

CZESŁAW MIŁOSZ AND OSIP MANDELSTAM ON LANGUAGE AND CULTURE: MEETINGS AND DEPARTURES¹

Miłosz's attitude to Mandelstam can be described as surprisingly ambivalent. The two poets share common ground in their thoughts on the foundations of European culture and also on the current role of poetry in regards to its heritage. Miłosz and Mandelstam are in agreement in their conclusions on this matter. On the other hand, Miłosz is not without words of criticism for the Russian poet. Initially, he signaled his reservations implicitly, by not commenting on the most disturbing aspects of Mandelstam's oeuvre, only to later express them directly in an iconoclastic essay concerning Mandelstam's stance towards communism.² Where is the cause of the silences and critical commentary? What is the reason behind this aversion to "understanding" the author of *Voronezh Notebooks*? It would appear to me that Miłosz was not entirely impressed with the direction of Mandelstam's

¹ For a more developed version of this article see Stankowska 2013: 234–258.

² In the 1990s, Miłosz wrote and published, first in *NaGłosu* (1996, no. 2) (Miłosz 2000/1: 278–285) and later in an abridged version in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, an iconoclastic commentary to Mandelstam's poem written in Voronezh, known as "Ode to Stalin". Jerzy Pomianowski, Anatol Najman and Adam Pomorski offered a polemical response to Miłosz's article, who, in turn, replied with an essay "Poet and Nation" (Miłosz 1996), explaining that he was concerned with the unique "national instinct" appropriate to Russian intelligentsia.

poetic evolution. Perhaps the changes that took place between the 1920s and 1930s, between such works as "Word and Culture", "Pushkin and Scriabin", "The Morning of Acmeism" and "Conversations about Dante" were not radical, but they were certainly significant and visible. The difference between them lies in the different points of emphasis regarding the cultural and autotelic function of the poetic word, which reflects the different attitude towards symbolism taken by the early and later Mandelstam.

Simply put, Mandelstam remains close to Miłosz mostly as an acmeist, an advocate for creativity, predicated on maintaining a harmonious balance between our attention to things and to the word, which is seen as a meeting place of what is sensual, existential and historical with what is spiritual, universal and metaphysical. Words, which are a unity, thanks to which it is possible to express, that is, to "embody", the truth of things, of man and of culture as it had developed from a Christian foundation. In a 1921 article, Mandelstam writes:

Whoever will raise high the word and show it to time, as the priest does the Eucharist, will be a second Joshua. [...] A living word does not signify an object, but freely chooses, as though for a dwelling place, this or that objective significance, materiality, some beloved body.

(Mandelstam 1977: 131)

A few years earlier, in the manifesto "The Morning of Acmeism" (1913, first published in 1919) Mandelstam, in a polemic with the symbolists and futurists, developed a program for striking a balance in poetry between various dimensions of words – their musical form, the conscious meaning and the horizon that a deployed word can evoke in a people, if they have been taught by poets, multidimensional sounds, significances and metaphysical meanings derived from speech. Mandelstam compared those three dimensions of poetry to the three dimensions of space that permeate every well-built house, palace, and cathedral. Drawing on architectural metaphors, Mandelstam suggested that the poetic word ought to build harmony between spirituality and the human existence with which nature endowed us. He wrote that "There is no equality, no competition. There is the complicity of those united in a conspiracy against emptiness and nonbeing" (Mandelstam 1972: 184). Miłosz would have regarded this program as not only beautiful but also very close to his own thoughts, as it touched on every important concern in his work. At the same

time, Miłosz was growing increasingly distant to Mandelstam, when, during the 1930s the latter developed the crystallographic theory of rhythm and ever more strongly emphasized the autonomy and autotelism of form.

Penetrating as best I can into the structure of the *Divina Commedia*, I come to the conclusion that the entire poem is a single unified and indivisible stanza. Or, to be more exact, not a stanza but a crystallographic shape, that is, a body. There is an unceasing drive toward the creation of form that penetrates the entire poem. The poem is a strictly stereometric body, one integral development of a crystallographic theme.

[...]

As in all true poetry, Dante's thinking in images is accomplished with the help of a characteristic of poetic material which I propose to call its transformability or convertibility.

[...]

Dante switched on the phonetic light.

[...]

if we were to hear Dante, we should be unexpectedly plunged into a flow of energy which is sometimes, as a whole, called 'composition,' sometimes, in particular, 'metaphor,' and sometimes, because of its evasive quality, 'simile,' and which gives birth to attributes in order that they might return into it, increase it by their melting and, having scarcely achieved the first joy of coming into existence, immediately lose their primogeniture in attaching themselves to the matter that is straining in among the thoughts and washing against them.

(Mandelstam 1977: 14, 19, 12, 8)

I have quoted this string of citations from "Conversation about Dante" for a reason, as it brings to the fore the extent to which in the 1930s Mandelstam reformulated the optics of his own thinking about poetry. This does not, of course, mean that the above-cited themes were absent in his earlier poetry. We can find them in, for example, "The Word and Culture" and in "On the Nature of the Word". In the 1920s their significance, however, was determined and limited by cultural theses.

Though we have no explicit evidence of Miłosz's polemical attitude towards Mandelstam, I believe that Miłosz could have distanced himself from the thoughts of the Russian poet, when another hierarchical arrangement appeared between two mutually corresponding themes ("cultural" and "purely poetic"), and, along with it, a somewhat different way of understanding the constant call to achieve the architectural harmony of the work and text, which was at first under-

stood as a “crystalized faith” (Mandelstam 1972: 192), and later, as a derivative of “inner image of structure” (Mandelstam 1972: 97), based most of all on phonetics and intonation. During the acmeistic period, the emphasis on the architectonics of cultural images shifted to the architectonics of sounds and their “form-creating impulse” (Mandelstam 1972: 96), subordinated to a related, but not identical with the first, poetic principle of the convertability³ of linguistic material. It is worth mentioning that this turn towards lyricism charged by “phonological energy” is sometimes interpreted as Mandelstam returning to his Jewish roots. The author of this thesis, Clare Cavanagh, finds in Mandelstam’s later poetry a shared testament to rebuilding “Jewish” poetics, in which coherence of the official culture is confronted by the chaos of the language used by unassimilated Jews. “). “For the Mandelstam of „Fourth Prose” and „Conversation About Dante”, the only true culture is a culture without walls, and his writing and created tradition thrive on borderlines and boundaries, on „incoherence and gaps” (Cavanagh 1991: 319). It is an expression of opposition to the official, in this case party line, post-revolutionary culture of Russia; it is also a new, qualitative attempt to protect one’s own identity.

He turns to the „holes” and „gaps” in his Jewish past, to the places that had refused to be filled with foreign content, as he creates an identity and a tradition that cannot be swallowed up by an all-consuming „alien regime.” Homelessness, foreignness, disruption, incoherence become the essence of an art and a culture that are made, like Mandelstam himself, of „air, perforations and truancy” (CPL, 324). [...] The poet-Jew need not fear a missing acropolis, a disrupted tradition, a shattered identity. Continuity and value now derive precisely from missing pieces and shattered wholes [...] through Dante, he learns to use this linguistic confusion to his, and poetry’s, advantage. (Cavanagh 1991: 323, 333)

And later:

What had been for Mandelstam the „shameful speech (*postydnaja rec’*)” of his family is converted into the „blatantly shameless (*narocito besstyvaja*)” speech of Dante’s Italian, and of his own late verse. Mandelstam’s Jewish inheritance of speechlessness, of linguistic chaos, had been his enemy, and culture’s. Now that he himself has become culture’s enemy, his inheritance has become not simply an ally. It is the very essence of poetic language, the energetic, endlessly disruptive renegade that forever challenges „so-called culture,” that affronts its propriety, ignores its dictums and disrupts its structures. (Cavanagh 1991: 334–335)

³ The meaning of “convertability” of speech was interestingly presented by Clarence Brown, though in reference to Mandelstam’s prose work. Cf. (Brown 1967).

I am not entirely convinced that Cavanagh is correct in so strongly identifying the new poetics of “form-creating impulse” and “convertibility of speech” with the Jewish tradition and the speech of unassimilated Jews, all the more so since, as she herself writes (citing Kiril Taranovsky’s 1976 book *Essays on Mandel’shtam*), in the 1930s “Jewish themes ‘almost disappear’” (Cavanagh 1991: 318) in Mandelstam’s work. Cavanagh’s observations are, however, very interesting in that they introduce the theme of the poet’s choice to be outside of culture, understood as a bastion of hierarchical forms subordinated to the element of life. I would like to draw attention to a theme that resounds with great force, one that is basically foreign to Miłosz’s thinking.

If I am correct, if indeed Miłosz was critical of this shift in Mandelstam’s thinking about the nature of the word, then this would be yet another example of Miłosz’s constant reticence towards all types of lyricism, which views language and the inner (in this case intonational-musical) perfection and coherence of form as more important than speech, and the poetic craft as more important than the cultivation of culture. We should add that lyricism, as a result of this shift, might, perhaps paradoxically, lose its immunity to any external discourses: obviously foreign to the native tradition that pays more heed to the spirit of the age than to the questions posed by one’s native culture. These questions not only stood at the center of Mandelstam’s images of antiquity and of a world inhabited by man but they were also the foundation for ideas concerning the deeply Hellenistic nature of Russian speech, ideas which were common in his earlier poetry and work. The shift which later takes place manifests itself, first of all, as an intensification of themes associated with existentially experienced history and the tragedy of someone who is now subjected to the modern, and not the “intersecting” dimension of time, as described in “Pushkin and Scriabin”. Simultaneously, in his non-poetic writing, especially in “Conversation about Dante”, theses connected to the purely poetic quality become more pronounced and are presented in a way that suggests associations with symbolism and formalism. In one of the key texts indicating his understanding of poetry in the 1930s, Mandelstam writes: “the purely historical approach to Dante is just as unsatisfactory as the political or theological” (Mandelstam 1977: 16). Instead of this, he will point to the necessity of explaining the “inner illumination of Dante’s space by light – light derived from

nothing more than the structural elements of his work" (Mandelstam 1972: 98). He will exhort others to take on "the study of the mutual relation of creative rapture and the work" (Mandelstam 1972: 132).

Such an appreciation of poetic virtues had to go together with decreased attention to what should be "embodied" in language, and for what reason. Miłosz could have perceived this shift in emphasis as a sign of degradation, or, at any rate, as a weakening of the cultural function of poetry. He often repeated that this undesired effect corresponds to, or perhaps is a consequence of, limiting the understanding of the word, which must "strive toward the heart of things", and at the same time "be always on the side of *mythos*" (Miłosz 1990/2: 174). He consistently resisted even the smallest indications – either legitimate or not – that could have suggested the weakening of the cultural power of the word, which he – just like Mandelstam himself – tied to historiographical, anthropological, and eschatological themes. Miłosz was certain that even the highest level of attentiveness to poetic quality could not compensate any possible losses.

I suspect that herein lies the cause of Miłosz's silence in regards to the later work of Mandelstam, and also the deep, poetological source of Miłosz's surprising claim regarding Mandelstam's susceptibility to the discourses and attitudes of his era. These claims were certainly influenced to a large degree by interpretations put forth by American researchers, with whom Miłosz was familiar. I am referring here particularly to Gregory Freidin's *A Coat of Many Colors* (1987), which Miłosz cited in his *Commentary on "Ode to Stalin"*, without, however, including its revealing subtitle: *Osip Mandelstam and his Mythologies of Self-Presentation*⁴. Other works which refer to Freidin's text include Donald Davie's *From the Marches of Christendom*, which touches on the opposing views of Miłosz and Mandelstam regarding the idea of heresy, as well as a review written in a similar vein by the same researcher of Aleksander Fiut's books *Moment wieczny* (*Eternal moment*) and Gregory Freidin's *A Coat of Many Colors*.

Even if we exclude these titles and slightly weaken the rhetorically sharpened thesis, we can still assume that Miłosz as a reader of Mandelstam's poetry could not remain indifferent to what was written in the same place but was nonetheless dramatically contrasted: an acme-

⁴ The type of references Miłosz made to this book is described by Clare Cavanagh (Cavanagh 2009).

istic hymn that expresses faith in the word and a story that emerges in its wake with heightened strength – the story about the drama of speech. He could have concluded that this evolution was proof of his resignation, also as an expression of the necessary distance – “style” – so essential to conquer despair, which he had always experienced and concealed.

Indeed, Mandelstam’s later poetry very clearly registers the awareness of the deepening process of degradation, loss, absence of the word – the loss of speech and the disintegration of man. This is accompanied by a long period of silence in the poet’s biography. However, that is not what is decisive here. Even when Mandelstam begins to write again after his revitalizing stay in Armenia, the expression of loss and the impossibility of the word appears in his poetry more often, with *Voronezh Notebooks* testifying to the irrevocability of this process. At the same time, the dramatic events of life linked his thinking about language with the situation of the subject who is vulnerable to degradation and who can no longer speak, let alone teach, not, as was the case earlier, with considerations regarding the foundations of culture (considerations which were dear to Miłosz). Though in a poem from 1931, dedicated to Anna Achmatowa, Mandelstam writes:

Сохрани мою речь навсегда за привкус несчастья и дыма,
За смолу кругового терпенья, за совестный деготь труда.
Так вода в новгородских колодцах должна быть черна и сладима,
Чтобы в ней к Рождеству отразилась семью плавниками звезда.

(Mandelstam 1998: 168)

Preserve my words for their after-taste of misery and smoke,
for the resins of circular patience, the honest tar of labor.
The way water in Novogrod wells must be honey-black
So by Christmas you can see, reflected, a star with seven fins

(Mandelstam 1973: 195)

And even though in another poem from the same year, he repeated the hope that: “So all through the night the blue polar foxes, / will shine at me in their primeval beauty” (Mandelsztam 1998: 159), when the Stalinist darkness was steadily thickening, eclipsing the sky and sunny beaches, he bore witness, almost uninterruptedly, to the impossibility of realizing these desires – desires still remembered, though

no longer valid, as they were unreachable and impossible to fulfill, precisely because of the absence of speech. Mandelstam's later poetry ever more forcefully conveys the impending helplessness of someone who desires to sing but who can no longer do it, of someone who perfectly knows the value and the need of the harmony which has been seized from speech, but who can no longer retrieve it despite the history he is experiencing.

Народу нужен свет и воздух голубой,
И нужен хлеб и снег Эльбруса.

И не с кем посоветоваться мне,
А сам найду его едва ли –
Таких прозрачных плачущих камней
Нет ни в Крыму, ни на Урале.

Народу нужен стих таинственно-родной,
Чтоб от него он вечно просыпался
И льнянокудрю каштановой волной –
Его дыханьем умывался.

(Mandelstam 1998: 208)

Mankind needs light and clear blue air
And it needs bread and Elbrus snow.

**And there is no one to consult with me,
While I will hardly find one on my own:**
Not in the Urals, not in the Crimea –
There are no such transparent, weeping stone.

Mankind needs a poem mysteriously familiar,
To be awakened by it all his days
And in the sound of it to lave forever –
As in a flaxen curl, a nut-brown wave.

(Mandelstam 2014: 49, emphasis mine)

The subject of the poems included in *Voronezh Notebooks* frequently betrays the author's deprivation of speech. Alone and mute he listens to his own helplessness.

Пою, когда гортань сыра, душа суха,
И в меру влажен взор, и не хитрит сознание.
Здорово ли вино? Здоровы ли меха?
Здорово ли в крови Колхиды колыхание?
И грудь стесняется, без языка тиха:

Уже не я пою, – поет мое дыханье –
И в горных ножных слух, и голова глуха.

(Mandelstam 1998: 214)

I sing when my throat is damp, my soul dry,
Sight fairly moist and the mind clear.
Are the grapes in good condition? The wine-skins?
And the stirrings of Colchis in the blood?
But my chest tightens, I'm tongue-tied:
It's no longer me singing – my breathing sings –,
My ears sheathed in mountains, head hollow.

(Mandelstam 1991: 78 emphasis mine)

Nadezhda Mandelstam wrote movingly in her “Mozart and Salieri” about this loss of language, this absence of speech as a particularly weighty motif in her husband’s poetry, connecting this observation with comments about Mandelstam surrendering himself to the rhythm which the word alone deafened, stifled and concealed.

For Mandelstam,

listening to oneself eventually turned into a murmur and instead of one triumphant sound there appeared a rhythmic totality. [...] a creative process in its preliminary stage presented itself in the following manner: initial anxiety, a resounding collection of forms, which is to say a “silent choir” barely audible to the ear, the beginnings of a murmur in which a trace of rhythm is already present – and finally – the first words. Instead of anxiety what finally triumphs is the pleasure of the first discoveries. And following this, the poet is besieged with a new misfortune: the necessity of finding the lost word.

(Mandelstam, Nadezhda 2000; 38–39)

It goes without saying that Miłosz, even in his most dramatic work, never crossed this threshold. He conquered despair with the hope that speech, as well as man, can be saved by preserving the distance between drama and word; between language, which history creates out of speech, and the word, wherein the poet, despite trauma, obstinately testifies to the possibility of order and beauty, which Mandelstam, the acmeist, called the architecture of the word. The concluding stanza of the relatively early poem by Miłosz devoted to faithful speech seems here to be symbolic.

Są chwile kiedy wydaje się, że zmarnowałem życie.
Bo ty jesteś mową upodlonych,

mową nierozumnych i nienawidzących
 siebie bardziej może od innych narodów,
 mową konfidentów,
 mową pomieszanych,
 chorych na własną niewinność.

(Miłosz 1985: 181)

Now, I confess my doubt.
 There are moments when it seems to me I have squandered my life.
 For you are a tongue of the debased,
 of the unreasonable, hating themselves
 even more than they hate other nations,
 a tongue of informers,
 a tongue of the confused,
 ill with their own innocence.

(Miłosz 2003: 245)

This is what Miłosz writes only to discover, a moment later, at the conclusion of the poem, a way to protect the word from the degrading influence of history. The roles of the subject and the mother tongue are reversed in these phrases. Polish language - homeland, approached by the emigrant as an enclave of what is familial and one's own (this is a theme that is very present also in the essays of the early Mandelstam⁵) is finally presented as a subject of therapeutic activity by the poet.

Moja wierna mowo,
 może to jednak ja muszę ciebie ratować.
 Więc będę dalej stawiać przed tobą miseczki z kolorami
 jasnymi i czystymi jeżeli to możliwe,
 bo w nieszczęściu potrzebny jakiś ład czy piękno.

(Miłosz 1985: 182)

Faithful mother tongue,
 perhaps after all it's I who must try to save you.
 So I will continue to set before you little bowls of colors
 bright and pure if possible,
 for what is needed in misfortune is a little order and beauty.

(Miłosz 2003: 245)

⁵ We find claims in many of Mandelstam's works regarding the necessity of discovering in poetry the real "essence of Russian speech" (Mandelstam 1972: 23).

This theme pervades Miłosz's work. Even in this remarkably dark volume, openly revealing his concealed despair, Miłosz wrote years later:

Tylko nie wyznania. Własne życie
Tak mnie dojadło, że znalazłbym ulgę
Opowiadając o nim.
[...]
Więc co mnie powstrzymuje?
[...]
Nawet gdybym dojrzał do skargi hiobowej,
Lepiej zamilczeć, pochwalać niezmienny
Porządek rzeczy. Nie, to co innego
Nie pozwala mi mówić. Kto cierpi, powinien
Być prawdomówny. Gdzież tam, ile przebrań,
Ile komedii, litości nad sobą!
Fałsz uczuć odgaduje się po fałszu frazy.

(Miłosz 2000/2: 36)

Everything but confessions. My own life
Annoys me so, I would find relief
In telling about it.
[...]
So what restrains me?
[...]
Even had I been ready for a Job's complaint,
It is better to keep silent, to praise the immutable
Order of things. No, something else
Forbids me to speak. Whoever suffers
Should be a teller of the truth. Should? How,
With all the disguises, comedy, self-pity?
Falseness of feeling results in a false phrase.
I value style too much to tak the risk.
Tylko nie wyznania. Własne życie
Tak mnie dojadło, że znalazłbym ulgę

(Miłosz 2003: 690)

In one of the letters to Konstanty Jeleński, we can find a passage in which Miłosz reveals yet another, perhaps the most important, reason for tempering his pessimism and knowledge. It is his fear of finding himself outside culture.

I have a difficult life. And when I reproach myself for anything related to my writing, it is that my pessimism was not revealed in the way it should have; ho-

wever, then one crosses a certain limit of human *decorum* and this is distinctly beyond culture. (Miłosz, Jeleński 2011: 215, emphasis mine)

Of course, obstacles and fears with which Miłosz had to struggle bear no comparison to Mandelstam's. Nonetheless, Miłosz had the right to keep to himself his opinion regarding Mandelstam's shift in his poetry from the idea of speech as an instrument for building the architectonic edifice of culture, in line with his manifesto of acmeism, which places emphasis on internal form. From the program of returning "rules of identity" to poetry, in his polemics with symbolists and futurists (the program which allowed Mandelstam to say that "culture became the church" (Mandelstam 1972: 194) for the faith that poetic form, in preserving its "unity" and coherence, and whose aim is to "transcend oneself", can offer the poet something more? What? Perhaps freedom which does not exist in the world? The promise of safely lingering inside "verbal space"⁶, a space governed by its own laws, self-sufficient and thus independent. These kinds of arguments would not have convinced Miłosz. All the more so because, paradoxically, this "clean" language, too directly and without the comfort of distance, told the truth about someone whom the epoch, its history and lost speech brought death. Miłosz might have read *Voronezh Notebooks* as far removed, and even contradictory, to the desire he held all his life that poetry, referring to what is permanent and beautiful, unflinchingly proved our hymnic defiance of death.

Was Miłosz fair in his reading and assessment of *Voronezh Notebooks*? I do not think so, though one cannot deny that he was consistent. Conducting his "feud" with the Mandelstam⁷, he certainly had deeper reasons than those he provocatively expressed in *Commentary to "Ode to Stalin"*, even if in the second perspective he omitted one of the key themes of Osip Emilyevich's thoughts.

In Mandelstam's non-poetic work from the late 1920s, there appears a thought that theology and the cultural significance of poetry and art in general (even as asemantic as music) does not only have to be built immanently, that is, on the basis of the problems and key questions regarding the condition of man and the state of culture. The core and vehicle of this theology could also be the life of the artist

⁶ This Mandelstamian description used by Miłosz in *The Land of Ulro* proves that Miłosz was familiar with "Conversations about Dante". Cf. (Miłosz 1984).

⁷ Cf. (Miłosz 2004).

himself. A moving judgment regarding the decisive role of fate can be found in Mandelstam's essay, "Pushkin and Scriabin", written most likely in 1915 or 1916. He writes:

I wish to speak of Scriabin's death as of the highest act of his creativity. It seems to me the artist's death ought not to be excluded from the chain of his creative achievements, but rather examined as the last conclusive link. From this wholly Christian point of view, Scriabin's death is amazing. It not only is remarkable as the fabulous posthumous growth of the artist in the eyes of the masses, but also serves as it were as the source of this creativity, as its teleological cause. (Mandelstam 1977: 123)

We could say that in those words Mandelstam prophetically opened a perspective on his own death, which he had not yet sensed. This perspective was not only on his death and it was also not especially on his death. In his essay, "Pushkin and Scriabin", Mandelstam suggested what seems to be more important – that such a reading of a work of art is possible only when we look at European art with respect to the tradition from which it grew, questioning and remembering the cultural sources of which it is a fruit. Mandelstam, much like Eliot and Miłosz, often reminded us that this source is Christianity. He did so – and this is a feature that distinguished him from the abovementioned artists – with extraordinary bravery, with no consideration for the dangers of stylistic excess, figures of incarnation and redemption. Before using the former figure in 1922 in order to describe the Hellenistic spirit of Russian speech, he used it in his earlier work in commemoration of Scriabin's death.

Christian artists are the freedmen of the idea of redemption, rather than slaves, and they are not preachers. All the two-thousand-year-old culture, thanks to the wonderful charitableness of Christianity, is the release of the world into freedom for play, for spiritual gaiety, for the 'imitation' of Christ.' [...] **While nourishing art, surrendered its flesh to art, offered art the supremely real fact of redemption as an unshakeable metaphysical foundation, Christianity demanded nothing in return.** Christian art is therefore not threatened by the danger of inner impoverishment. It is inexhaustible, endless, since, as it triumphs over time, it condenses grace into magnificent clouds and empties them out in life-giving rain. (Mandelstam 1977: 124–125, emphasis mine)

Indeed, this image is far from Christian orthodoxy, but also one that dramatically embodies one of the most important sources of European culture, though extremely uncertain in an era of "the scientific

worldview". It is not by coincidence that at the end of the essay cited, in direct connection with the thesis on death as a last stage of creativity, Mandelstam formulated the famous sentences about "transverse dimension of time" and "harmony as a crystallized eternity". Sentences, we should add, that endowed his lessons on the three dimensions of the word described in "The Morning of Acmeism" with absolute significance, and were never doubted by Miłosz. This telling coincidence draws our attention to the fact that the importance of the cultural goal, so emphatically formulated in the acmeistic period and somewhat muted in his later poetry, could be seen differently. Mandelstam suggests in "Pushkin and Scriabin" that the poetry concentrated on itself, autonomous art, even that which in a direct way does not have the intention of engaging in a cultural dialogue could recoup its social and cultural meaning thanks to the truth of drama experienced and accepted by the artist. Even if we ignore the voice of the poet whose voice was taken and who lost or rejected the right to use it, his silence and tormented body can speak. "The tissue of our world is renewed by death" (Mandelstam 1972: 191). Mandelstam wrote "Remember at all costs! To conquer oblivion even at the price of death: that is Scriabin's motto, that is the heroic aspiration of his art!" (Mandelstam 1972: 191). I think that the gravest indiscretion in Miłosz's *Commentary to "Ode to Stalin"* lies in its lack of respect for this truth, expressed and affirmed by Mandelstam, the acmeist.

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