionistic, laudatory, appreciative responses to individual texts or to their features. Second, there are distinctive evaluative statements based on formal and interpretive analysis, close reading, and comparison. Third, the nature of formal and interpretive analysis, such as interest in the way a work is made, questions of style, imagery, and in general the question of the literariness of texts is in itself an indication of aesthetic response to the text. Whereas the first type of statements is characteristic of book reviews, the other two are usually found in critical articles and scholarly studies. While all of them can be taken as evidence of the aesthetic reception, it may be argued that not all critical responses record the critics' view of the artistic value of the text and of its aesthetic potential, and hence critical writings have a limited value as material for the analysis of the aesthetic reception of literary texts. In fact, the character of the aesthetic response to the writings of Miłosz and Brodsky recorded in criticism depended to a very large extent on the type of critical text in question. Significantly, there are only a few in-depth analyses of the artistic value of Miłosz and Brodsky's texts. While, as we have seen, the reception of Brodsky consisted for a long time almost exclusively of reviews
of his various volumes of poems, reviews of Miłosz's volumes of poems do not constitute a major part of the criticism devoted to his writings. Most critical work devoted to Miłosz falls into the category of critical essays and studies, although their number is relatively small until the late 1970s.

Notwithstanding the fact that the reception of the two poets in the West began before the translated texts of their poems were available to the reader, a number of critics knowing Polish and Russian could, and did, write about their poetry on the basis of their readings of the original texts. Principally, it is in these articles that the reader could initially find opinions about the artistic values of Miłosz and Brodsky's poetry.

Miłosz and Brodsky's reception by the English-speaking reader raises the question of what was perceived as an aesthetic value of their poetry and how the aesthetic reception of their writing has developed over the years. Taking into account the distinctions made by Mukařovsky, we should identify extra-aesthetic values and their interrelations with elements from the text and its contexts. Since the aesthetic concretization always depends on aesthetic norms and values, there is also the question of the system of norms and values to which their writings were referred. Finally, there is also the question of the impact of the aesthetic readings of the text on the aesthetic values and codes of the readers (including critics).

When Brodsky was introduced to the English-speaking reader for the first time, the context of his native poetry was already
to some extent mediated to the reader. There existed codes according to which Brodsky was perceived as a continuator of the greatest tradition of modern Russian poetry. At the same time, his biography placed him among the Russian poets who stood for their beliefs embodied in their literary writings and who paid a high price for their beliefs. Thus, moral and artistic values were the most important elements of the aesthetic reception of Brodsky in the initial stage.

Unlike the response to other contemporary Russian poets, especially Yevtushenko and Voznesensky, the aesthetic response to Brodsky’s poems did not initially depend on the impact which the reading performance (public readings and Brodsky’s characteristic mode of incantation) had on the public, including the critics. It was the printed text rather than the recitation of his verse (including the sound effects of his poems) that was to gain the attention of the reader. Even in the pre-textual stage of the reception of Brodsky, the critics pointed out the artistic values of his poetry. However, in the absence of the text and because of the political circumstances that brought the poet’s name to the attention of the Western reader, critical reflection about the artistic values of Brodsky’s poems had, to a large extent, a political (or ideological) character. Artistic evaluation was usually associated with the apolitical character of Brodsky’s poems and with differences in poetic form and use of language between Brodsky and the most prominent Soviet poets. Brodsky himself repeatedly pointed out that the Russian language suffered acute damage under communism and that the way he treated language
came from the need to save his native tongue from the ravages of communist oppression.

From this point of view, the efforts of Kline who, as we have seen, published his translations of Brodsky's poems along with explanatory notes, are of special interest. Kline pointed out various elements of the personal situation of the poet at the time of the writing of a particular poem only marginally, trying instead to convey to the reader the artistic value of the text, as well as the inter-textual aspects of a given poem. The intertextuality of Brodsky's poems was conveyed by relating them to the poetry of Anglo-American poets familiar to the reader and by placing Brodsky in the tradition of the greatest Russian poets of the inter-war period. Kline referred the reader to already known texts that could act as a sort of substitute for the artistic values of Brodsky's poems and to the already mediated Western knowledge of modern Russian poetry. At the same time, he tried to make the reader aware of the fact that the aesthetic value of Brodsky's poems resided, to a large extent, in the tension between their content and form (which, one may add, is one of the most difficult features to preserve in translation).

A very different view regarding the aesthetic value of Brodsky's poems was expressed by Auden. Despite the fact that his opinion was formed on the basis of translations alone, Auden stated quite emphatically that the aesthetic qualities of Brodsky's poems were to be found outside of the resources of their language and did not depend on them. Auden saw these qualities in the metaphysical and religious character of
Brodsky's poetry and in the fact that Brodsky refers the reader not to the reality around him, but to eternal values. As far as Auden was concerned, translators of Brodsky's poems could hardly go wrong in conveying the qualities of his poetry.

Since there were few explicitly direct links between the events of Brodsky's life and the thematic matter of his poetry, it was rather the nature of the response to the injustice of the communist system, the remoteness from topical issues, and the search for eternal values that were treated as the most important moral and aesthetic qualities of Brodsky's writing. At the same time, almost all critics felt compelled to mention that a knowledge of the biography of the author was not necessary for the appreciation of his poetry, even if they usually began their reviews or articles with a short description of the persecution the poet had experienced in his homeland. As for the formal features of his poetry such as the play with traditional poetic forms and Brodsky's poetic use of language, they were not sufficiently preserved in translation and critics were unable to illustrate their views by means of close readings. Thus their remarks had often a general character and were to a large extent based on the already mediated knowledge of Russian poetry of the pre-war period.

The growing availability of the text and the problems with translations led to various inconsistencies and confusions in the search for the aesthetic values of Brodsky's poetry. Some critics started to question the mastery of Brodsky's poems and wondered whether their aesthetic values came from the original or from the
poetic work of the translator. Some critics even pointed out that what the reader of the translation appreciated was the poetry (or work) of the translator rather than Brodsky's poetry. Others criticized translators for their "second-hand versions." (Spender 1973, 916) In fact, critics seemed to be more concerned with the problem of translation than with the evaluation of Brodsky's poetry and their role as mediators between the text and the reader. Not surprisingly, the words of Robert Frost that "poetry is what is lost in translation" were widely quoted by critics writing about Brodsky's poetry.

Eventually, as a result of the inadequate character of translations, the texts available to the Anglo-American reader lost their importance for the evaluation of the artistic values of Brodsky's poems. To convey their aesthetic appreciation of Brodsky's poems some critics even referred to the impact that the sound of the original poems and the circumstances of the poet's life had on them.¹ Although in 1980 almost all of Brodsky's poems were already translated into English, at least some critics felt compelled to refer the reader to the impact the original poems had on them. As F.D. Reeve noted, they did not know "how to

¹ In 1980 in his review of A Part of Speech C. Brown wrote: In 1966 he (Brodsky) recited to me (wittily enough, just beneath the Kremlin walls) his then-unpublished elegy on the death of T.S.Eliot, and the deliberate echo of an earlier model, Auden's elegy on Yeats, was immediately perceptible. The form alone was speaking with its mute but unmistakable eloquence, and the Russian poet's moving lines extended to include two other great poets - tradition and the individual talent, as it were. (1980, 16)
persuade someone to believe" in their experience, "for these poems come in English (...) and that's like being in another country." (1981, 36)

The highest artistic value of Brodsky's poetry, as pointed out by the majority of critics, was to be found in the constant play with tradition. In practice, the appreciation of this feature was limited by the considerable differences in the cultural memory encoded in the text and the cultural memory of the Western reader. Even in the case of play with tradition well known to the Western reader (that is, Anglo-American poetry), the translated text had less value for the reader than the original, since the play took place not only on the level of content but also on the level of poetic structure. Consequently, pointing out that the translations were not doing justice to the originals, the critics emphasized that the artistic value of Brodsky's poems resided in the tension between the content and the form that depended on the resources of the language of the original and the memory of the speaker of this language.\(^1\) The critical mediation based on translations lost much of its significance, since the artistic values of Brodsky's poems were connected with the language in its poetic function, and as such were not preserved (or only partially preserved) in translation (in other words,

\(^1\) "By the unobtrusive means of meter alone Brodsky is (...) able to tie many knots of history and subversive emotion. The fine translation by George Kline preserves the halting march of the funeral procession(...)" noted C.Brown (1980, 16), thus pointing out that the difference in common memories of the speakers of the two languages as well as the possibilities given by the language of translation limited the "full spectrum" given to the reader of the original to some elements only presented to the Western reader."
there occurred a complete reversal of Auden’s opinion).

Not surprisingly, the critics began to differentiate an "ideal Russian reader" from an "ideal English reader" in terms of their receptivity to the form of Brodsky’s poems and in consequence in terms of their aesthetic receptions. Having in mind English-speaking readers, critics tended to explain the aesthetic values of Brodsky’s poems in terms of the poet’s attitude toward exile, longing, solitude and the insulting dilemmas of growing older, that is, by formulas based on content rather than on the more strictly poetic qualities of his poetry. Critics also tended to refer to a limited number of Brodsky’s poems, especially those that could be discussed in comparison to the artistic traditions of Anglo-American poetry.

The comparatively small number of works by Russian critics devoted to Brodsky’s poetry and their very limited (if any) impact on Anglo-American critics resulted in a relatively weak mediatory effect within the interpretive community. This situation left the reader without the possibility of knowing the aesthetic reaction of an "ideal Russian reader" to Brodsky’s poetry and made Anglo-American critics unable to act as mediators between already recorded aesthetic readings by native readers and English-speaking readers. This began to change only in the late 1980s with the appearance of academic studies of Brodsky’s poems based on the original texts and with the increasing number of critics of Russian origin presenting their critical analyses and interpretations to Western readers. Also, the fact that Brodsky’s essays written in English provided the Western reader, however
indirectly, with an authorial introduction to his poetry, was a factor stimulating the interest in the text of his poems.

Miłosz’s poetry, in contrast, gained the interest of his native criticism prior to the interest of Anglo-American critics. Although the text of his poems was initially not of interest to the reader in the West, the fact that Miłosz was a poet seemed to be of importance for the Western readers of his political works in prose.¹ Thus the name of poet was assigned in the West to Miłosz on the basis of his prose and of his recognition by native readers.

The reception of Miłosz’s first works in prose in the 1950s primarily had an efferent character because of the Western interest in political aspects of life in the Soviet Bloc. Artistic aspects of Miłosz’s works in prose gained little interest. Nevertheless, even in the initial stage, the reception of Miłosz’s prose works was not limited to efferent readings only. Although its aesthetic reception can initially be described only by extra-aesthetic values found to a large extent outside the literary text, Miłosz’s prose, especially some passages in The Captive Mind, over the years had an impact on the criteria used in the evaluation of contemporary poetry, including Miłosz’s own.

The most important elements of the aesthetic reception of Miłosz’s poetry for years were the personality of the poet, and

¹ The prolonged lack of translations of Miłosz’s poetry may be treated as proof of the lack or at best a very limited interest of Western readers in his poetry (and, for that matter, in Polish poetry in general).
the moral, philosophical and experiential values of his writings. Though there was a significant body of criticism by critics of Polish origin devoted to Miłosz's poetry which dealt with its artistic values, Anglo-American critics virtually ignored that aspect of Miłosz's writings. In its mainstream, the aesthetic reception of Miłosz's poetry was for years -- in fact until 1978, to a large extent a response to his works in prose.

Critical works devoted to Miłosz after the poet had been awarded the Neustadt Prize in 1978, not only grew in number but also constituted a "breakthrough" in the mainstream of criticism by overcoming the previous clichés and formulas. Nevertheless, Anglo-American critics still went on categorizing Miłosz's poetry rather than describing and analyzing the aesthetic potential of the text. Since they were limited in their ability to formulate their opinions without the help of those who could read Polish (only a selection of the poetry of Miłosz was available in translation before 1988), Western critics tended to produce new general categories to describe his poetry.

In many respects, criticism devoted to Miłosz between 1978 and 1988 (the year of the appearance of Miłosz's Collected Poems) had to face similar problems to that faced by the critics writing about Brodsky. High recognition of the poet among those who knew his works in the original as well as by a few of critics who based their opinion solely on translation, did not lead to major attempts at establishing adequate categories of description of his poetry in terms of its aesthetic potential for the English-speaking reader. The main difference in the case of Miłosz lay in
the fact that critical works by native speakers provided the Western reader with a knowledge of an aesthetic reading of Miłosz’s poems. However, because of the constant placing of Miłosz and of the artistic values of his poetry (which could not become an element of the aesthetic appreciation by Western readers) in the Polish cultural and literary traditions, translations of Polish criticism soon lost their importance for the reception of Miłosz in the West. Not surprisingly then, when the translations of Miłosz’s poems became available to the English-speaking reader in the mid-1970s, especially after Miłosz had been awarded the most prestigious literary prizes in 1978 and 1980, some critics began to question the artistic values of Miłosz’s poems. The gap between the poet’s high reputation, based on aesthetic readings of native speakers and some English-speaking critics who knew Polish, and the availability and quality of translations brought some confusion to the English-speaking reader.

In the case of Brodsky, a similar confusion resulted in a wave of critical evaluations of English translations of his poems and, finally, in an increasing importance of academic studies based on the Russian originals.

14. With the growing availability of and interest in the text, followed by the high recognition of Miłosz and Brodsky’s poetic achievements, critics had to take into account more than the political or efferent aspects of readers’ horizon of expectations. In effect, the reception process itself became a
subject of critical reflection.

Evaluating Miłosz's poetry in 1983, Helene J.F. de Aguilar focussed principally on the reception process and the weaknesses of Western aesthetic reception of his poems.

The predominant pattern in Miłosz's commentators is the expenditure of disproportionate amounts of critical energy in explaining just why the reader won't be able to appreciate the poetic miracle before him and must believe it anyway. (1983, 128)

The critic suggested that (irrespective of the actual qualities of Miłosz's original poems) the translations probably did not fully convey the artistic potential of Miłosz's original poems. However, a more important feature of the aesthetic reception of Miłosz's poetry was noted by D.J. Enright, who wrote:

[the difficulty with Miłosz lies less in understanding him than in establishing or recognising what one thinks or feels about him: not what the author says, but how the reader responds. (Enright 1988, 957).

Difficulties with the aesthetic reception of Miłosz's poetry should be seen as the consequence of the limitations of the horizon of expectations of the Western reader by extra-textual formulas as well as extra-aesthetic values found in the tension between the text and the outside reality. They can be also attributed to some extent to the artistic values of Miłosz's writings, particularly with respect to their apartness from the most prominent trends in Anglo-American poetry as well as, paradoxically, to the rising Western interest in contemporary Polish poetry. Critics noting the impact that East European, especially Polish poetry, had on Anglo-American poetry, often pointed out the connection between poetry and the life of the
nation; they were thus referring readers to the contexts rather than to poetic form. However, with the growing availability of Miłosz's poems in translations, Western critics became increasingly interested in the kinds of aesthetic reactions involved in the process of the reception of his poetry.\(^1\) The focus on context began later, in the early 1990s, to be seen by some critics, especially those involved in the discussion about the impact of contemporary East European poetry on Anglo-American poetry, as limiting the reader's ability to fully appreciate the art of Miłosz's poetry.

The issue of the insufficient critical interest in the question of the artistic qualities of Miłosz's poetry came to the surface most strikingly in the reviews of The Poet's Work, the first full-length critical study of Miłosz's works written by Anglo-American critics. Evaluating the book, Donald Davie observed:

> Tear any poet out of the poetic tradition that he belongs to (even if, like Blake, he mostly fights against that birthright), and you hand him over to the history of ideas - a perspective far more malleable, and more reassuring to most readers, than the history of poetry. (1993, 51)

Helen Vendler also noted that "[t]hematic analysis (...) is simply too feeble a tool with which to do justice to poetry such as..."

\(^1\)Describing his reactions to Miłosz's poem "Incantation" Seamus Heaney made clear that the impact the poem had on him involved its content along with "the artfulness of its diction, rhythm, and tone" (1986, 3) as well as the knowledge of the biography of the author and the contemporary history of his nation. Thus the "full spectrum" of feelings and thoughts involved in the aesthetic reading of Miłosz's poem in Heaney's case consisted of the impact of the poem's content, its form and of its contexts.
as Miłosz’s.” (1992, 45) Thus critics noted the limitations of presenting Miłosz’s poetry only through its extra-aesthetic values based on a thematic analysis of his poems. In fact, as Czaykowski noted in 1991, the reception of Miłosz’s poetry in English-speaking countries could be described as a series of paradoxes.

[A] poet who strove throughout his life to open poetic form to reality and ideas, has found himself in need of protesting that the attention he was receiving was not exactly doing justice to his achievements as a poet....[O]ne finds critics and discerning readers baffled by the apparent discrepancy between the claims made for him as a poet (...) and the difficulty of identifying unquestionable masterpieces. (p. 50)

In recent years, partly thanks to the discussions about the impact of contemporary Polish poetry on Anglo-American poetry, the question of the artistic value of Miłosz’s poems came fully to the surface of Western criticism. The other factor contributing to the significant change in the reception process - and to a shift from thematic to artistic interest, was the growing availability of translations and growing readers’ interest in contemporary Polish poetry, which allowed readers to see Miłosz’s poetry in comparison with works of other contemporary poets of the same literary tradition. In addition, as has been shown in chapter 5, in the eyes of some critics and poets, his poetry began to function as a model and standard of poetic value.

For the reception of Brodsky’s poetry, the most significant development was not a critical evaluation of the reception process but the question of the primary and secondary readers of
his works. While in the early stages of the reception critics assumed that English-speaking readers could appreciate Brodsky's poems in translation, it later became obvious that the original plays a crucial role for the appreciation of aesthetic values of Brodsky's poems because several features of his poetics cannot be conveyed in translation. The difficulties with rendering Brodsky's poems into English were explained, not only by differences between Russian and English languages, but also by different traditions of poetry. Differences in the common memories of English and Russian speakers in the case of Brodsky's poetry were thus not limited to the different acquaintance with reality to which Brodsky referred in his poems, but were related to different "meaning" of formal features of poems for the speakers of the languages in question. Not only was it not possible to preserve in translation the play with Russian tradition, but such play was also incomprehensible to the speakers of English.

In the later stages of the reception process, critics began to treat the Russian reader as a primary reader of Brodsky's poems. Not surprisingly, the mainstream of the recent criticism of Brodsky in the West is formed by scholarly writings based on the original poems which refer to elements more readily decoded by Russian readers. As for Brodsky's prose, some of the works available in both languages have begun to be treated as different texts, not only because they are written in different languages, but because they refer the reader to different literary traditions and thus to the cultural memory of speakers of the
language in question.

15. The reception processes of Miłosz and Brodsky show then a different course of development of the interest in the text as the basis of critical opinions and as a centre of the reader's attention. The reception of Miłosz's works in prose, from the beginning, was textual in nature, partly because of the interest in the informative layer of his writings. Though the artistic values of his prose were for a considerable period of time virtually ignored, it was precisely on the basis of his prose that critics gradually identified the most important extra-aesthetic values of Miłosz's literary works. In the case of Miłosz's poetry, the contexts of his writing (personal experiences of the author and historical experiences of his nation) became clearly defined and used as elements supporting a better understanding of his poems. Since the contexts of his poetry were presented to the Western reader by Miłosz himself in his prose works, the reception of his poetry had, at the same time, both a contextual and an intertextual character. For a considerable period of time Miłosz's poems were presented in translation according to the already mediated categories of the readers' understanding of the culture and experience they came from and in terms of their horizon of expectation until, in the 1980s and early 1990s, the contexts began to limit "the full spectrum" of the response and the text gained an interest because of its artistic values. Moreover, Miłosz's writings were now mediated to the Western reader within contexts that were
previously unknown or of little interest to the West; this development resulted in a significant shift in looking at contemporary literature from the point of view of the experiences it was based on. This point of view not only made East European poetry (and thus also Miłosz’s poetry) superior in the eyes of some critics to the literary context of the Western reader (namely contemporary Anglo-American poetry) but also revealed the limited Western receptivity to the artistic values of Miłosz’s poems. During the discussions in the late 1980s and early 1990s, critics began to place the text of Miłosz’s poems in the centre of interest and to see his poetry in the context of its native literary traditions. Of importance here was also the fact that critics began to see the relatively traditional but very distinctive form of Miłosz’s poems as innovative, in contrast to the constant experiments with form in contemporary poetry.

Brodsky’s poetry, on the other hand, was described in a variety of literary and non-literary contexts, depending on the most prominent critical interest at a given time. In contrast to Miłosz’s poetry that for years was not evaluated by Western critics with regard to the artistic development of the poet, Brodsky’s poetry was presented to the reader in its development. The consecutive volumes of his verse were evaluated in terms of his poetic evolution and its potential for further change. Critics traced not only the intertextual character of his poems, comparing them with the poetry of some Anglo-American poets and placing Brodsky in the tradition of his native literature, but also focused on the intertextuality within the scope of his own
writings. Over time and with the consecutive changes in Brodsky's attitude to translating, the translated poetry lost its importance as the main textual component of the communication process, and descriptions of Brodsky's poetic achievement had to be supported by drawing on the knowledge of the original poems. His poetry in the original not only gained the attention of academic criticism, but in recent years has become the subject of intertextual academic studies focusing on allusions to other Russian literary works on all levels of the text.
CONCLUSION

By examining the criticism devoted to Miłosz and Brodsky I presented the development of interest in Czesław Miłosz and Josif Brodsky and their writings in English-speaking countries. The material collected for the study enabled me to describe and analyze the nature of the reception of the two writers over a period of over thirty years. It allowed me to discuss and assess the impact on the reception of a number of factors which, although extrinsic to the critical reception itself, influenced its course and character. These factors included the contribution of both writers to the reception process, the role of translation, the political context, and the growing interest in East European poetry.

While being theoretically informed, my work does not attempt to be a study in literary theory. Nor is it an attempt to apply a particular reader-oriented theory to a body of critical writings. During the course of my research it became clear to me that if I were to do so consistently, I would be unable to present the reception in its development or to deal with it comprehensively. However, my analysis of the collected material does carry some implications for reader-oriented theories.

The question of the role of the reader in the "activation" of the literary text became, especially beginning with the 1960s, one of the main issues of modern literary theory. Nevertheless, although in the last thirty years many researchers and scholars
have devoted their works to the question of readers' participation in the literary communication, theoretical integration of their various points of view and approaches has not yet been achieved. The two main theories which focus on the reader, while being both speculative rather than empirical in character, differ significantly. The theory of aesthetic response (reader-response theory) is primarily concerned with the nature and the extent of the reader's contribution to the text, and it ranges from denying the text any significant power over the reader's response (Bleich) to viewing its structure as constitutive of the reader's response (Iser); thus the various approaches differ in the way in which they treat the components of the interaction between the reader and the text. The theory of reception (or, more precisely, the theory of aesthetics of reception) "always deals with existing readers, whose reactions testify to certain historically conditioned experiences of literature." (Iser 1978, x)

In addition to the reception school of literary theory, which was developed mainly in Germany, and whose most prominent representative has been H.J. Jauss, and the various reader-response theories, such as those of Fish, Holland, Bleich, Culler and Iser, there is yet another strand of reader-oriented research, namely the empirical investigation (sometimes by means of controlled experiment) of the nature of reading. Some of the representatives of this approach have addressed the question of how literary works are "processed" and cognized when they are read.

One of the problems with the application of the concepts of
these theories in empirical studies such as mine lies in the lack of consensus among researchers with regard to the respective roles played by the text and the reader in the interaction that occurs between them. The underlying reason, to put it in the words of Jane P. Tompkins, is the fact that in reader-response criticism "reading and writing join hands, change places, and finally become distinguishable only as two names for the same activity." Furthermore, while

an emphasis on the reader tends first to erode and then to destroy the objective text, there is an increasing effort on the part of reader-oriented critics to redefine the aims and methods of literary study (1980, x)

and to use "the idea of the reader as a means of producing a new kind of textual analysis." (1980, xi) My study, in contrast, focuses almost exclusively on critical responses to the text, only few of which have been close readings of particular works.

Making full use of the reader-response and reception theories was further complicated by the fact that the critical material which constitutes the evidential base of my study has posed questions which have not been taken sufficiently into account by these theories. The reception of Miłosz and Brodsky began with a pre-textual stage, prior to the appearance of their poetry in translation and at least initially had an extra-aesthetic character. Even when the text of their works became available to the Western readers, the attention paid to extra-textual factors remained strong. The text that eventually became available to readers was not the original text but its translation and the reception was based to a large extent on translations and not on
the originals. The translation and the original always differ in some respects and since at least some critics (and readers) based their opinion on the original while others relied on the translation, the critical response was based on two different types of texts, one of which was a mediated text.

Three other features have made the application of reader-oriented theories of only limited value. My study of the reception of Miłosz's and Brodsky's works deals primarily with the reception of poetry, while most reader-oriented approaches have so far concentrated on the reception of literary prose. Both authors took an active role in the reception process not only as translators or co-translators of their works but also by commenting on them in various literary and non-literary writings. And finally, although the literature on what the literary critic should do is enormous, little useful theorizing has been done so far on critics as readers, and my study deals primarily with the writings of critics.

II

While the major reader-response theories focus on the reading as an individual process involving personal reactions and experiences, critical writings are seldom accounts of merely personal readings, although of course critics do bring personal feelings and interests to their readings. Nevertheless, what makes their readings literary criticism is precisely their un-individualized character; their readings have to have certain
features without which they would not be classified as criticism. Thus the question of what kind of reading is documented in critical works is not at all simple, and any attempt to answer it fully would require more than one kind of analysis.

Among the various reader-oriented theories, Stanley Fish's approach seems at first sight the most useful as a way of conceptualizing the material studied in my work. I have in mind his concept of "interpretive community" and the related notion of "interpretive strategies". However, an analysis of the actual "interpretive community" involved in the reception of Miłosz and Brodsky's poetry in English-speaking countries reveals features that are not taken into account by Fish.

The role of critics in the literary communication may be defined as that of mediators between the literary text on the one hand, and the reader on the other. A successful performance of this role depends, at least to some extent, on both sides sharing a similar system of codes (including language) and values. Since translation itself is, as we have seen, a mediation between the original text and the linguistic and poetic potential of the target language, translators also play the role of mediators (with each translation involving both interpretation and re-coding). In the case of cross-cultural mediation there is also the question of what Lotman called "the common memory" of readers within a linguistic culture. Cross-cultural reception involves mediation between the "common memory" recorded in the original text and that of the readers. This mediation is performed by critics as well as by
translators. In practice the interpretive community consists not only of critics but also of translators.

Furthermore, the overview of the various groups of mediators presenting different points of view on Miłosz and Brodsky's poetry, and using different arguments while introducing and evaluating their works, shows that the mediation took place not only between the text and the reader but also between different groups of mediators. Moreover, since Miłosz and Brodsky's works were written in a language not known to the reader, the communication process involved at least two (or more) texts, namely the original and its translation or translations. Criticism based on original texts was primarily addressed to specialists in literary studies who did not necessarily know the language of the original poems. These specialists, in turn, based their understanding, and thus a further mediation, on already available criticism and texts published in translation. And since both Miłosz and Brodsky took an active role in the reception process, not only by translating or co-translating their poems into English, but also by addressing prospective readers (including critics) directly, their role as mediators has also to be taken into account. Since the differences between critics were not limited to different interpretive strategies but, as we have seen, were drawn along several different lines, the notions of the interpretive community and of interpretive strategies as understood by Stanley Fish show their limited value in the case of a community of mediators of translated poetry.

Despite the fact that the concepts of interpretive community
and interpretive strategies played a crucial role in Stanley Fish's reader-oriented theory, their proponent "has never made clear what an interpretive community is, how its constituency might be determined, or what could be the source of its...power." (Scholes 1985) In adopting the term for an empirical investigation I have, I hope, given it a more definite and less abstract meaning by showing the considerable diversity of the group of critics and translators involved. The fact that, for instance, a number of critics writing about Miłosz and Brodsky have been bilingual, disposes of Fish's readiness to see the sharing of a language as a constituent feature of an interpretive community. Lotman's notion of the "common memory" seems more apposite in this context.

It may also be argued that it is possible for an interpretive community to employ different interpretive strategies while sharing a common interest and performing similar functions, such as mediation or evaluation. Finally, an analysis of the reception of Miłosz and Brodsky's poetry shows very clearly the crucial role of the text in the process of mediation and interpretation. With the gradual emergence of translations, critics not knowing the language of the original began to approach and understand Miłosz's poetry in a way in which critics who read his poetry in the original had done many years before. In the case of Brodsky, the "untranslatability" of several features of his poems enabled critics to discuss in depth the artistic potential of his poems and criticism had to turn to the original poems. Thus one may conclude that the role of the text and the actual internal dynamics of the process of reception
are of greater significance for a further development of reception theory than the fairly abstract notion of interpretive community.

III

Another of the concepts of reader-oriented theories that proved its applicability (however limited) in the course of my study is the notion of "horizon of expectation." The concept was developed by H.J. Jauss and used in many of his works as well as in works of his followers. Understood as "the nexus of readers' anticipations with respect to a given literary work" (Perkins 1992, 25), the concept allowed researchers to treat responses to a literary work within a given time as possessing a relative unity. The changes in the horizon of expectations were then seen over fairly long periods of time and the term was generally used in studies dealing with the literature of the past.

Although the concept includes not only literary but also broadly social aspects, Jauss focused primarily on the literary horizon of expectations and was almost solely interested in the aesthetic character of reception. In his studies Jauss reconstructed the "horizon of expectations" from critical responses to the given literary work, as well as from the literary work itself, which enabled him to find coherence in the reception of a given period.

My study shows the importance of both literary and extra-literary factors for the reception process. As we have seen,
Western readers' interest toward Miłosz and Brodsky's works were initially determined by the degree of the acquaintance with the poets' native literary traditions and by the international situation. While the first factor had a literary character, the second was of a political, ideological and broadly cultural nature. My study also shows that in the reception of the two poets the importance of the literary factor has grown over the years, and that this development was directly related to the availability of Miłosz and Brodsky's works in translation. In the case of Miłosz, the growing interest in contemporary Polish poetry was also a factor which had a significant impact on expectations toward his works. Thus the horizon of expectations was evolving over the years as part of the dynamics of the reception process. This formation and evolution of the horizon of expectations (from largely efferent to principally aesthetic) is one of the most interesting aspects of the reception of both poets. Moreover, my study shows that as a result of the diversity of the "interpretive community" and the simultaneous impact of the original text and its translations on the critical response, there existed at the same time more than one horizon of expectations.

The simultaneous existence of different horizons of expectations, not taken into account by Jauss, was also the result of the fact that translations often differed significantly from the originals, which led in turn to differences in critical opinions and thus horizons of expectations. Moreover, there existed for a considerable time a significant disparity between the horizons of
expectations formed in the pre-textual stage of the reception and those derived later from the perusal of the two poets' writings. Jauss's notion has also clear limitations for studies involving obvious "misreadings" and erroneous ideas which require and undergo corrections after a more thorough reading of the text or after the appearance of a sufficient number of translations. Jauss does not seem to take sufficiently into account the fact that the horizons of expectations reconstructed from critical works may differ significantly from that which may be derived from the literary text. Furthermore, the limitations of the horizon of expectations toward East European poetry resulting from various descriptive formulas show that applying Jauss's concept to the reception of East European poets would prove not only the remoteness of the critical expectations from the literary text but also the negative impact of some horizons of expectations on the reception. In short, a concept that blends different aspects together (text and reader's responses, literary and extraliterary aspects) rather than distinguishing between them has only a limited analytical value.

To show the development of the horizon of expectations I had to use a theoretical concept that would let me distinguish between the literary text and responses to it as well as between literary and extraliterary character of the responses. Thus for the analysis of the aesthetic reception of Miłosz and Brodsky's works in English speaking countries I used Mukařovsky's point of view on the literary work as an aesthetic object. This enabled me to distinguish between efferent and aesthetic readings and to focus
primarily in the analytical part of my work on the latter. According to Mukařovsky, the aesthetic reaction to the literary text is a conglomeration of responses to literary and extraliterary factors and this allowed me to take into account non-literary factors contributing to the aesthetic reception of Miłosz and Brodsky in the West. Moreover, it enabled me to see the changes in the character of the aesthetic response in terms of increasing critical attention to the literary factors.

A still further limitation of Jauss’ concept consists in the fact that it does not take into account differences between horizons of expectations of readers speaking different languages and coming from different cultures, which has been precisely the case with the receptions of Miłosz and Brodsky. Jauss tended to see Western culture as a unity and did not give sufficient consideration to the question of the simultaneous existence of different horizons of expectations within Western culture.

IV

The critical material shows how considerable was the attention paid by critics to non-literary factors, such as the writer’s life or the political situation in his homeland. Literary works were often (at least initially) presented to the reader through their contexts, or (in Lotman’s phrase) hors texte. In practice this means that a proper analysis of the material could not be done without a consideration of these contexts. In this respect,
however, reader-oriented theories in general fail to provide categories for analysis of literary and non literary factors contributing to readers' interest in the literary work. Such analysis requires that the work of art should be treated not just as an isolated complex sign but as an element of a wider structure, that is of culture. In general, treatment of art as a "system of signs, invested with intersubjective meaning," (Mukařovsky 1977, 88) helps to deal with questions that approaches which treat the literary text in isolation from culture leave out of their purview. Tomaševskij's view of the importance of the mythologization of the poet's life and Lotman and Uspenskij's view of literature as an element of culture thus provide a more suitable theoretical framework for the study of non-literary aspects of critical reception. According to Lotman and Uspenskij

Culture is understood as a system that stands between man (as a social unit) and the reality surrounding him, that is a mechanism for processing and organizing the information that comes to him from the outside world. The information may be considered important, or it may be ignored, within a given culture. On the other hand information which is considered non-relevant for the first culture, in the language of another culture may be extremely important. In this way one and the same text may be differently read in the languages of different cultures. (1984, ix)

My study of the reception of Miłosz and Brodsky concerns works which come from cultures that differ in at least some respects from the culture of the English-speaking reader. Since both poets addressed primarily their native readers, there is the question of the intercultural aspects of reception of their works by English-speaking readers. Reader-oriented theories do not sufficiently take into account differences between readers coming from different
cultural backgrounds and speaking different languages. In this respect Lotman's notion of common memory (literary as well as non-literary) of speakers of the same language proves its greater operational value for the description and analysis of reception of works coming from different cultures and presented in translation. Here, however, one may add that Lotman's concept does not take into account bilingual critics and, in fact, bilingual writers. A number of critics conversant with Miłosz and Brodsky's writings were bilingual or were specialists in Polish or Russian literature and culture (while not necessarily being native speakers of the respective languages) and thus they differ in their acquaintance with the common memories of speakers of the languages in question (English and Russian or Polish). Moreover, by the time Brodsky entered Western readers' market his native literary traditions had been at least partly assimilated by the speakers of English and had thus become part of their cultural memory. In the case of Miłosz a part of his native literary traditions (namely contemporary Polish poetry) was slowly absorbed into the "common memory" of English-speaking readers beginning in the 1970s. I have, thus, preferred to use the term "cultural memory" as having a more precise character.

Finally, my study also shows the importance of the text for the reception process. However, in contrast to the major reader-oriented studies, my work does not include an analysis of the corresponding features of the text. Instead, I tried to distinguish textual and extratextual elements in the critical responses to the text. This enabled me to see not only the development of the
interest in the text but also the controlling function of the text over the critical ideas and descriptions. In the course of the reception of both writers the critical ideas that did not find confirmation in the text gradually lost their validity. This is especially clear in the critical treatment of contexts. In the initial stage of the reception, biographical (and often politically motivated) interest in the author was of primary importance. In the course of the reception the life of the author became functional only if recorded in the literary text and thus could act as a context of the text. Thus of primary importance for the reception was not the nature (literary or extraliterary) of the context but its relation to the text.

My study, however, does not allow me to answer the crucial question of the nature of the interaction between the reader (any reader) and the text. Nevertheless, two conclusions seem to be warranted. It is clear from the development of the reception in the case of both poets that whatever the actual nature of the interaction, the text, both in its translated form and in the original, has exercised an increasingly directive role in the reading process which, in the words of John W. Harker (1989), may be characterized as the process of attention and "reattention" to the literary text. It is also clear from my study that texts are always read in a cultural space that is both inter- and extra-textual.
There are several aspects of the actual process of reception that are not discussed in my study and which it would be theoretically fruitful to pursue. For example, a comparative study of the artistic potential of the literary text and recorded critical responses to it would be of considerable interest. Similarly, a study of the reception process of the two poets in their respective homelands followed by a comparative analysis of their receptions by native and non-native criticism would also reveal many interesting features. Finally, a number of specific factors, which shaped in varying degrees the critical responses to Miłosz and Brodsky's writings, would deserve a more extensive treatment. They include the question of Miłosz's poetic apartness, the evolution of the concept of exile, or the critics' treatment of the complex issue of the cultural and national identities of the two poets (Lithuanian-Polish and Jewish-Russian respectively). These, however, are separate tasks that I hope will be undertaken in the future.
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**Interviews, articles and other**


Czesław Miłosz

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