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Captive Minds: Czesław Miłosz, Ketman, and the Mid-Century Revival of Dissimulation

By

Bruno Jacob Mikanowski

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor John Connelly, Chair
Professor Victoria Frede-Montemayor
Professor Jason Wittenberg

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Abstract

Captive Minds: Czesław Miłosz, Ketman, and the Mid-Century Revival of Dissimulation

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Between the rise of fascism and the beginnings of the Cold War, mid-20th century Europe experienced an unprecedented period of ideological rule. Artists and intellectuals were called upon to actively endorse the political ideologies governing their respective regimes, with little room for dissent. In response, many looked back to previous eras in which thinkers were faced with similar pressures. In these reflections, the practice of dissimulation in which believers of one religion or denomination pretended to belong to another took on new relevance. This dissertation traces this upsurge in interest in dissimulation among writers, historians, sociologists and philosophers through the prism of one author – the Polish poet and political exile Czesław Miłosz – and one concept: *Ketman*. Miłosz popularized this Persian word term, which denotes the duty of believers to conceal their true beliefs when faced with mortal peril, in his 1953 book *The Captive Mind*. In doing so, he made Ketman a byword for the myriad strategies of concealment and self-effacement used by inhabitants of the Soviet Bloc. This work presents a global history of Ketman, beginning with its articulation by Islamic jurists and its discovery by Western Orientalists, through its re-appropriation by Miłosz and his readers both in Communist Poland, and in the world at large. In sketching the various personal and intellectual influences acting on Miłosz, and the numerous authors he influenced in turn, it makes a case for dissimulation as structuring precedent for thinkers enmeshed in later periods of ideologically-driven authoritarianism.

for Nik

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Acknowledgments

This dissertation is concerned with concealing one's true opinions in the face of political or social pressure. I hope, however, that no one thinks that I am being insincere in listing the many, deep debts I have incurred in the course of its completion. The first and greatest debt is to my *Doktorvater* John Connelly, who has provided unerring guidance through the many permutations this project has assumed over the years. My manuscript also benefited immensely from the careful attention of Victoria Frede and Jason Wittenberg, the two other members of my committee, both of whom offered valuable notes and feedback. David Frick was initially supposed to be one of my readers. His untimely passing robbed us all of a great scholar. I learned a tremendous amount about Polish literature and history from him over the years, an influence which permeates this present work.

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Introduction

Belief mattered to the intellectuals of mid-20th century Europe, to a degree not seen before and in a way not seen since. In the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, writers and thinkers across the continent were asked – and often ordered – to commit themselves to totalizing systems of thought, whether fascist or communist. For some, this provided a sense of relief. Ideology seemed a suitable replacement for religion in a secularized world. Embracing it could also offer the promise of swift and easy passage into political relevance and national, if not international, stature. For others, it provoked a crisis of faith. The fiction of the period is littered with parables of ideological capture, whether elaborate allegories of enchantment, like Thomas Mann's "Mario and the Magician" (1929). or Jorge Luis Borges "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," (1940). or more direct portraits of the price of engagement, such as Klaus Mann's *Mephisto*, Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* and George Orwell's *1984*.

But if belief mattered to the mid-century intellectuals, then so did its negation and concealment. Many found themselves forced to teach or write things that directly contradicted their beliefs, while others found themselves drawn towards prohibited or suppressed ideas in reaction to this very coercion. For many, being unable to openly voice their true opinions was a new experience, and an uncomfortable one. It prompted reflection, particularly of a historical nature. Intellectuals looked back to previous eras and other cultures in search of models for how to behave in circumstances of extreme political pressure combined with ideological censure. A few periods and places emerged as particularly significant to their reflection: Europe during the Reformation, and the Islamic societies of the Middle East. Both locales featured elements of theocratic rule, whether in Iraq under the first Caliphs or in the Geneva of John Calvin. Relatedly, both places also afforded rich material for pondering the practice of dissimulation, whose use seemed especially germane to the predicaments faced by intellectuals living in regimes with totalitarian aspirations.

The historian Perez Zagorin defined dissimulation as "pretending not to be what one actually is," while the closely related concept of simulation is "pretending to be what one actually is not."[1] These are effective, if spare, definitions. However, they are neither exhaustive, nor universally agreed on. As befits a practice rooted in deception, the meaning of dissimulation has been difficult term to pin down precisely. Some features recur frequently though, among them feigning, concealing, and dissembling. According to Jon Snyder, in the early modern period, dissimulation was considered a "shadowy art,"[2] which draws on habits of both secrecy and disguise. The dissimulator conceals what he or she really he thinks. He or she may also pretend to believe something they do not. In this was, they behave like actors, albeit without wearing a mask. That is, their performance is never acknowledged as such making it at once more difficult to detect, and potentially more destabilizing to society at large.

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[1] The closeness between these two terms has led Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, the most prolific and influential contemporary scholar of early modern dissimulation, to coin the term dis/simulation as a way of acknowledging their interrelationship. Perez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution and Conformity in Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 3.

[2] Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), p. xiii.

It is precisely this tacit nature of dissimulation which has made it difficult for historians to fully grasp. As Perez Zagorin observed over thirty years ago in his classic *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution and Conformity in Early Modern Europe*, it has had countless practitioners, but few codifiers. Many people have had to dissimulate, but few wrote in defense of dissimulation. The one major exception occurred in the court societies of Renaissance Italy and early modern France. In these environments, charged by proximity to power, dissimulation was thought to be one of the endowments of the ideal courtier, along with such traits as *grazia*, *astuzia*, and *sprezzatura* (respectively, grace, astuteness, and nonchalance – or more precisely, the ability to do things with seeming effortlessness). In the narrow world of the court, these were all political tools, whose necessity seemed obvious, so much so that the Latin maxim *Nescit vivere qui nescit dissimulare* - "He who does not know how to dissimulate does not know how to live" – became a commonplace applied to courtiers.[3]

The respect accorded to dissimulation in the early modern era largely evaporated by the late 18th century, as it was replaced by Romantic (and before that, Rousseauean) cultural norms privileging sincerity and emotional transparency. But this was only true of the secular world. In the religious sphere, dissimulation, at least in the Christian world, had never enjoyed a positive reputation. In the Middle Ages, dissimulation was almost exclusively the domain of heretics, both real and imaginary. After the Reformation broke the unity of the Western Church, it became relatively common for members of one denomination to live under the jurisdiction of another.

Pressure from religious authorities in an era of aggressive confessionalization[4] encouraged many to conceal their true faith in order to escape persecution or censure. (In Spain, the mass conversion of Jews and Muslims produced the parallel phenomena of *marranos* and *moriscos*, or crypto-Jews and crypto-Muslims). However, the apparent or supposed prevalence of religious dissimulation did not win it many admirers. The perception of religious disguise remained overwhelmingly negative. Most of what we know about dissimulatory practices in this epoch comes from attacks made by its opponents. For instance, the term *Nicodemite*, usually applied to Protestants misrepresenting their faith in Catholic countries (but sometimes adapted to the reverse circumstance) was coined by John Calvin in a polemic against supporters he considered excessively timid. Indeed, hardly anyone freely admitted to practicing dissimulation. In texts of the period, it attached most often to people on the fringes of both Catholicism and Protestantism. These were irenicists, seekers and radical reformers – seekers of a 'third way' between established denominations, whose efforts attracted suspicion from virtually all sides of the contemporary religious spectrum.

Given the opprobrium which attached to dissimulation for so long, its return to the intellectual fore in the 20th century seems all the more remarkable. This revival was part of a broader historicizing trend which saw the ideological clashes of the mid-20th century through the prism of past religious conflicts. By the 1950s, it became common for writers to liken censorious government authorities with Protestant witch hunters or the Catholic Inquisition and portray themselves as heretics or freethinkers caught in their grasp. This took place both in the West, as in Arthur Miller's 1953 play *The Crucible*, set during the Salem witch trials, and in the East – see

[3] Perez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution and Conformity in Early Modern Europe*, p. 8.
[4] For more on confessionalization, or the use of state instruments to cultivate religions uniformity and obedience, see the foundational work of Heinz Schilling, "Confessional Europe," in eds. T.A. Brady, HA Oberman and J.D.Tracey, *Handbook of European History 1400-1600*, (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

Bertolt Brecht's 1937 play *Life of Galileo*, or his *The Trial of Joan of Arc at Rouen, 1431* from 1952. The effusive celebration surrounding the 400th anniversary of the death of Michael Servetus, burned at the stake in Calvin's Geneva in 1553 and subsequently seen as an early martyr for "free thought," likewise fits into this trend.[5]

Most of these works feature a fearless iconoclast pitted against a hegemonic enforcer of orthodoxy. This made for good drama, but it failed to address the more subtle problems of conformity and evasion faced by artists and intellectuals in their everyday lives. Here, dissimulation functioned as an especially potent metaphor for the situation of people living under a freshly imposed ideological system. The first author to both realize this relevance and reach a larger audience with it was the Polish poet Czesław Miłosz.

In 1951, Miłosz, then serving as a cultural attaché at the Polish Embassy in Paris, defected to the West. He left behind not just his diplomatic position, but – he thought - his career as a poet and a writer in the Polish language as well. Miłosz quickly set about the task of reinventing himself. Just two years later, in 1953, he published *The Captive Mind*, his account of the country he had left behind, written for those living beyond its borders. Appearing almost simultaneously in Polish, French and English (and soon to be followed by translations in a number of other European languages) *The Captive Mind* commented on the effect Marxist ideology, and the social and political pressures attendant to Communist Party rule, exerted on the lives of his fellow writers. Miłosz combined short biographies tracing the post-war careers of four of his peers (disguised by the pseudonyms 'Alpha,' 'Beta,' 'Gamma' and 'Delta,' but clearly recognizable to most Polish readers[6]) with general statements about the "moral and psychological consequences of dialectical materialism"[7] on the population at large.

Miłosz used two primary metaphors to describe how belief and conformity functioned in People's Poland. The first of these was "the Pill of Murti-Bing," a phrase drawn from an otherwise little-known 1932 novel by the Polish avant-garde writer and artist Witkacy (real name: Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz), entitled *Insatiability* (*Nienasycenie*). In it, Witkiewicz describes the sudden appearance of the Pill all over Poland and Western Europe. The mysterious capsule, sold by hawkers from the East, contains, in condensed form, the teachings of a "Mongolian philosopher" named Murti-Bing. Those who take his pill are able to immediately assimilate Murti-Bing's "philosophy of life." Once they do so, their lives become "serene and happy" and their problems "suddenly appeared to be superficial and unimportant."[8]

The philosophy contained in the pill gave them relief from the "spiritual hunger" and decadence which art falls into when it strives after merely formal innovation. More ominously, the pill-takers stopped worrying about the approach of the "Sino-Mongolian army" to the extent that when this army conquered their homelands, they happily entered the "service of the new society." Those artists who had previously written dissonant music and painted abstract art now switched to composing marches and drawing "socially useful pictures." The Pill of Murti-Bing is

[5] See Chapter 2 for more on this and a discussion of Stanisław Kot's role in the unexpected Castellio-Servetus revival.
[6] Their real identities are, respectively: Jerzy Andrzejewski – Alpha; Tadeusz Borowski – Beta; Jerzy Putrament – Gamma; and Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński – Delta.
[7] This phrase comes from the jacket copy for the 1955 English paperback edition. Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1955).
[8] Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, p. 4.

a fairly transparent figure for the spread of Marxism-Leninism, especially as experienced by artists and intellectuals living in the newly-Sovietized countries of eastern Europe after the imposition of Stalinism in the late 1940s. Miłosz made the comparison explicit by likening it to the “New Faith” of Communism, whose appeal he describes as at once irresistible and all-consuming: “for the intellectual, the New Faith is a candle that he circles like a moth. In the end, he throws himself into the flame for the glory of mankind.”[9]

“The Pill of Murti-Bing” was a recent invention, but the equation of communism with religion and in particular, with sudden religious conversion, was already familiar by 1953. Indeed, it was a mainstay of anti-Communist literature, appearing everywhere from *The God that Failed* the milestone 1949 collection of essays by disenchanted former party members and fellow-travelers to the early histories of Bolshevism penned by René Fülöp-Miller in the 1920s. Miłosz’s other metaphor of belief was more novel however. This was “ketman” a Persian term Miłosz borrowed from the world of Shi’ite Islamic theology. Ketman was originally a form of religious disguise. It was a practice by which Shi’ites living under Sunni dominion were encouraged – and even, in cases of mortal threat, ordered – to hide their true faith under a mask of obedience to the ruling orthodoxy. Ketman was thus primarily a survival strategy, a means for members of a persecuted religious minority to maintain their beliefs while living in hostile territory.

Miłosz did not know much about Shi’ite religious teachings or their historical development, and drew his account of ketman entirely from a rather flawed description of Persian mores penned by the 19th century French diplomat and amateur orientalist Arthur Comte De Gobineau. Despite the slender factual basis behind Gobineau’s description, the idea of ketman fired Miłosz’s imagination. Dissimulation, maintained at length and across social environments, seemed to offer a key for explaining the psychology of the new subjects of Stalinism.

According to Miłosz, the citizens of people’s democracies were asked to believe things which they knew to be untrue, or which ran counter to their most deeply held beliefs. They resolved this contradiction by “becoming actors.”[10] Like Shi’ites under Sunni Islam (or members of heterodox Islamic sects under Shi’ite rule), who, after all, did not reject Islam outright, people in communist countries had to continually weigh which parts of the ruling ideology they could accept, and which they would merely mouth. In committing to this form of lip service, their whole lives, down to the smallest gesture or smile, became a performance, and the name for this performance, and the calculation which lay behind it, was ketman.

Miłosz’s chapter on ketman in *The Captive Mind* became the most quoted, debated and discussed parts of the book, spreading far beyond the books’ immediate circle of readers. Reactions to ketman varied widely according to milieu. In Polish émigré circles, it drew near universal scorn, and was dismissed as an intellectual’s fancy, and an attempt to salvage moral grandeur out of a process of submission others ascribed to a mix of cowardice and brute force. Accusations that ketman was a mere cover for opportunism, and perhaps, an excuse for Miłosz’s own cooperation with the Polish government, would follow the poet over the decades.

The reception of ketman among Western (non-Polish) audiences was far more positive. Hungry for information about the Iron Curtain, intellectuals devoured his “fascinating and frightening”

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[9] Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, p. 6.
[10] Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, p. 51.

description of “the intellectual condition of men and women who live under Communism.”[11] For readers already predisposed by works such as *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950) and *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) to think of totalitarianism in psychological terms, it seemed to offer a convincing explanation for the sudden and seemingly universal acquiescence to Soviet domination across the Eastern Bloc.[12] In its depiction of people engaged in ketman waging a daily campaign of deception in order to protect a fragile core of inner truth, *The Captive Mind* also became a party to the mutual stereotyping of East and West which was particularly acute at this early phase of the Cold War, a process recently chronicled by Melissa Feinberg in her *Curtain of Lies: The Battle Over Truth in Stalinist Eastern Europe*.[13]

However, this was not the whole story of its reception. With surprising swiftness, *The Captive Mind* circulated in Poland, where it and its author were officially banned and condemned. Members of the official Writer’s Union read it in copies brought back from abroad. (The CIA also allegedly dropped miniature copies over the country by balloon, but these do not seem to have had many readers).[14] The concept of ketman was perhaps the ‘stickiest’ concept to come out of the book. In a short span of time, it became a familiar idea to a much wider circle than the privileged few who had access to Miłosz’s original text. For many, ketman did not appear as a Western projection or a piece of face-saving on the part of its author. Rather, it appeared to describe a recognizable feature of life in a party-state, namely the gap that appeared between public expression and inner belief which continually appeared in a country governed by an ideology many were required to profess but only few passionately believed.

Beyond Poland, ketman also proved to be a durable concept – for a time. For some American scholars and social scientists, it encapsulated something about not just totalitarianism, but the psychic condition of modern life in general. For the sociologist Erving Goffman, it captured a quality of life in what he termed “total institutions,” such as mental hospitals, prisons, merchant vessels and monasteries. It also prompted him to ask whether the peculiar forms of surveillance and concealment common in such establishments were part of the fabric of life in “free society” as a whole.

The Captive Mind also reached audiences far beyond the relatively narrow world of Western intellectuals. For readers in places as far apart in ideology and geography as Tito’s Yugoslavia and Suharto’s Indonesia, ketman seemed to name something specific about the mechanics of power in their respective societies. However, by the 1970s, just as it was being received by a global readership, *The Captive Mind*’s influence in Eastern Europe was beginning to wane. Its account of domination rooted in belief – whether simulated, or in earnest – no longer seemed as

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[11] Jacket copy, Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1955).

[12] *The Captive Mind* thus played an important role in the development of totalitarian theory, although one that has been only incompletely acknowledged in recent scholarship. For some recent examples, see: Abbot Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Anson Rabinbach, “Moments of Totalitarianism,” *History and Theory* 45, No. 1 (Feb. 2006), pp. 72–100; Louis Menand, “The Object of Power,” in *The Free World: Art and Thought in the Cold War*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021), pp. 35-54; Nicholas Devlin, “Hannah Arendt and Marxist Theories of Totalitarianism,” *Modern Intellectual History,* 20, No. 1 (March 2023), pp. 247-269.

[13] Melissa Feinberg, *Curtain of Lies: The Battle Over Truth in Stalinist Eastern Europe*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[14] Andrzej Franaszek, *Miłosz: A Biography*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), p. 306.

relevant as it once had in the less ideologically-charged world of what Vaclav Havel termed "post-totalitarianism."

Indeed, Havel and other dissident figures (most notably Alexander Solzhenitsyn) were instrumental in constructing the discourse which replaced ketman. They replaced Miłosz's complex (if bleak) portraits of inner struggle spiritual "schizophrenia" with the more hopeful notion of "living in truth," in which petty demands of the state are the only impediment to realizing one's authentic self. But if Havel and Solzhenitsyn writings marked the end of an era, they did not emerge out of a vacuum. In particular, Andrei Sinyavsky (first known to readers by his pseudonym, Abram Tertz) forms a bridge to the era of *The Captive Mind*. This can be seen on one hand, through his artistic investment in doubleness and disguise, and on the other through the fact that his publication in the West was directly mediated by the Polish émigré press and Miłosz himself.

The literary *Kultura* played a central role in this process. Founded in Rome in 1947, (but published in Paris after 1948), by a circle of Polish intellectuals led by Jerzy Giedroyc, *Kultura* had a unique profile among the many émigré publications dotting the West from London to Buenos Aires. Opposed to Communism but open to thinkers from the right and left, it became a venue for work by most of the leading Polish writers living abroad (among them, Witold Gombrowicz, Jerzy Stempowski and later, Aleksander Wat, Wisława Szymborska and Leszek Kołakowski). In Ewa Hoffman's words, the journal was "largely responsible for keeping dissident Polish culture alive."[15] *Kultura* also played a major role in transmitting dissident writing from the rest of Eastern Europe to the West, especially in the early days of the Soviet Thaw, and in so doing laid the groundwork for the explosion of dissident literature in the 1970s.

But just like the work of the 1970s dissidents, the ideas contained in *The Captive Mind* did not come about *sui generis*. Miłosz formulated them in dialogue with a number of interlocutors. His friends in the literary world – as well as his editors, censors and rivals – supplied him with the observations which formed the backbone of the book. But it was a more intense epistolary exchange with Tadeusz Kroński, a friend outside the immediate literary sphere which did the most to shape Miłosz's thinking on ketman. Kroński was a philosopher and a historian of philosophy. Miłosz used to attend his and his wife Irena's philosophical salons during their time spent in German-occupied Warsaw. After the war, Kroński, who was philosophically drawn to Marxism and the Soviet-backed Polish regime, but living outside it, became a critical foil for Miłosz, who was skeptical of the Polish government's aims, but nonetheless worked for it.

For most of the immediate postwar period Miłosz, worked for the Polish diplomatic service, serving in its embassies and consulates in New York City, Washington D.C. and Paris. His job as cultural attaché required him to read much of the current American (and later French) press. Rather uniquely for an eastern European intellectual of this era, Miłosz was thus exposed simultaneously to influences from East and West. He could observe the creation of a new regime in Poland while also remaining current on the newest intellectual trends circulating in the United States and France. Two such movements were especially formative for him. One was French existentialism, and in particular, its more phenomenological branch, which he absorbed in part through the aid of Jeanne Hersch, his French translator and a former student of Karl Jaspers. This

[15] Ewa Hoffman, *On Czeslaw Milosz: Visions from the Other Europe*, (Princeton:Princeton University Press, 2023, p. 76.

encouraged him to analyze his experiences in Poland through the categories of authenticity and masquerade.

The other was American and particularly, African-American, sources, which likewise spurred his thinking on dissimulation. During his time in America, Miłosz translated traditional Black hymns and became acquainted with the work of W.E.B. Du Bois. Du Bois' reflections on "double consciousness" likely contributed to his ideas about ketman as it was practiced in Poland. We also know that Miłosz read and wrote about racial passing, in which Black Americans took on white identities in order to survive in a segregated and slave society, during his time in America. It too must have contributed to his thoughts about ideological disguise.

Looked at in his postwar contexts, Miłosz emerges as a figure uniquely poised to synthesize the experience of living in a Stalinist state for a Western audience. Phenomenology gave him tools to re-interpret his experiences for a global audience (something Frantz Fanon, arriving in Paris from another imperial periphery was doing at the same place and time, and with parallel results), while contact with Black American thought helped frame his own thinking in a broader perspective. However, it was in history that Miłosz found his most potent metaphors, ketman chief among them. This history did not exist independently of Miłosz's circumstances.

The historiography of dissimulation is complex, uncertain, and bound up in multiple ways with the same up-swelling of ideological regimes Miłosz himself experienced. Due to the fact that its practitioners have always tended to obscure their own actions, dissimulation is a very difficult subject to study, or to say anything about with precision. Moreover, for centuries following its 16th and 17th century heyday in the West, it was largely forgotten. As a consequence, dissimulation had to be discovered before it could be revived.

It took a network of scholars working in the early 20th century, and especially the 1930s, to resurrect dissimulation as a subject of inquiry. The majority of these scholars lived in Italy, and were motivated in their studies by a desire to find parallels to their own situation as intellectuals living an increasingly oppressive fascist regime. This search led some of them to study radical reformers who left Italy for Poland and Transylvania in the 16th century, which in turn brought them in contact with Polish scholars, and most notably, Stanisław Kot. Miłosz would eventually walk in Kot's footsteps as well, drawing on his work to find precedents for his own experiences in the Polish Reformation.

Tracking Miłosz's long term engagement with the history of Christian heresy and dissent demonstrates that his interest in dissimulation was part of a wider European trend, which was most acute in exactly those places where intellectuals felt most compelled – yet able – to clarify their contested position vis-à-vis an ideologically aggressive state. These scholars constructed a history of past dissimulation in the image of their own predicament, leading to a historiography in which fact and supposition have become hopelessly intermingled.

The historiography and ethnography of ketman is troubled by similar confusion between what is known and what has been imagined. Ketman – a Persian word for what is more commonly referred by the Arabic term *taqiyya* (also rendered as *taqiya*, *taqiyyah*, *taḳīya* and numerous other transliterations) – has been an object of controversy within the Islamic world for centuries. Usually used to refer to a cluster of beliefs and practices unique to Shi'ism, it also has a wider application in Islamic thought and jurisprudence. The precise definition assigned to it varies by

sect and legal school. Speaking broadly, dissimulation is permissible, particularly under duress, in most schools of Islamic law. However, in Shi'a thought it rises to the status of a religious duty; the faithful are obligated to dissimulate in order to ensure the safety of their co-believers, and most critically, of their spiritual leader, the Imam.

This injunction to disguise true belief makes taqiyya rather singular among historical forms of dissimulation. In the Christian world, various heretical or dissident denominations have resorted to dissimulation out of necessity. Hardly any have viewed dissimulation as praiseworthy in its own right. Taqiyya is also an outlier in the Islamic world, as well as an object of inter-denominational controversy. Sunni polemicists have long used it to denigrate their Shi'a adversaries, and label them as inherently dishonest and untrustworthy.[16] As a consequence of this, Shi'ite scholars have been somewhat reluctant to explore this topic, while many Shi'a jurists have suggested that taqiyya was only necessary under certain historical conditions, which have now ended.

The Western reception of taqiyya is even more fraught. European readers only became aware of it in the mid-19th century via a very flawed informant, whose knowledge of Islam was questionable at best. At the start of the 20th century, Ignaz Goldziher, a far more reputable scholar turned his attention to the subject of dissimulation in Islam.[17] Though a superb linguist and an expert in Islamic law, his perspective on taqiyya was decidedly hostile, tainted on the one hand by his pro-Sunni bias, and on the other, by a personal distaste for what he saw as religious opportunism.

He was not alone in his aversion; dissimulation has had few friends in the historical record. However, for a short moment in the middle of the 20th century, it seemed not only worthy of study, but a key to understanding what seemed otherwise to be the very modern phenomenon of totalitarian power. Concealed, disguised and simulated belief became a category of inquiry at the very moment when states began to demand not just loyalty, but active protestations of faith from their intellectuals. Tracing dissimulation's tangled reception, moving re-discovery and appropriation, and subsequent rejection, this dissertation outlines the bounds of a specific historical moment. An extreme time summoned an equally expansive historical imaginary. The gift of sympathy shown by Miłosz and his peers – their ability to see parallels across disparate time periods and cultures, and in practices that had otherwise been scorned – is one we would do well to rediscover ourselves.

[16] Toby Matthiesen, *The Caliph and the Imam: The Making of Sunnism and Shiism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), p. 5.
[17] Ignaz Goldziher, "Das Prinzip der *takijja* im Islam," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlāndichen Gesselschaft* 60 (1906), pp. 213-226.

Chapter 1: The Islamic Background

Among the world's major religions, Islam is unique in having to contend, from a point very early in its development, with a major, and enduring, dissident branch of the faith. The split between the Sunni and Shi'ite Islam began in the immediate aftermath of Muhammad's death in 632 A.D., with a dispute over who should succeed the Prophet as the secular and spiritual head of Islam. Sunnis followed the Caliphs, chosen from among Muhammad's companions. Shi'as, by contrast, believed that the line of succession began with 'Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, and continued with his descendants.

This question of inheritance was settled by a series of vicious civil wars (usually known as the First and Second Fitnas, whose end result was a decisive defeat for the party of 'Ali and the triumph of their Sunni enemies. In 680 A.D., at the Battle of Karbala in today's Iraq, the Umayyad Caliph Yazid I crushed an army led by Husayn, the son of 'Ali (and grandson of Muhammad), who was killed on the battlefield. Following this, the Shi'ites, the party of 'Ali, could never again challenge the Sunnis for supremacy of the Muslim world. In the centuries that followed, the Shia became a persecuted minority, at odds with the ruling theocracy over matters of belief and politics.

Ketman, and the range of practices under varying names to which it is related, was largely devised as a response to this status of Shi'ism as a dissident faith. It was initially articulated during the period of the Umayyad Caliphate, one of history's great revolutionary theocracies, as a way of protecting members of a heterodox religion from their all-powerful, orthodox opponents. This history has made it an attractive figure of comparison for intellectuals navigating life in ideologically-motivated regimes. However, ketman only became known in the West after much delay. Initially developed in the first centuries of Islam (roughly, the 7th through 10th centuries A.D.), it was only introduced to European audiences in 1865, with the publication of *Les religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie centrale* by the Comte de Gobineau, from which it was taken up by Czesław Miłosz in his *The Captive Mind* ninety years later.

When he used the concept of ketman to describe the psychological state of artists under Stalinism, Miłosz, was drawing on a very limited knowledge of the term's meaning and place in Islamic thought. Gobineau's text was his only source, and it arrived in his hands nearly by chance. Miłosz's friend Józef Czapski happened to pick it up in a Teheran bookshop in 1942, while passing through Iran en route from Siberia to Palestine with Anders' Army. Gobineau himself, though partially fluent in Persian, was no expert on Islamic law or Shi'ite practice, and his account of ketman is distorted by various personal and historical prejudices. Grasping the word's original meaning, therefore, requires stripping away over a century and a half of Western misunderstanding, and returning to its original contexts in the history of Islamic jurisprudence.

The term *ketman* is an Arabic word meaning the "action of covering," "concealment" or "disguise." It is most commonly used in a more narrow sense, to refer to the practice of religious dissimulation, or the hiding of one's true beliefs through silence or omission. Within Twelver Shi'ism, currently the largest branch of Shi'ism, owing to its dominant place in Iran, it often takes on a rather different meaning, There, it refers not just to relation of believers to unbelievers, but also to believers' own attitudes towards the more esoteric teachings of their own

faith, and the duty to keep these secret from the uncomprehending crowd.[18] (For convenience, I will use ketman when discussing the work of Miłosz and Gobineau, and *kītman*, the Persian form, when referring to its place in Islamic history.)

While *kītman* has attracted some scholarly attention over the years, it is usually discussed in conjunction with its near synonym *taqiyya* (other spellings include *taqiya*, *taḳīya*, and *taqiyyah*). Although the terms are often used interchangeably, taqiyya has a somewhat broader meaning and it typically takes precedence over *kītman* in treatments of the general subject of dissimulation. As Ethan Kohlberg notes that there are "numerous works entitled K. al-taqiyya" (*Book of Taqiyya*) by Shi'ite authors, he knows of "none entitled K. al-kitman," (*Book of Kitman*).[19] For this reason, much of my discussion of dissimulation in Islamic contexts will refer to taqiyya, while returning to ketman in the final section on the transmission of these ideas to European audiences.

As a concept, taqiyya is present in all the major branches of Islam, but it is traditionally most associated with the Shi'ites, and above all, with the Twelver or Imāmī Shi'ites. In Shi'a sources, taqiyya refers to a variety of methods deployed to maintain the secrecy of one's inner beliefs. This can be done both by suppressing the truth and by suggesting a falsehood – that is, adopting the disguise of another faith entirely. The first Imāmī pronouncements on taqiyya date to the mid-8th century, or just as the movement was beginning to crystallize into a separate sect within Shi'ism.[20] It was also the moment when the Imāmī s were experiencing their first intense bout of persecution at the hands of the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates. Faced with the possibility of physical extermination, dissimulation naturally became an issue of signal importance.

The original meaning of taqiyya is "fear" or "caution."[21] When it is used as a technical term in Islamic law, it means something closer to "precautionary dissimulation."[22] It can also be used to mean "self-protection through dissimulation" or, more generally, the "safeguarding of secrets." However, it is not merely a *terminus technicus*. Taqiyya can also refer to a broader religious principle, or guiding precept, governing the conduct of everyday life. Ignaz Goldziher, the author of the first scholarly treatment of taqiyya in a Western academic journal, goes even further in his definition. For him, taqiyya was an "ethical theory raised to the status of 'a fundamental mental doctrine.'"[23]

Because of this multiplicity of uses, scholars do not agree on how to best translate taqiyya into English. Most, though, apply some variation of 'dissimulation.' Ethan Kolhberg renders it as "precautionary dissimulation,"[24] and says that it can also be used to mean "self-protection through dissimulation" or, more generally, the "safeguarding of secrets." Louis Dupree prefers "protective dissimulation." Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi gives it another shade still, choosing

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[18] Louis Medoff, "TAQIYA in Shiʿism," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2015, available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/taqiya-i-shiism

[19] Etan Kohlberg, "Taqiyya in Shīʿī Theology and Religion," in eds. Hans G. Kippenberg and Guy G. Stroumsa, *Secrecy and Concealment: Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions*, (Leiden: Brill, 1995), p. 346.

[20] Etan Kohlberg, "Some Imāmī-shīʿī Views on Taqiyya," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 95, No. 3 (Jul. - Sep., 1975), p. 396.

[21] Strothmann, R., "Taḳīya," in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, First Edition (1913-1936)*, edited by M. Th. Houtsma, T.W. Arnold, R. Basset, R. Hartmann.

[22] Etan Kohlberg, "Some Imāmī-shīʿī Views on Taqiyya," p. 395.

[23] Ignac Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 180.

[24] Etan Kohlberg, "Some Imāmī-shīʿī Views on Taqiyya," p. 395.

"tactical dissimulation," which he glosses further as "to hide a truth [of] the faith of those who are not worthy of it."[25]

Responding to Kohlberg's definition of taqiyya, Cyrus Gordon, an American scholar of the ancient Near East with long personal experience of Iran, took a much more negative valuation of the term, seeing it as the practice of "concealing, or even lying about, one's religious identity, to protect one's self or one's coreligionists." He even goes so far as to equate it with institutionalized "deviousness."[26]As we will see, this emphasis on lying and untrustworthiness will recur frequently in attacks on taqiyya made by its opponents in the Sunni camp and those who followed their lead. Their hostility should not blind us to the variety of meaning taqiyya has held over the centuries or to its deep roots within not just Shi'ite thought, but the Koran itself.

Koranic Justification

Islamic jurists found justification for dissimulation in a number of Koranic passages. The first among these was verse Q 3:28 – "Let not the believers take unbelievers for their allies in preference to believers. Whoever does this has no connection with God, unless you but guard yourselves against them as a precaution." In different translations, the word for 'precaution' here, is rendered as 'fear', 'caution,' 'taking security,' or 'guarding carefully.' Other translations make the aspect of feigning or dissembling explicit by rendering the word as 'pious dissimulation,' or simply '*taqiyah*' outright[27] This is not the actual Koranic term, however. Rather, a related term, either *tuqatan* or *taqiyyatan,* appears in its place. All of these words ultimately derive from the same source. They are cognates of the verb *ittaqā*, which carries with it a definite connotation of dissimulation.[28] Indeed, later discussion of taqiyya in Islamic jurisprudence all seems to ultimately take this passage as its starting point, and it may rightly be considered the origin of the term.

As in many matters of Koranic interpretation, things were not always so simple. A level of lexical ambiguity at the root of taqiyya allowed Imāmī theorists a wide degree of latitude in how they interpreted various passages in the Koran. The fact that the noun taqiyya derives from the verb *iltaqii*, whose most common meaning is "to fear (God)," gave Imāmī jurists plentiful space to find justification for the practice of dissimulation in Koranic passages and hadiths whose outward meaning seemed to be about simple piety or god-fearing. This meant that Imāmī readers discovered a much larger number and broader range of justifications for dissimulatory behavior in the Koranic tradition than their peers in the other branches of Islam.

Nearly all interpreters, however, agreed that two other passages in the Koran offered justification for precautionary dissimulation. The first of these is Q 16:106: "Whoever expresses disbelief in God after having accepted belief [will suffer greatly]–except him who is forced while his heart is still at peace in belief."[29] This verse was said by later commentators to refer to a companion of the Prophet Muhammad, 'Ammār b. Yasir, who was captured with his parents by

[25] Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, "New Remarks on Secrecy and Concealment in Early Imāmī Shi'ism: the Case of *khatm al-nubuwwa*: Aspects of Twelver Shi'i Imamology XII." In ed. Shahrokh Raei, *Islamic Alternatives: Non-Mainstream Religion in Persianate* Societies, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017), p. 3.

[26] Cyrus Gordon, "The Substratum of Taqiyya in Iran," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 97 (1977), p. 192

[27] Muhammad Sarwar translation, http://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=3&verse=28

[28] Devin Stewart, "Dissimulation in Sunni Islam and Morisco Taqiyya," *Al-Qantara* XXXIV 2, 2013, p. 452.

[29] Devin Stewart, "Dissimulation in Sunni Islam and Morisco Taqiyya," p. 452.

pagans in Mecca and forced to worship in front of their idols. ‘Ammār’s mother and father refused to do so, and were killed. ‘Ammār acquiesced to the demand, and survived. When he later confessed to the Prophet that he had seemingly backslid into paganism, Muhammad asked him how he felt in his heart when he did so, ‘Ammār replied that he “was at ease in belief.” The Prophet then told him that if that was the case, ‘Ammār was right to do as he had done. Should the pagans attack again, he should do the same thing, and feign adherence to their religion. If one’s life was threatened, dissimulation was permissible, and even necessary – so long as one stayed faithful within one’s self.

Commentaries on this verse frequently pair it with a discussion of another story from the time of the Prophet.[30] Musaylima, the false prophet of the Banu Harith, and a rival to Muhammad’s authority during his lifetime, captured two Muslims and tried to force them to admit that he, like Muhammad, was a messenger of God. One of the prisoners attempted to evade the demand by pretending to be deaf, and was executed as a result. The other prisoner acquiesced, and was spared. Told about these events, Muhammad remarked that both men’s actions were correct: one was free to choose martyrdom, and one was also permitted to dissimulate if one’s life was in danger. Both paths, that of courageous sacrifice and of prudent evasion, were open to the true believer, provided they maintain the ‘peace in belief’ which ‘Ammār had shown during his trial.

The third Koranic passage used to justify dissimulation, Q 40:28, appears in the Sūrat al-Mu’min or ‘Surah of the Believer.’ This Surah depicts a confrontation between Moses and the Pharaoh. When the Pharaoh threatens to kill Moses, a high-ranking member of the pharoah’s family intercedes on the prophet’s behalf. This is the titular ‘Believer,’ who kept his faith in the Hebrew God secret from the rest of his family. Commentators differ on his name, the nature of his relationship to the Pharaoh and even whether he was in fact Egyptian or Hebrew.[31] However, they mostly agree on the more general point, that this passage provides a proof text for religious concealment. The figure of the Believer is thus analogous to that of Nicodemus in the Gospel of John, the Pharisee who followed Jesus’ teachings surreptitiously until the moment when he was ready to make a public declaration of faith.

Taqiyya in Shi’ism

As a general concept and possible means of evading harm, taqiyya was familiar to all branches of Islam. The earliest discussion of it as a legal concept seems to have been undertaken by the Kharijites,[32] the first recognizable sect within Islam, whose members broke away from the mainstream of the faithful in the decades after the Prophet Muhammad’s death. However, in time, taqiyya came to be most associated with Shi’ism, and in particular, with its Imāmī or Twelver branch, where it found its widest currency.

In Twelver Shi’a writings, *taqiyya* is sometimes elevated almost to the status of a pillar of the faith. In multiple pronouncements, the twelve holy imams, the religious leaders who gave the movement its name, praise taqiyya explicitly. Abundant hadiths extoll it in terms which leave little doubt as to its fundamental status: “He who has no taqiyya has not faith”; “he who forsakes

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[30] Devin Stewart, “Dissimulation in Sunni Islam and Morisco Taqiyya,” p. 453.
[31] Devin Stewart, “Dissimulation in Sunni Islam and Morisco Taqiyya,” p. 454.
[32] Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, “New Remarks on Secrecy and Concealment in Early Imāmī Shi‘ism: the Case of *khatm al-nubuwwa*: Aspects of Twelver Shi‘i Imamology XII,” p. 3.

taqiyya is like him who forsakes prayer"; "nine tenths of faith falls within taqiyya";[33] and perhaps most dramatically, "a believer without taqiyya is like a body without a head."'[34]

In Twelver-Imāmī teachings, taqiyya had its own exemplars across time, dating back well before the arrival of Islam. These champions include the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, as well as Seth, the hidden son of Adam and Eve. Taqiyya is also used as a principle of historical exegesis, by which events in Islamic history that appear incomprehensible (or at least inconvenient) to the Twelver position can be recast in a more favorable light. For instance, the fact that 'Ali recognized the authority of the first three Caliphs to succeed Mohammad -thus potentially invalidating his own claim to leadership, on which all later Shi'a doctrine is based - is ascribed to taqiyya. In this reading, 'Ali did not validate the Caliph's claims in earnest, but merely dissembled. Likewise, the disappearance of the twelfth and final Imam in 874 A.D. is interpreted as an act of taqiyya – a prudential measure undertaken to preserve him from harm until he can return, centuries later, as the messiah.[35]

A signal fact about taqiyya in Twelver Shi'ism however is that it was not just a way of reading the past, or an escape hatch during moments of extreme duress, but a daily practice, woven into everyday life. Dissimulation was raised to the level of a duty, and an act of faith in itself. In Twelver jurisprudence there is even a special term, *dār al-taqiyya*, to indicate the various situations in which taqiyya is not merely allowed, but obligatory. Opponents of the Shi'a seized on this tendency as evidence of the sects' duplicity, hypocrisy and faithlessness. In Sunni eyes, the Shi'a emphasis on taqiyya meant that they could not be trusted.[36]

In response to these accusations, Shi'a thinkers strove to delimit the exact borders of when dissimulation was and was not permitted. A vast body of thought arose whose aim was to distinguish outright lies from statements that only *appeared* to be lies.[37] Falsehood was not permissible, but dissimulation was, and might even be necessary when it was in service of the faith. Imams and jurists wrote copious descriptions of how to swear oaths and give testimony in ways that concealed the truth without falling into outright falsehood. Much of this literature, which relies heavily on punning, wordplay and minute parsings of intention, resembles the equally strenuous products of the Jesuit casuistry, and especially their promotion of mental reservation, or *reservatio mentalis*, as a morally permissible way of evading speaking the truth. As with casuistry, there are signs that these efforts at justification proved to be more engaging for their authors than they were convincing for their intended recipients.

Shi'ite History and Esotericism

To understand the reasons why dissimulation took on such an outsize role among the Twelver Shi'a, we must look to the early history of the movement. Early proponents of the Shi'a cause voiced their beliefs openly, and many suffered martyrdom as a result. However, open adherence to the cause became much more difficult after the Battle of Karbala. This confrontation, which pitted the forces of the 'Umayyad Caliph Yazid I against a small band led by Husayn, the son of

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[33] Etan Kolhberg, "Taqiyya in Shīʿī Theology and Religion," p. 373.

[34] Etan Kohlberg, "Some Imāmī-shīʿī Views on Taqiyya," p. 396.
[35] Etan Kohlberg, "Some Imāmī-shīʿī Views on Taqiyya," p. 397.
[36] Toby Matthiesen, *The Caliph and the Imam: The Making of Sunnism and Shiism*, p. 5.
[37] Etan Kolhberg, "Taqiyya in Shīʿī Theology and Religion," p. 362.

‘Ali and grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, ended with the death of Husayn and the capture or execution of his supporters. In the decades that followed the massacre at Karbala, Shi’ites faced intense persecution at the hands of both the ‘Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates. Meanwhile, the leadership of the pro-'Alid party went underground,[38] devoting their lives to asceticism or disguising their identities entirely. By the mid-eighth century, even the true identity of the Imam – the spiritual successor to ‘Ali and Husayn, and divinely-inspired leader of the Twelver faithful – became a closely guarded secret.

The doctrine of taqiyya thus emerged in the aftermath of a crushing defeat, and in a period of sustained intimidation. It was not initially a method for devising elaborate methods for mixing truth and falsehood. Rather, it was a way of keeping believers alive and at liberty during a period of suffocating harassment. Early pronouncements about taqiyya closely resemble the rules of conspiracy followed by revolutionary and insurrectionary movements of later epochs: don’t preach the doctrine to people unknown to you, don’t expose fellow believers to the scrutiny of authority, and above all, don’t reveal the identity of the leadership to people who don’t already know it.

In its first centuries of existence, Shi’ism was a small movement, and everywhere a minority that was at odds with those in power. Early Shi’ite doctrines about secrecy and concealment concentrated on ensuring the survival of the faithful, even if this meant making collective action nearly impossible. But taqiyya was not simply a pragmatic tactic. For Twelver Shi’ites, it was also an article of faith, which played a central role in a wider theology of secrecy. Polemical treatment of taqiyya, largely written by its Sunni opponents, have tended to obscure this fact. In recent years, scholarship by Maria Dakake, and Lynda Clarke, and Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi has revealed the importance of this second meaning of taqiyya, and the multiple ways in which it informed the teaching of the Twelve Imams and their followers. [39]

Taqiyya, in the sense of holding and maintaining a secret, has played a key role in the development of Twelver theology. In the words of Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, “beyond concealment tactics…taqiyya fills a highly religious and spiritual role” in Twelver religious practice, and is thus an inextricable “part of the Shīʿī piety.”[40] Maria Dakake goes even further, writing that “the principle of secrecy in Shi'ism” “underlies and gives a certain unity to many of the distinct, and sometimes peculiar, aspects of Shi'ite thought.”[41]

Before delving into the theological import of secrecy on Twelver Shi’a thought, it is worth pausing a moment to discuss terminology. Twelver Shi’a thought makes a subtle distinction between taqiyya and kitmān which is not always followed by commentators from other branches of Islam.Dakake points out that while taqiyya and kitmān are sometimes used interchangeably in Shi’ite texts, taqiyya more commonly refers to believers’ hiding their religious affiliation as

[38] Maria Dakake, “Hiding in Plain Sight: The Practical and Doctrinal Significance of Secrecy in Shi'ite Islam,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Jun., 2006, Vol. 74, No. 2, pp. 330.
[39] Hans Kippenberg, Henry Corbin, Josef van Ess, Daniel De Smet and Orkhan Mir-Kasimov have all likewise investigated the place of taqiyya in Shi’ite esotericism.
[40] Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, “New Remarks on Secrecy and Concealment in Early Imāmī Shiʿism: the Case of *khatm al-nubuwwa*: Aspects of Twelver Shiʿi Imamology XII,” p. 5.
[41] Maria Dakake, “Hiding in Plain Sight: The Practical and Doctrinal Significance of Secrecy in Shi'ite Islam,” p. 329.

Shi'ites, while kitmān pertains more to the concealment of their leaders' mystical teachings.[42] Similarly, Lynda Clarke glosses *taqiyya* and *kitmān* separately as "precautionary dissimulation of belief" and "esoteric silence."[43] Kohlberg adds that although kitmān is "generally synonymous with taqiyya," it is used more often to express notions of concealment (*suppressio veri*) rather than of dissimulation (*suggestio falsi*).

Therefore, we are dealing with two modes of dissimulation: one that is outer-directed, pragmatic, and political, and a second one, which is inner-directed, esoteric and spiritual. These two modes of concealment were not mutually exclusive. Indeed, it seems likely that the practical need of Shi'ites to conceal their religious affiliation led them to conceive of religious instruction in general in terms of ascending levels of secrecy. As Lyndal Clarke persuasively argues, to Shi'ites, kitmān was essentially a form of esotericism.[44] The Twelver doctrine contained secret truths, known only to the adept. These had to be guarded not only from unbelievers, but also from the masses of Shi'a not yet spiritually worthy of them.

According to an account by 'Ali b. Musa Ibn Tawus, a Shi'i scholar of the 13th century A.D., Shi'ism contained a hidden kernel of doctrine which had been passed directly from God to Muhammad to 'Ali. 'Ali then passed this knowledge on to his eleven descendants, the holy Imams who succeeded him as infallible, divinely-guided spiritual leaders. Only they preserved the true kernel of the Islamic religion, while the remaining majority of the Muslim 'ummah lived in error.

Only parts of the Imams' occult knowledge could be made known to the rest of the believers. But as Georg Simmel observed long ago, secrets have an allure which extends far beyond their content. Defending the Imams' secret teachings from the unbelieving gave the embattled Shi'a a "sense of superiority and solidarity." By performing taqiyya themselves, Twelver Shi'ites could follow the Imams' example and participate in the life of the elect. In Lyndal Clarke's words, "*Taqiyya* is the Shi'a *Imitatio* of the Imams."[45] If concealment began out of necessity, it evolved into a way of enhancing the sects' prestige. It also reversed and re-wrote the terms of their earthly existence. Rather than being an endangered minority, possession of the secret transformed them into a spiritual elite. Likewise, the small number of adherents was not a sign of their marginality, but proof of the refined nature of the knowledge which only they possessed.

Throughout its early history, esotericism was essential for maintaining Shi'isms mystique in the eyes of its adherents. Even in moments when Shi'ism became popular with regional elites or ruling dynasties, Shi'ite tradition insisted that true believers remained few and far between. They were an "elite and elect community, designated by God."[46]

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[42] Maria Dakake, "Hiding in Plain Sight: The Practical and Doctrinal Significance of Secrecy in Shi'ite Islam," p. 333.

[43] Lynda Clarke, "The Rise and Decline of *Taqiyya* in Twelver Shiʿism," in T. Lawson, ed., *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought*, London, 2005, pp. 46-63.

[44] Lynda Clarke, "The Rise and Decline of *Taqiyya* in Twelver Shiʿism," p. 46.

[45] Lynda Clarke, "The Rise and Decline of *Taqiyya* in Twelver Shiʿism," p. 47.

[46] Maria Dakake, "Hiding in Plain Sight: The Practical and Doctrinal Significance of Secrecy in Shi'ite Islam," p. 328.

But what was the secret which taqiyya was meant to protect? Although it may seem to refer to any of the various aspects of Shi'ism which may appear controversial to a nonbeliever, such as its messianism, the prophetic status of the imams, its teaching on the nature of the Koran, or the 'true' nature of Muhammad's companions, it can be difficult to know *which* of these was meant. Shi'ite texts on taqiyya contain voluminous discussions of *how* to maintain the secret, when it is necessary to do so, and what mitigating factors (such as risk of bodily harm) might absolve one from doing so. However, they are noticeably reticent about the nature of the information being kept secret. This comes about only in fragments and scattered allusions. As Amir-Moezzi, this was itself a form of taqiyya, known as the "dispersal of information."[47]

Dissimulation in the rest of the Islamic World

Although the Shi'a interpretation of taqiyya was a favorite target of abuse for Sunni polemicists, their writings tended to ignore its second, spiritual dimension. Amir-Moezzi argues that it was a focus of scorn precisely because taqiyya occupied such a "highly religious and spiritual role"[48] in Shi'ite piety. This may be, but it seems more likely that taqiyya was a focus of attacks because it made for an easy target. The practice of tactical dissimulation smacked of dishonesty and double-dealing. Many medieval Sunni writers equated Shi'ites with the *Munafiqun*, or 'Hypocrites,' a group derided in the Koran for outwardly supporting the Muslim cause while working to undermine it on the sly.[49] A common trope of anti-Shi'a polemicists was thus to exaggerate the role of taqiyya in Shi'ite practice, to the point where it seemed to override all other injunctions of religious law. These attacks continue to the present day, especially among Wahhābi ideologists, who see in taqiyya proof of a Shi'ite conspiracy to "destroy Islam from within."[50]

The equation of taqiyya exclusively with Shi'ism is at once dangerous and misguided on several counts. For one, except for possibly the worst periods of persecution in the 8th and 9th centuries , taqiyya was never as pervasive in Shi'ite thought as it appeared to be in the eyes of its Sunni opponents. Even in the classical era Shi'ite jurists varied tremendously in the emphasis they placed on taqiyya as a religious duty.[51] While some indeed elevated dissimulation to the status of an article of the faith, others were far more measured in their endorsement, restricting its applicability only to those situations which threatened the most grievous harm to individuals or communities. Still others abandoned the practice of taqiyya entirely, and preferred to reveal and fight for their true belief, even if this should result in torture, death or martyrdom.

The degree to which jurists stressed the importance of taqiyya ebbed and flowed based on political and social circumstances, waxing in periods of persecution and waning under more tolerant regimes. Even when it was most in force, taqiyya was regarded as a temporary measure to be employed only so long as Shi'ites remained threatened. In most recent Shi'a theology and jurisprudence, both forms of taqiyya and kitmān have retreated almost entirely into the background. The success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran is responsible for this shift. Tactics of

[47] M. A. Amir-Moezzi, "New Remarks on Secrecy and Concealment in Early Imāmī Shiʻism: the Case of *khatm al-nubuwwa*: Aspects of Twelver Shiʻi Imamology XII," p. 7
[48] M. A. Amir-Moezzi, "New Remarks on Secrecy and Concealment in Early Imāmī Shiʻism: the Case of *khatm al-nubuwwa*: Aspects of Twelver Shiʻi Imamology XII," p. 5.
[49] Devin Stewart, "Dissimulation in Sunni Islam and Morisco Taqiyya," p. 449.
[50] Louis Medoff, "TAQIYA i. In Shiʿism," https://iranicaonline.org/articles/taqiya-i-shiism
[51] Etan Kohlberg, "Some Imāmī-shīʿī Views on Taqiyya,"pp. 395-402.

dissimulation make little sense in a state run by Imāmī clerics. Moreover, as Iranian Shi'a have sought a larger role in global Islam they have tended to downplay the importance of taqiyya in their tradition, as it is seen as a major stumbling block to rapprochement with the Sunni world. Already in the 1960s, during a period of unrest in Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini ruled that taqiyya was not permissible if it became an excuse for inaction in the face of "devious tyrants"[52] bent on subverting the tenets of Islamic law.[53] Taking a similar stance, the sociologist Ali Shariati, one of the main secular theorists of the Iranian revolution, dismissed excessive reliance on taqiyya as a symptom of feudal reaction, and sought a way to reinterpret it for an age of anti-colonial struggle.[54]

In spite of all this, taqiyya remains, in Louis Medoff's phrase, a "veritable bête-noire" of anti-Shi'ite discourse. This is especially ironic, since Sunnis have likewise practiced forms of religiously-sanctioned dissimulation throughout their history. As long ago as 1906, the first Western student of taqiyya, Ignac Goldziher, pointed out that it was doctrinally available to Sunnis as well as Shi'ites. The former were less apt to use it simply because they were almost always the majority, as well as the ruling power. This changed of course when Sunnis came under Christian rule, which happened at various points throughout the Middle Ages, for instance during the Crusader conquest of the Holy Land, the Byzantine reconquest of Syria and Crete, and the Norman conquest of Sicily. However, the most notable case of Muslim polity coming under Christian overlordship was surely the joint Castilian-Aragonese conquest of al-Andalus, which culminated in the subjugation of the Emirate of Granada in 1492. At a stroke, the Kingdom of Spain gained tens of thousands (maybe as many as 300,000[55] – though estimates vary) Muslim subjects. In 1502, those residing in Castile underwent forced conversion to Christianity, to be followed by Valencia in 1526.

In the century that followed, despite the pressures imposed on them by the crown and the Inquisition, many of these converted Muslims or *Moriscos*, nonetheless maintained their original faith in secret. Many studies of crypto-Islam have suggested that the Moriscos' religious feigning was motivated by an understanding of taqiyya. There is little clear evidence for this, however. In part, this is because we understandably have few religious texts written by Moriscos from the period following their conversion. Those texts that we do have largely come from North Africa, penned in response to questions sent from the other side of the Straits of Gibraltar. Of these religious rulings or *fatwas*, the most frequently cited is one issued in 1504 by the North African jurist Abū l-'Abbās Ahmad b. Abī Jum'a al-Maghrāwī al-Wahrānī. This *responsum* provides Moriscos with a broad dispensation to feign adherence to Christianity as they see fit. It permits them wide latitude to perform acts that are forbidden and omit acts that are obligatory. Al-Wahrānī allows Moriscos to eat pork and drink wine if they are forced to do so, to pray with Christians, utter blasphemous Christian creeds and even insult the Prophet Muhammad – all of

[52] Louis Medoff, "TAQIYA i. In Shiʿism," https://iranicaonline.org/articles/taqiya-i-shiism
[53] Lynda Clarke, "The Rise and Decline of *Taqiyya* in Twelver Shiʿism," p. 57.
[54] Ali Rahnema, *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shariʿati*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), pp. 303-305.
[55] Amalia Zomeño, "Families and Family Ties in Nasrid Granada," in ed. Adela Fábregas, *The Nasrid Kingdom of Granada between East and West: Thirteenth to Fifteenth Centuries*, (Leiden: Brill, 2021), p. 197.

these are allowable so long as the Moriscos remain steadfast in their hearts, and retain an inward conviction of what is proscribed and what is required by religious law. [56]

Some scholars have seen in al-Wahrānī ‘s fatwa proof that taqiyya was both ubiquitous and understood in post-*Reconquista* Spain. Others have objected that the text offers no theoretical justification for dissimulation, and indeed never uses the term taqiyya. Indeed, it appears in none of the Sunni rulings written by North African jurists in response to Iberian petitioners.

Because of the stigma surrounding dissimulation, Sunni authors were loath to call taqiyya by name. They did, however, make ample use of the judicial terminology surrounding the related concept of ikrāh, or compulsion, whose terms cover many of the same topics and often rely on identical Koranic proof texts. Through a meticulous study of *fatwās*, legal manuals, hadith collections and Koranic commentaries from the period immediately following the end of the *Reconquista*, Devin Stewart has been able to show that North African jurists consulted by the Moriscos made full use of the concept of taqiyya and the literature surrounding it, even if they did not refer to it by the terms made famous by anti-Shi'ite polemics.

Theories of dissimulation were well known in the Sunni world, and called upon by religious scholars to make sense of situations in which believers suddenly found themselves out of power or in the minority. Knowledge of these doctrines was not restricted to the world of practicing (or dissimulating) Muslims, however. It seems to have been familiar to at least some Spanish Christians as well. During the forced conversion of Muslims in Valencia in 1526, the inhabitants of the Muslim town of María, near Zaragoza, rose in rebellion against the crown. The town was promptly besieged. The investiture only ended when a Christian nobleman informed the Muslim rebels that their own religion allowed them to feign adherence to Christianity:

> Sad and unfortunate people, who in this manner will deliver yourselves into the hands of your enemies! If you refuse to be baptized in order not to go against your Qur'an, then learn something that is permitted to you therein: show yourselves to be Christians and get baptized, while keeping your heart for Muhammad. You will thereby be delivered from the present danger, if you are forced to surrender by arms, and from future dangers as you roam as fugitives the world.[57]

This is not the only reference to dissimulation in Christian Spanish sources. In his history of the expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain, Guadalajara y Xavier writes that the Moriscos were difficult to convert in large part because "they could feign any religion outwardly and without sinning, as long as they kept their hearts nevertheless devoted to their false imposter of a prophet."[58] This is a reasonably precise (if prejudiced) description of the doctrine of true belief under compulsion articulated in Q 16:106.

It seems evident that some idea of a religiously-sanctioned dissimulation was current across Muslim and Christian circles in early modern Iberia, even if the terms of its articulation differed somewhat from those found in Shi'a sources. How much of the theory behind it was available to the average Moriscos remains an open question. After 1502, they were largely cut off from

[56] Devin Stewart, "Dissimulation in Sunni Islam and Morisco Taqiyya," p. 443.
[57] Devin Stewart, "Dissimulation in Sunni Islam and Morisco Taqiyya," p. 444.
[58] Devin Stewart, "Dissimulation in Sunni Islam and Morisco Taqiyya," p. 445.

organized religious instruction. Most were also not literate in Arabic, as its instruction was outlawed by the Inquisition.

A degree of advanced Islamic education nonetheless persisted in Iberia into the mid-17th century. In 1640, church authorities called on a learned Morisco named Ahmad b. Qasim al-Hajari to aid them in deciphering the Lead Books of Sacramonte, an elaborate forgery designed to prove that the Moriscos of Granada were originally Christian, and among the first inhabitants of Spain. Al-Hajari was proficient in Arabic grammar and Islamic philosophy. He faced a quandary, however, in that knowledge of both subjects was punishable by being burned at the stake. He resolved his dilemma by lying about how he had acquired his learning. Writing about this episode later, Al-Hajari justified this tactic with a reference to the work of al-Ghazali,[59] who wrote that lying is permitted when it helps the oppressed "escape the tyranny of his pursuer."

We should not expect most other Moriscos to have been so clever. But this does not mean that they did not practice a version of taqiyya all the same. As Devin Stewart points out, dissimulation is a practice as much as it is a theory. Beyond merely concealing adherence to Islam, Moriscos had to persuasively mimic full adherence to Christianity. This must have involved a sustained daily performance, consisting of hundreds of individual actions. Drawing on the work of Erving Goffman, Stewart likens this performative aspect of taqiyya to racial passing. Tariq al-Jamil of Swarthmore is more skeptical of this equation, countering that it lacks the explicitly bodily dimension of passing. However, he does agree with Stewart that taqiyya "is not a single statement or action during the time of duress" but rather a "careful sustained performance that may involve many disparate acts" which combine to form "a complex narrative that makes up an individual's social self."[60]

Professional and Sectarian Taqiyya

Like most forms of dissimulation, taqiyya is hard to spot in the historical record. Although there is a body of jurisprudence justifying its use (and a countervailing one condemning it), actually spotting it in action is difficult, since those who practiced concealment successfully by definition did not betray their 'true' selves or beliefs.

In the absence of diaries or private confessions, most of the recognizable uses of taqiyya that we possess occur in a professional context. In late medieval Iraq and Syria, Shi'ite legal scholars frequently disguised their true beliefs in order to study with Sunni teachers in the foremost centers of judicial learning. Afterwards, some of these Shi'a jurists continued to preach and practice law as Sunnis, even though their origins and inner convictions were Shi'ite. These scholars took various steps to make sure they were accepted in a hostile environment. Some disguised their background by changing their official genealogy and surnames, especially the *nisbah*, the adjectival appellation which usually designated one's place of origin, such as al-Baghdadi for Baghdad or al-Dimashqi for Damascus.[61]

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[59] Devin Stewart, "Dissimulation in Sunni Islam and Morisco Taqiyya," p. 480.

[60] Tariq al-Jamil, spoken remarks, Swarthmore Religion Department, https://www.swarthmore.edu/news-events/hiding-plain-sight-shi%E2%80%99i-islam-secrecy-and-religious

[61] Devin Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy: Twelver Shiite Responses to the Sunni Legal System*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press 1998), p. 100.

For these Shi'ite clerics, disguise was imperative, since failing to hide their true beliefs could prove to be fatal. This was shown by the martyrdom of the Shi'ite scholars Muhammad Jamaluddin al-Makki al-Amili al-Jizzini in 1385 and Zayn al-Din al-Juba'i al'Amili in 1558. It could also result in less deadly but still painful consequences. Exposed as a Shi'ite n 1312, Sulayman b. 'Abd al-Qawi al-Tufi, a Hanbali jurist teaching in Cairo, was removed from his teaching position, beaten, imprisoned, publicly humiliated and then banished.[62]

In early 20th century Afghanistan, Shi'ites , who made up about 20% of the country's population, were not normally at risk of being martyred for their faith. They did, however, face professional discrimination and sporadic communal violence. The group of Isma'ili Shi'a known as the Qizilbash was a particular target of resentment. They were descended from administrative and military specialists brought to govern Afghanistan in the 1730s, by its conqueror, the Shi'ite Nader Shah of Persia. After control of Afghanistan passed back in the hands of local Sunni dynasts, the Qizilbash retained their importance, serving both as a ruling cadre and as the Afghan Shah's personal bodyguard. During the first Anglo-Afghan War (1838-1842) most of the Qizilbash sided with the British. At the war's end, many left for India with the defeated English. Those that stayed began practicing taqiyya, pretending to be Sunni in order to save their lives and property from harm.[63] In subsequent decades, the remaining Qizilbash found that they could only keep their positions in government if they maintained the pretense of being Sunni. Official discrimination against the Shi'a was only ended by the short-lived Constitution of 1977. Despite this, the Qizilbash maintained an outsize presence in elite professions such as business, medicine, law and education as well as in the state bureaucracy. For all their success, many Qizilbash still found it necessary to conceal their religion, especially in dealing with the more hostilely disposed Sunni countryside. Writing in 1977, the American scholar Louis Dupree claimed that is was common for "Shi'i bureaucrats and technicians still try to 'pass for Pushtun,'" – which in this context meant to pose as Sunni.[64]

The Qizilbash were also known to practice taqiyya when they ventured outside of Afghanistan into other areas under Sunni control. This was especially true during the *hajj*. The pilgrimage to Mecca could be fraught with dangers for Shi'ite travelers, who were known to be occasionally killed in or en route to the holy city. Iranian Shi'ites commonly took similar precautions when they traveled to the Hijaz. Indeed, Cyrus Gordon argues that the frequency of religious dissimulation during the hajj normalized the practice for all Iranians. According to Gordon, by the 1940s, when he was stationed there with the United States Army, taqiyya "was obvious in public and private life"[65]

Dissimulation was in fact such an accepted part of civic life in Iran that it had spread far outside the Shi'a sphere. Where in most of the world taqiyya was a technique for living securely as a Shi'ite in a Sunni-dominated space, in Iran it became a strategy for various religious minorities to cope with the dominant Shi'ite majority. It was taken up by all the major faith groups present in Iran, including the Bahais, Jews, Christians and Sunnis. The Bahai, whose participation in

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[62] Devin Stewart, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, p. 71.
[63] Louis Dupree, "Further Notes on *Taqiyya*: Afghanistan," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 99, No. 4 (1979), p. 680.
[64] Louis Dupree, "Further Notes on *Taqiyya*: Afghanistan," p. 681.
[65] Cyrus Gordon, "The Substratum of Taqiyya in Iran," p. 192.

civic life was severely curtailed by discriminatory legislation, were especially prone to acting the part of believing Shi'ites in order to hold government jobs or other elite positions in society.

Iran was not the only place in the Islamic world where forms of dissimulation analogous to taqiyya were practiced by non- or near- Islamic groups across the Muslim world. In the 19th century, it prudential concealment seems to have been widespread among various minority groups in the Ottoman and Qajar domains, including the Nusayri-Alawis in Syria, the Christians of the Trabzon and Erzurum regions in northeastern Anatolia, and among Zoroastrians of Iran.[66] The Druze even apparently made a form of taqiyya part of their official (though rarely-shared) doctrine The spiritual founder of the movement, the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim, is said to have told his followers that "if any religion is stronger than you" they should follow it, while keeping his teaching "in your hearts."[67]

Although the Druze practice a heterodox religion that is distinct from any of the main branches of Islam, its roots are in the Ismaili Shi'ism of Fatimid Egypt. The Guptis of India, another group noted for the widespread practice of taqiyya, likewise share Ismaili roots. Originally members of a Hindu caste of vegetable sellers from Gujarat, they converted to a form of Ismaili Shi'ism as a community in the first years of the 20th century.[68] However, following their conversion, the Guptis, whose name means "secret" or "hidden ones," did not live as Ismailis nor as adherents of any of the other, more mainstream varieties of Islam. Instead, they long maintained a public identity as practicing Hindus. For the Guptis, Hinduism is not merely a veneer used to defend against discrimination. It is also an integral part of their belief system, which holds that the Aga Khan is not just the spiritual leader of the Ismaili Shi'a, but is the tenth and final *avatara*, or incarnation of Vishnu.

For decades, Guptis maintained their belief in the Ismaili Imams in secret. Publically, they were members of a Hindu caste who described their houses of worship in completely Hindu terminology as *dharmashalas* rather than *jama'at-khanas*. Even today, many Guptis across the Indian subcontinent conceal their connection to Islam, and are very reluctant to discuss anything related to the Ismaili Imam, to the point where family members sometimes do not know they are Ismailis at all.[69] However, beginning in the 1950s, one group of Guptis, from Bhavnagar in southeastern Gujarat began to cautiously abrogate their concealment. By the 1990s, they had 'come out' as fully fledged members of the Ismaili ummah with their own, Muslim, house or worship, thus marking the decisive "end of an era of taqiyya" for the community.[70] This reversal should serve as a reminder of the dynamic nature of taqiyya. Never an immutable part of religious doctrine, it is always subject to change, abrogation and even abandonment if external conditions for worship become more advantageous. As Aharon Layish has written in reference to the Druze, "Taqiyya is a dynamic, not a static, doctrine; adaptation and assimilation to the

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[66] M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "New Remarks on Secrecy and Concealment in Early Imāmī Shi'ism: the Case of *khatm al-nubuwwa*: Aspects of Twelver Shi'i Imamology XII," p. 4.
[67] Aharon Layish, "Taqiyya among the Druzes," *Asian and African Studies* 19 (3), p. 251.
[68] Shafique N. Virani, "*Taqiyya* and Identity in a South Asian Community," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (February) 2011, pp. 99-139.
[69] Shafique N. Virani, "*Taqiyya* and Identity in a South Asian Community," p. 131.
[70] Shafique N. Virani, "*Taqiyya* and Identity in a South Asian Community," p. 124.

environment are not one-time acts but continuous processes determined by changing circumstances of place and time."[71]

Taqiyya's Reception in the West: Goldziher and Gobineau

Academic treatments of dissimulation are almost never neutral. The scholarship around each of its forms, whether Muslim, Christian, or secular worlds, is inevitably drawn into debates within competing strands of religious tradition, as well as moral judgments over whether concealment and deception are ever truly justifiable. To study dissimulation, therefore, is to confront a historiographical landscape shaped and deformed by multiple fault lines of stress.

As befits a doctrine whose essential teaching is one of secrecy, an awareness of taqiyya dawned only very slowly in Western scholarship. Until as late as 1975, detailed knowledge of taqiyya depended largely on the testimony of just two authors: Ignaz (or Ignác) Goldziher (1850-1921) and Joseph Arthur, Comte de Gobineau (1816-1882). The two men could hardly have been more different. Goldziher was a superb Arabist and meticulous scholar whose numerous articles on the history of the early Islamic religious law, legal and poetic tradition made him the "easily the grandest Orientalist of his generation"[72] in Robert Irwin's estimation. By contrast, the Comte de Gobineau was a rank amateur in the field of oriental learning, possessed of only a smattering of "kitchen Persian," augmented by a supreme self-confidence in his own linguistic abilities. A diplomat, novelist and all around man-of-letters, he is best remembered today for his disastrous contributions to the development of 'scientific' racism through his infamous *Essay on the Inequality of Races* (1853-55). In spite of his lack of expertise, it was Gobineau's description of taqiyya (for which he always used the term *ketman*), which was to have the wider influence.

Gobineau based his description of religious dissimulation in Islam on his direct experience as a French consul in Tehran, then (as now) the capital of the largest Shi'a state in the world. Goldziher developed his contrasting account through deep immersion in Arabic literary tradition and an encyclopedic knowledge of Islamic law jurisprudence which, though striving for objectivity, was shaped by a definitely Sunni perspective. A closer look at Goldziher's treatment of taqiyya, and his wider trajectory as a student of Islam, reveals what a difficult subject taqiyya could be for even the most gifted scholar.

Goldziher outlined his view of the Islamic doctrine of dissimulation in a 1906 article in the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* entitled "Das Prinzip der takijja im Islam."[73] It is a characteristically scrupulous accounting, following taqiyya from its roots in Koranic proof texts through its adoption and articulation by the Kharijite, Sunni and Shi'ite branches of Islam. Goldziher defines taqiyya as a "*terminus technicus* for the excusable violation of the creed,"[74] and notes that it is permitted in Sunni texts, especially when a believer's life is in danger. However, while taqiyya is approved of by even such strict jurists as Ibn Hazm, it is

[71] Aharon Layish, "Taqiyya among the Druzes," p. 261. cited in Shafique N. Virani, "*Taqiyya* and Identity in a South Asian Community," p. 133.
[72] Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and Their Enemies*, (London: Allen Lane, 2006), p. 295.
[73] Ignaz Goldziher, "Das Prinzip der *takijja* im Islam," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlāndichen Gesselschaft* 60 (1906), pp. 213-226.
[74] Ignaz Goldziher, "Das Prinzip der *takijja* im Islam," p. 216.

rarely considered laudable. It is a "concession to the weak." The more honorable course is to endure suffering and, if need be, martyrdom.[75]

In Shi'ism, of course, taqiyya has a much more favorable connotation, and it is there that Goldziher devotes the bulk of his attention. He quotes many of the more dramatic pronouncements made by the Imams in favor of dissimulation, and observes that in Shi'ite traditions "taqiyya has a very prominent, almost dogmatic place."[76] Where for Sunnis it is only an allowance, in Shi'ism, it rises to the position of "an indispensable duty that no one may omit out of overzealousness." In a wider discussion of the uses and applications of dissimulation among the Shi'a, Goldziher touches on various legal gimmicks associated with taqiyya, such as the use of elaborate and ambiguous wordplay in order to avoid taking compromising oaths. He also notes its presence as a way of explaining some of the more confounding episodes in Shi'ite history, such as the disappearance or 'occultation' (the Arabic term is *gaybah*) of the 12th Imam, which was retroactively seen as an example of *kitman* lasting centuries.[77]

Though measured overall, the general bent of Goldziher's treatment of taqiyya is strongly negative. He is particularly disapproving of its use among the Shi'a. "Free application" of dissimulation has led it to decline into "frivolous hypocrisy." This in turn has ""had a very bad ethical effect on the general spirit of Islam in Persia."[78] (For confirmation, he cites Gobineau's *Les religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie centrale*).[79] In later publications, Goldziher was even more condemnatory, writing that for its users, taqiyya was a "school of suppressed fury against one's powerful adversary." [80] This fury was then apt to bubble out in the form of "unrestrained hatred and fanaticism." As evidence, Goldziher points to the Shi'ite practices of cursing one's enemies, which was elevated by the Imams into a holy act,[81] and to their equation of the inner struggle caused by practicing taqiyya with the fighting of a "religious war."[82] He found these and other "peculiar religious doctrines" engendered by the use of dissimulation to be "totally incongruous with orthodox Islam."[83]

The sources of Goldziher's disapproval of dissimulation must be sought in his religious and academic formation. Born in 1850 to a Jewish family in Székesfehérvár, Hungary, Goldziher studied Hebrew and oriental languages in Budapest and at the universities of Leipzig and Leiden. He spent 1873 and 1874 traveling across the Middle East, perfecting his Arabic and living, for all intents and purposes, as a Muslim. In Cairo, Goldziher studied with Islamic scholars at the al-Azhar University, the preeminent bastion of Sunni legal thought . Although he was immersed in the world of Islamic learning, he had yet to fully experience Islam as a religion. Goldziher badly wanted to attend prayers in one of Cairo's great mosques. However, as a nonbeliever, he was barred from entry. With the help of a Syrian colleague, disguised as an Arab in turban and caftan,

[75] Ignaz Goldziher, "Das Prinzip der *takijja* im Islam," p. 216.
[76] Ignaz Goldziher, "Das Prinzip der *takijja* im Islam," p. 219.
[77] Ignaz Goldziher, "Das Prinzip der *takijja* im Islam," p. 218.
[78] "Zur Rechtfertigung dieses zweideutigen Vorgehens, das in seiner freien Andwendung als frivole Heuchelei den allgemeinen Geist des Islam in Persien in ethischer Beziehung sehr übel beeinflußt hat." Ignaz Goldziher, "Das Prinzip der *takijja* im Islam," p. 217 .
[79] Ignaz Goldziher, "Das Prinzip der *takijja* im Islam," p. 217.
[80] Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, p. 181.
[81] Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, p. 181.
[82] Ignaz Goldziher, "Das Prinzip der *takijja* im Islam," p. 221.
[83] Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, p. 181.

he managed to enter the mosque by the tomb of Imam Shāfi'ī in time for the great Friday prayer. It was one of the most profound religious experiences of Goldziher's life. In the diary he kept during this period, he wrote that "In the midst of the thousands of the pious, I rubbed my forehead against the floor of the mosque. Never in my life was I more devout, more truly devout, than on that exalted Friday." [84]

Goldziher had tremendous sympathy for Islam, both as a philosophical system and as a lived experience of worship. In a later diary entry, he wrote that during his time in Cairo he had entered into the spirit of Islam "to such an extent that ultimately I became inwardly convinced that I myself was a Muslim."[85] Despite this degree of fellow feeling, and even though he was told he could have a splendid career in Egypt if he only became Muslim, Goldziher never converted. Although he had very mixed feelings about the Jewish community in Budapest and Judaism as it was practiced in his time, he also never converted to Christianity, though this cost him a chance at a university position for many years.

Resolute in a faith for which he had more than a little disdain, he tended to be dismissive of those who were less steadfast. That Arminius Vámbéry, his first great teacher in oriental studies, had converted to Christianity for the sake of his academic career seems to have been one of the many sources of Goldziher's resentment towards his mentor.[86] Vámbéry, a "master of dissimulation" according to Raphael Patai, had also converted to Islam for a time, and played the part of a Sufi dervish, a disguise which allowed him to travel through parts of Central Asia previously off-limits to Westerners.

Goldziher refused to follow suit. He decried his mentor's "total unreliability and untruthfulness," and referred to him mockingly as "the Dervish." His own enormous learning and facility with languages allowed him to maintain a certain level of imposture, but he never allowed it to slip into a full performance of dissimulation. At Al-Azhar, he took delight in correcting other student's grammatical mistakes, and enjoyed being mistaken for a Muslim by his teachers.[87] But after that single experience in the Cairene mosque he never again tried to bluff his way into a place of worship where he wasn't welcome, and when he was asked about his religion by fellow students, he would reply, (in Arabic), "I am a believer in God," a traditional formula indicating that he was a monotheist but not a member of the faithful.[88]

Goldziher's hostility to taqiyya therefore can be said to have had multiple sources, both personal and doctrinal. It came in the first place from the attitude of the Sunni polemicists, whose stance Goldziher imbibed during his intellectual formation at Al-Azhar. It was also rooted in a personal aversion towards anything resembling religious insincerity. Perhaps in no small part because he cost himself so much by refusing it, 'strategic' conversion of any kind was odious to Goldziher, as was any compromise in matters of faith. Unwilling to cross a threshold himself and unwilling to pretend, it is no wonder then that he saw taqiyya as not just morally degrading, but ultimately futile.

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[84]Raphael Patai, *Ignaz Goldziher and His Oriental Diary: A Translation and Psychological Portrait*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), p. 28.
[85] Ignaz Goldziher, *Tagebuch*, ed. Alexander Scheiber, (Leiden: Brill, 1978), p. 59.
[86] Raphael Patai, *Ignaz Goldziher and His Oriental Diary*, p. 38.
[87] Raphael Patai, *Ignaz Goldziher and His Oriental Diary*, p. 152.
[88] Raphael Patai, *Ignaz Goldziher and His Oriental Diary*, p. 152.

Comte de Gobinieau

Joseph Arthur de Gobineau was born in 1816 to an old family of notables from Bordeaux. His father, Louis, was an army officer and a supporter of the monarchy. He was imprisoned by Napoleon's secret police for supporting a Bourbon restoration, and made a captain after the ascension of Louis XVIII, only to lose the position again at the arrival of King Louis Phillippe. Young Arthur inherited his father's royalist politics, as well as his overwhelming hatred of the French Revolution. His early literary career in Paris was spent in the fractious company of Bourbon legitimists, pouring scorn on the bourgeois mores prevalent during the reign of the citizen king, while extolling the "charity, courage, virtue and intelligence"[89] of the old aristocracy. In time, Gobineau would transmute reverence for the old feudal nobility and contempt for the rest of society into a general theory of history, in which valiant, racially-pure aristocracies are forever succumbing to decadence and demoralization through interbreeding with their inferiors. This conception of perpetual decline became the germ of his first major published work, the infamous *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, which was to play such a major role in the later development of European racism.

By the time of the *Essai*'s publication (1853-55) Gobineau's own career was on the rise. He established a close friendship with Alexis de Tocqueville, who later gave him his *chef de cabinet* after he became France's Foreign Minister following the revolution of 1848.[90] Gobineau spent the next thirty years in the diplomatic service, mostly abroad. He worked in a succession of French embassies and consulates in places as close as Bern and Frankfurt, and as far afield as Newfoundland and Brazil. But it was to be his two stints for the French mission to Persia in Tehran, first as secretary and chargé d'affaires from 1855 to 1858, and later as minister, (1862 - 1863) that were to be the most formative for his thought and literary output. Gobineau's two most significant works, *Trois ans en Asie* (1859) and *Les religions et philosophies dans l'Asie centrale* (1865) were both based on his time there, and it was these books that brought him to the attention of scholars such as Goldziher and lay readers like Miłosz.

That his posting to Tehran proved to be so fertile was due in large part because Gobineau had long been fixated on the Islamic world. A childhood friend of Gobineau's recalled that when they were in school in Switzerland, "all his aspirations were towards the East. He dreamt only of mosques and minarets; he called himself a Muslim, ready to make his pilgrimage to Mecca."[91] For the young Gobineau, the Middle East was a pure space of fantasy, in which the romance of the middle ages had persisted into the modern age. As he came of age, he more and more wanted to be recognized as a proper scholar and orientalist. He claimed to have taught himself several eastern languages, including Sanskrit and Zend. However, his knowledge seems to have been limited to a middling grasp of Persian and a smattering of very poor Arabic.[92] Even so, Gobineau never allowed his lack of ability to stand in the way of his ambitions. The results were disastrous. His attempt at deciphering cuneiform resulted in a farrago of nonsense, which was easily seen as such by his contemporaries. Likewise, his history of Persia (*Histoires des Perses*, 1869), which

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[89] Michael D. Biddiss, *Father of Racist Ideology: The Social and Political Thought of Count Gobineau*, (New York: Weybright & Talley, 1970), p. 20.
[90] Jean Calmard, "Gobineau, Joseph Arthur de," *Enyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. XI, Fasc. 1, p. 20.
[91] Robert Irwin, "Gobineau, the Would-be Orientalist," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 26, No. 1-2 (2016), p. 322.
[92] Robert Irwin, "Gobineau, the Would-be Orientalist," p. 326.

was full of legendary material presented as fact and shot through with his racial theories about the ancient Aryans, was a work "devoid of any scholarly value"[93] in the words of a contemporary biographer, and was dismissed as "rubbish" even by his friends.

However, the two books Gobineau wrote about his actual travels in Iran, *Trois ans en Asie* and *Les religions et philosophies dans l'Asie centrale*, were received much more warmly, and to this day they continue to enjoy a stronger reputation than the rest of his work. They benefit enormously from being written, at least in parts, from first hand observation and testimony. Although laced with dubious racial theories[94] and composed with a blithe indifference to written sources, the two books enjoy the influence of first-hand contact with actual Persians and Muslim believers. What's more, in writing them, Gobineau benefited greatly from his friendships with learned Iranians whom he used to visit while *charge d'affaires* in Teheran. Additionally, he had received linguistic help from a Persian-speaking Jewish Rabbi named Lalazar, with whom he also collaborated on a translation (into Persian!) of Descartes' *Discourse on Method*.[95]

In letters he sent back to Tocqueville during his stay in Teheran, Gobineau revealed himself to be a perceptive observer of his Persian surroundings, though one whose observations were always filtered through a heavy scrim of prejudice. In one letter, Gobineau boasts of speaking Persian "fluently enough" and writes to temper Western conceptions of the Persians as a group: "they are not angels, nor are they perfectly honest, but neither are they the perverse ghouls which they are represented to be."[96] In another letter, Gobineau says the Persians are not nearly as "fanatical" in their religion as some Europeans think. Although their "philosophical inclinations vacillate between ecstasy and atheism," most tend toward religious indifference, and at most a quarter could be considered "practicing Mohammedans."[97]

However, in other letters, Gobineau sets these more enlightened thoughts aside, and complains vehemently about Persian tendency towards corruption, theft and dishonesty: "to lie nearly always, to cheat as much as possible, to find sexual inversion natural despite religious laws … these are the sorry qualities to which Persians, like most Asiatics, have reverted."[98] Still, Gobineau praises the strength of their family bonds, "closer here" than anywhere else. He summed up his overall impression of Persians as at once an "intelligent people," but one which was also "incurably decadent."[99]

Possessing more enthusiasm than talent as either a linguist or a student of religion, Gobineau remained a questionable authority on any of the finer points of Islamic law, practice, or history. The description of ketman provided in Gobineau's *Les religions et philosophies dans l'Asie centrale* is thus almost purely psychological. It does not mention the doctrine's connection to Shi'ism, nor does it explain ketman's grounding in the Koranic tradition. Indeed, Gobineau does

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[93] Jean Calmard, "Gobineau, Joseph Arthur de," *Enyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. XI, Fasc. 1, p. 23.
[94] For instance, Gobineau was convinced that Persian Shi'ism was the product of a revolt by the Aryan Iranians against the Semitic Arab Sunnis. He also appears not to have realized that it only became the dominant religion in Iran after the 16th century. Robert Irwin, "Gobineau, the Would-be Orientalist," p. 325.
[95] Robert Irwin, "Gobineau, the Would-be Orientalist," p. 324.
[96] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The European Revolution & Correspondence with Gobineau*, trans. John Lukacs, (New York: 1959), p. 265.
[97] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The European Revolution & Correspondence with Gobineau*, p. 274.
[98] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The European Revolution & Correspondence with Gobineau*, p. 277.
[99] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The European Revolution & Correspondence with Gobineau*, p. 279.

not seem to realize that the Shi'a went through a period of persecution under the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates, or that they used to be a minority religion in Iran until the arrival of the Safavids. He associates dissimulation primarily with heterodox or non-Muslim groups attempting to fit into a Muslim-dominated milieu. He singles out three sects as the most flagrant practitioners of ketman: the Nusayris of Persia, (though according to Geoffrey Nash, these were really members of a syncretic sect known as Yarsanism or the Ahl-e Haqq[100]) the crypto-Christians of the region surrounding Erzurum in Eastern Anatolia, and the Zoroastrians (Gobineau calls them Guebres), of Azerbaijan.

Gobineau argued that each of these groups used ketman in a different way. For the Nusayris, it consists primarily of circumcising their children and even their slaves, despite considering the custom "perfectly useless." According to Gobineau, whose valet was a leader of the sect and informed him of its doctrines, the Nusayris felt "nothing but aversion" to Islam. Despite this, they follow virtually all its customs out of habit. For the Zoroastrians, it consists of equating the founder of their religion Zoroaster with Abraham, and in practicing such a broad latitudinarianism that their faith takes on the appearance of something in between Islam and Unitarianism.

For the Christians of eastern Anatolia, dissimulation involves the practice of a kind of religious amphibianism, which Gobineau notes, is also to be found in places such as Albania and southern India. However, the Erzerum Christians go beyond mere syncretism in that they seem to conform to two separate faiths at once. They visit mosques on Fridays, support Koranic readers and discuss the traditions of the Prophet with their mullahs. At the same time they profess an inward, but surprisingly well-organized Christianity – visiting a church, hearing mass, accepting the divinity of Christ and worshiping images of the saints. For Gobineau, this is not a form of hypocrisy or imposture. It is a dual-faith, in which both sets of belief are sincere. As he writes, for the Anatolian Christians, "the mosque has become no less indispensable to them than the church."[101]

Gobineau's concrete examples of ketman in action all come from minority religious communities. The contemporary Shi'a scholar M. A. Amir-Moezzi has praised Gobineau for being able to recognize religious dissimulation as an "essential element"[102] of physical and spiritual survival for embattled communities in a hostile environment, and for avoiding the moralizing tone taken by Goldziher and his acolytes within the Sunni-dominated world of Islamic studies. However, it would be a mistake to take Gobineau's description of ketman as a simple endorsement. Rather, for him, it is a symptom of a pervasive disregard for the niceties of religious law which, for him, pervades the whole of the Middle East. At one point, Gobineau claims that "a Muslim Sufi" told him that in, his opinion, Persia, "did not contain one single absolute Muslim." Gobineau then extends this to the whole of Central Asia, which he feels

[100] Geoffrey Nash, "Introduction," in Arthur Gobineau, *Comte de Gobinueau and Orientalism: Selected eastern writings*, (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 10.
[101] ed. Geoffrey Nash. *Comte de Gobinueau and Orientalism: Selected eastern writings*, (Milton Park, Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 120.
[102] M.A. Amir-Moezzi, "New Remarks on Secrecy and Concealment in Early Imāmī Shi'ism: the Case of *khatm al-nubuwwa*: Aspects of Twelver Shi'i Imamology XII," p. 4.

certain "does not contain a single person who recognizes only the precepts of his nominal faith and believes in them all."[103]

For Gobineau, Persian Muslims and sectarians were all characterized by a singular mutability of belief. He describes the average Persian as being only nominally a member of their ascribed religion. Most believed some precepts intensely, and doubted others just as strongly. Above all, they were predisposed to borrow new ideas from one another.

In a world where doctrinal boundaries were never fixed, ketman provided a way of smoothing over differences. It was a unifying thread, allowing people of various faiths and sects to coexist under the guise of orthodox Shi'ite rule, while also being flexible enough to allow boundary-crossings of other kinds. For Gobineau, the general confusion of real and feigned religion in Persia gave rise to a "perpetual carnival,"[104] in which anyone's true beliefs were impossible to discern "by dint of disguise and elusiveness." Ketman, here is not a mask donned by one amongst many, but a costume worn by all. Indeed, Gobineau writes, Ketman is practiced avidly by every religious group in the country:"there is not one communion, one sect which does not bask in its glory or its pleasure."[105]

This mention of ketman as a source of pleasure leads us to what may be its most important feature for Gobineau. He sees it not merely as a way of deceiving one's' enemies, but of triumphing over them. By duping their religious opponents into thinking they share the same faith, a believer "acquires the multiple satisfaction and merit of having safeguarded oneself and one's loved ones, of not having exposed a venerable faith to horrid contact with the infidel, and finally, of having imposed on the former the spiritual shame and wretchedness he deserves by tricking him and confirming him in his error."[106]

Ketman, in this formulation, acts as a weapon of the weak, and a source of psychic retribution against the strong. Gobineau thinks that a 'European' would find something "humiliating" in this system, which not only renders reticence indispensable but calls for the use of untruthfulness on a vast scale." Asians, by contrast, "find it glorious." The reasons why are worth quoting in full:

> Kitman ennobles him who practices it. The believer raises himself to a perpetual state of superiority over the person he deceives, be it a minister or a powerful king, no matter; for he who uses kitman against him [sic] he is above all a poor wretch to whom one closes the true path and who suspects nothing; ragged and starving you stand, outwardly quaking in your boots before deceived might, yet thine eyes are filled with light; thou treadst in brightness before thy foes. You ridicule an unintelligent being; you disarm a dangerous beast. What multifarious delights![107]

This is the passage Miłosz seized on while searching for a way to describe the habits of concealment made necessary by the politics of his own time. Its strength comes from its psychological depth, and indeed, contradiction. In Gobineau's vision, ketman is more than a

[103] ed. Geoffrey Nash, *Comte de Gobinueau and Orientalism: Selected eastern writings*, p. 122.
[104]ed. Geoffrey Nash, *Comte de Gobinueau and Orientalism: Selected eastern writings*, p. 122.
[105] ed. Geoffrey Nash, *Comte de Gobinueau and Orientalism: Selected eastern writings*, p. 121.
[106] ed. Geoffrey Nash, *Comte de Gobinueau and Orientalism: Selected eastern writings*, p. 119.
[107] ed. Geoffrey Nash, *Comte de Gobinueau and Orientalism: Selected eastern writings*, p. 120.

mere survival mechanism; it is a source of sinister delight. It is a trick one can play against one's' enemies, a form of perverse vengeance worthy of a Dostoevsky novel. Like the actions of some of Dostoevsky's most tortured grotesques (Fyodor Karamazov, Captain Snegiryov, the Underground Man), this ketman is ultimately self-defeating, It provides only the illusion of victory, which serves as little more as inner compensation for the user's essential conformity, and therefore, defeat. More than anything in the learned pages of Goldziher or his fellow orientalists, it is this image of dissimulation as a form of deception which ultimately rebounds on the deceiver that attracted Miłosz as he wrote *The Captive Mind*.

Chapter 2 – Dissimulation, Heresy and Christian Parallels

The previous chapter explored the history of ketman as a concept within Islamic religion, beginning with its articulation as a doctrine among the early Shi'a, and concluding with its introduction to the West via the scholarship of Ignác Goldziher and Gobineau. This chapter takes up the history of related concepts – namely, those having to do with dissimulation and concealed belief – in a Christian context, both in the sense of the Christian religion, and in the sense of a wider argument about the "culture of secrecy" in early modern Europe. It begins with an opening irony: while ketman was arguably the most enduring, and certainly the 'stickiest' idea to emerge from the reception of *The Captive Mind*, Islamic thought did not feature prominently in the rest of his work.

At one level, this isn't too surprising. Miłosz was introduced to the idea of ketman through a series of accidents. He first read about it in a copy of Gobineau's *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* given to him by Józef Czapski, when he was staying at *Kultura*'s headquarters in Maisons-Laffite shortly after his defection to the West in 1951.[108] Czapski, in turn, discovered the book in a used bookshop in Teheran, as he was searching for information about the difference between Sunnis and Shi'ites while passing through Iran with Anders' Army in 1942.[109]

Had Czapski not stumbled onto Gobineau's book, Miłosz would have never known about ketman. In this case, we can imagine him still writing about dissimulation in People's Poland, but under another name, most likely drawn from Christian sources. In this sense, ketman, was a lucky discovery, since it gave Miłosz something no Christian tradition could. It was, (at least as Miłosz received it), a clear doctrine of dissimulation, in which religious disguise was not merely permitted, but required. As Gobineau described it, this version of ketman was also a pervasive social practice, Although different branches of Christianity have allowed dissimulation in certain historically contingent moments, none have followed the early Shi'a in elevating it into a major tenet of religious observance.

While ketman proved to be perfectly suited to Miłosz's rhetorical needs in *The Captive Mind*, his involvement with similar concepts in the history of Christian theology was far more intense and long-lasting. His attraction to various early-Christian heresies, and in particular, to Gnosticism and Manichaeism, is well-documented.[110] Miłosz's equally enduring interest in heterodox movements from the epoch of the Reformation has received far less scholarly attention. Polish 'heretics' – Calvinists, Socinians, and Arians, especially those from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, form a recurring theme in his poetry and prose.

If Miłosz took a name for dissimulation from a Muslim tradition, he did most of his thinking about it in Christian terms. In the pivotal years between the end World War II and his departure from the PRL's Paris embassy, Miłosz read deeply in the history of Polish anti-Trinitarianism or

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[108] Eric Karpeles, *Almost Nothing: The 20th Century Life and Art of Józef Czapski*, (New York: New York Review Books, 2018), p. 288.
[109] Eric Karpeles, *Almost Nothing: The 20th Century Life and Art of Józef Czapski*, p. 239.
[110] Łukasz Tischner, *Miłosz and the Problem of Evil*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015) gives a good introduction to the role of Manicheanism in Miłosz's theodicy.

Socinianism.[111] This was a faith brought to Poland by a group of scattered exiles, mostly from Italy. Part of the so-called Radical Reformation, its members were scorned by Protestants and Catholics alike. Threatened by the Inquisition from the west, and Ivan the Terrible from the east, for a few decades it maintained a precarious existence in the Polish Commonwealth (and to a lesser extent, in Transylvania), before falling victim to the larger crisis of the mid-17th century. Thereafter, it took on the status of an orphan faith, claimed as an ancestor by English and American Unitarians, but otherwise ignored, especially in the countries – Italy and Poland – where it was first formulated and first found a home.

Writing later in his life, Miłosz would describe his position immediately after the war in terms drawn from this era. Repelled by the right-wing politics of the Polish emigration, but absolutely unwilling to join the Polish Workers' Party, he found himself on an ideological island. His solution was to practice a form of "*reservatio mentalis*,"[112] the Jesuit art of the permissible lie, which might be interpreted as a sort of Catholic version of ketman. But if the Jesuits gave Miłosz a language for talking about dissimulation, it was the heretics who most closely mirrored his actual situation during the composition of *The Captive Mind*, and later. Like them, he was an exile, who found it difficult to find a safe haven between two great, rival intellectual systems.

Miłosz was not alone in noticing this parallelism. In the decades before and after the Second World War, historians and intellectuals from across Europe and America, turned to the 16th and 17th centuries in search of a mirror for their own times. In Italy as well as in Poland, this search focused on the various Italian heretics who fled Italy under pressure from the Inquisition, and thereby helped spread the Radical (or, 'left') Reformation, across Europe.

In the works that resulted from this hunt, heresy speaks with two voices. One is that of secrecy. The Nicodemites, who hid their religion under a mask, and justified doing so with reference to scripture, provided an example of dissimulation, or dissimulation under compulsion, for those Italian historians who felt unable to speak openly about their beliefs in the years leading up to the Second World War. The other voice is one of defiance. In the 1950s, in the context of the early Cold War, nonconformist reformers like Michael Servetus, who was burned at the stake in Geneva in 1553, found new relevance as pre-modern martyrs for free speech, in much the same way that the Salem Witch trials became stand-ins for the McCarthy hearings in the United States. Both uses would find echoes in Miłosz's thought leading up to and following the writing of *The Captive Mind*.

In the chapter that follows, I will try to argue three things, in order of increasing importance. First, that Christian traditions of dissimulation have a significant place in Czesław Miłosz's literary work, and in his self-imagination as a man between worlds or between systems. Second, that the wider historiography of Christian dissimulation is in large part a product of Italian scholars wrestling with their position as intellectuals under fascism. Finally, that there is a deeper link between one and two, or between the Polish articulation of ketman and the Italian quest for a usable past. Some of this connection is personal, conditioned by a series of friendships among a small circle of Italian and Polish intellectuals. Some of it may also speak to a deeper resemblance between the Italian fascism of the late 1930s and Polish communism of the early 1950s.

[111] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie: korespondencja z pisarzami, 1945-1950*, (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1998), p. 213 and 427.
[112] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 8.

Both regimes shared an investment having scholars and philosophers (and sometimes, poets) proclaim their historical necessity. Each was willing to extend significant rewards to those who did so, and significant (if not crushing) punishments to those who refrained. In other words, they presented intellectuals with a lot of carrot, and a lot of stick. This is not quite terror, but it is constraint – and it is to the pressure of this constraint that we owe much of the foundational scholarly work on dissimulation a practice, as a theology, and as a literary motif.

Nicodemism

Despite the persecutions endured by early Christians in the Roman Empire, Church fathers had little to say about dissimulation. Martyrdom, rather than survival, was the preferred model of religious expression. Even if this was only an ideal, theologians tended to value public witness over safety. Following the conversion of Constantine in 312 A.D., by which the Church was suddenly thrust into a leading position across the Western and Eastern Roman Empire, dissimulation was largely the preserve of heretics. A certain level of deception was necessary for any heterodox movement to thrive in the Catholic West or Orthodox East.

In the millennium which followed the Empire's adoption of Christianity, various groups practiced some form of religious disguise in order to maintain their existence in a world governed by varying forms of Canon Law. These heretical sects included the Bogomils of Bulgaria, [113] Albigensians of southern France, and the Waldensians of France, Switzerland and the Low Countries. [114] None of these groups, however, produced an identifiable doctrine or body of jurisprudence concerning dissimulation on par with the literature surrounding taqiyya in the Islamic world. (Or at least no doctrine which survived the ravages of book burnings and persecutions to be read in the present).

For a clear and cogent justification of religious dissimulation, we must wait until the Reformation. The splintering of the Western Church which followed Luther's posting of the 95 Theses created numerous mismatches between the creed of ruler and ruled. Protestants found themselves living under Catholic overlordship and vice versa. This process broadly mimicked what happened to the world of Islam following the first and second fitnas of the 7th century A.D., and it gave rise to the same needs for religious secrecy and disguise.

In the early decades of Protestantism, the practice of dissimulation was most often associated with a group nicknamed the Nicodemites. However, this was a term of disparagement, apparently coined by John Calvin as part of an attack on French Protestants who he considered insufficiently bold in their profession of faith. Ever since Calvin coined the term, historians have debated whether he was identifying a real tendency within the faith, or merely attacking a strawman.[115] Some argue that Nicodemism was an identifiable – though largely clandestine - body of thought within Protestantism, with identifiable leaders and theological justifications. Others tend to dismiss it as little more than a phantasm, and a product of vivid religious polemics which characterized the middle 16th century. My purpose in what follows is not to make a

[113] Dimitri Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), p. 181.
[114] Gabriel Audisio, *Preachers by Night: The Waldensian Barbes (15th - 16th Centuries)*, (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p. 130.
[115] Carlos M.N. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 235 – 258.

definite judgment on the status of Nicodemism, but to survey its 20th century historiography. The study of Nicodemism and related forms of Christian dissimulation unfolded in circumstances very similar to those which led Miłosz to write about ketman. Moreover, as I hope to demonstrate, its Italian students were directly influenced by Polish scholarship, and these two schools (Polish and Italian) exerted a mutual influence on Miłosz and his peers in the Polish émigré intelligentsia.

Over the past ninety years, there have been two major approaches to Nicodemism in European and American Reformation scholarship. One is to treat it as a genuine spiritual movement, with its own principles, beliefs and spiritual guides. The other is to see it as no more than a vague tendency, a loose catch-all for a variety of practices, whose only connection is that they involved some degree of falsification or deception.

What does seem clear, however, is that no group of believers willingly applied the term 'Nicodemite' to themselves. The name came into use first purely as an insult. The first evidence of its use as a pejorative dates to 1522.[116] In the subsequent two decades, it appears to have gained fairly wide currency as a descriptor for newly-converted Protestants who were as yet too afraid to profess their faith in public. In 1543 and 1544, the Nicodemites were the subject of two scathing polemical pamphlets by John Calvin, the *Petit Traité* and *Excuse à Messieurs les nicodémites*. These two texts did much to popularize the term across the Protestant world. Indeed, so much of what we know (or think we know) about the Nicodemites has its origins in these caricatures that it can be difficult to separate what the members of this movement actually believed and practiced from the terms laid down by Calvin. Therefore, any discussion of the Nicodemites must begin with an appraisal of the image formed of them in the Genevan reformer's twin pasquinades.

We begin with the name. Calvin took the label for his target from a figure in the Gospel of John. Nicodemus was a prominent Jew of Jerusalem and member of the Sanhedrin who was attracted to Jesus' teachings. However, for fear of being exposed to his fellow Pharisees, he would only attend the savior's sermons at night. In the *Excuse*, the second longer of his two treatises aimed at them, Calvin distinguished four different types of Nicodemites. Carlos Eire summarizes them as follows: "a) those whose primary interest is to obtain lucrative benefices but still pretend to preach the gospel; b) those who try to convert ladies of high birth but do not really take the gospel seriously; c) those who try to reduce Christianity to a philosophy and whose heads are full of Neoplatonic ideas; and d) those among the merchants and the common people who are too timid to face persecution."[117]

From the outset then, it appears that Nicodemism was a movement made up of disparate parts which had little in common with one another except for a timidity or shyness about publicly declaring their true beliefs. The reasons for this timidity appear different in each case, but seem to rest principally on the troika of fear, opportunism, and a lack of conviction. What's missing here, and throughout Calvin's early attacks, is any sense of Nicodemism possessing a positive doctrine of its own. What Calvin was attacking was more of a posture, an attitude taken by

[116] M. Anne Overell, *Nicodemites: Faith and Concealment between Italy and Tudor England*, (Leiden: Brill, 2019), p. 1.

[117] Carlos M. N. Eire, "Calvin and Nicodemism: A Reappraisal," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, v. 10 (1), Spring, 1979, p. 67.

certain Protestants, especially in France and most especially in educated circles around royal courts and universities. These were men and women who were already convinced about the rightness of the new religion but could not bring themselves to part with all the benefits conferred through outward membership in the old one.

Calvin doesn't identify any of his opponents by name. Much scholarly ingenuity has been expended on matching names to his targets, with many plausible suggestions and no definite results. In a path-breaking but still controversial book[118] from 1970, Carlo Ginzburg claimed to have discovered a doctrinal theory behind the practice of Nicodemism and to have pinpointed its source: a Strasbourg humanist and monk named Otto Brunfels. In true Nicodemite fashion, Brunfels cleverly concealed his beliefs in a collection of spiritual quotations, the *Pandectae veteris et novi testamenti* (1527). Ginzburg considered Brunfels' *Pandects* to be the founding manifesto of a movement. In it, Brunfels argued for a purely spiritual approach to religion. True Christians were made by an act of faith and not by the performance of ceremonies associated with any particular denomination. Thus, they can "participate in even the most extravagant religious rites without harm to their souls."[119] Applying the correct mental reservation, these believers can even participate in the excesses of the Roman Mass.

According to Ginzburg, not only were Brunfels' *Pandects* a blueprint for a spiritualist church above denomination, it was also a theological primer on the subterfuges needed to sustain it, or in his words, a "point-by-point theorization of religious simulation and dissimulation."[120] Brunfels did not root his justification of deception in the story of Nicodemus, who, in any case, as Calvin would later point out, eventually repented and made his faith public after the crucifixion (because of this, in his later works, Calvin took to calling the dissimulators the "pseudo-Nicodemites"). Rather, he sought to ground his theory of dissimulation in two other proof texts: first, the story of Naaman the Syrian, a fresh convert to Judaism whom the prophet Elisha allowed to bow before a pagan idol if his king should command it, and second, in St. Paul's remark in Corinthians concerning the circumcision of Timothy, when he explained his willingness to follow Jewish customs among the Jews if it would win him more converts to his faith by saying "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (I Corinthians 9:22). As Brunfels' work circulated around Europe, these words became a "slogan of the theorists of dissimulation"[121] everywhere, at least in Ginzburg's 1970 reconstruction of events.

Nine years later, Carlos M.N. Eire did much to demolish Ginzburg's vision of Nicodemism as a coherent theology with a well-articulated set of beliefs about religious concealment. Eire pointed out that Brunfels' *Pandects* contain only two statements concerning simulation, and that it also contained a number of statements *condemning* lying and imposture.[122] He also questioned why, if Brunfels had been so important in establishing Nicodemism as a movement, Calvin didn't then single him out for attack.[123] In Eire's estimation, then, Nicodemism was never a unified

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[118] Carlo Ginzburg, *Il Nicodemismo: Simulazione e dissimulazione religiosa nell'Europa del '500*, (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1970).
[119] Eric Cochrane, "Review of *Il Nicodemismo*," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 76 , No. 4, (October 1971), p. 1156.
[120] Carlo Ginzburg, *Il Nicodemismo*, p. 160.
[121] Carlo Ginzburg, *Il Nicodemismo*, p. 76.
[122] Carlos M. N. Eire, "Calvin and Nicodemism: A Reappraisal," p. 54.
[123] Carlos M. N. Eire, "Calvin and Nicodemism: A Reappraisal," p. 67.

movement; Calvin's attack only made it seem so. No single connection or shared belief united these dissemblers, scattered as they were over half a continent. Rather than an articulated and self-conscious set of principles, Nicodemism was an "amorphous phenomenon;"[124] it was an "attitude," a response to persecution, made differently by different people in different circumstances.

Since Eire published his essay in 1979, scholars have tended to follow his lead in dismissing the existence of a unified Nicodemite movement with a theology of its own. (Not all though. Perez Zagorin found Eire's account of Calvin's critique valuable, but thought he "goes astray" in "denying that Nicodemism entailed a theory of dissimulation."[125]) However, at the same time, many writers have also stressed that there *was* a constellation of separate groups during the Reformation to whom the label 'Nicodemism' does apply. These included French evangelicals, Italian reformers, Catholic recusants in England as we shall see later, various figures in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth who straddled the lines between Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Uniate adherence. But if these disparate tendencies did not share a single body of thought, origin, or reference point, what, if anything, holds them together in the first place?

M. Anne Overell writes that the term 'Nicodemite,' besides being a pejorative, is "miasmic, anachronistic and imprecise," and for those reasons should probably be abandoned. Unfortunately, she notes, it is too late for that: there are already too many important historical studies of 'nicodemite' (she prefers the lower-case 'n'), groups to abandon the label entirely. And besides, the backlash against Ginzburg's conception of Nicodemism may have gone too far. Although there was no cohesive European movement, "there *were* similar patterns of thought and action in different places,"[126] usually shared through texts. These patterns consisted chiefly of keeping one's religion secret, obeying outward authority, and disguising one's true beliefs.

Nicodemism has thus become a catch-all term for a constellation of loosely connected phenomena, all involving dissimulation, which mostly dated to the early period of the Reformation but sometimes extended to the early years of the following century. This insistence that it was always an attitude, or a pattern of practices and resemblances and never a doctrine, lends Nicodemism a strangely chimeric character in contemporary historiography. It is at once everywhere and nowhere. On one hand, a historian of the English Reformation can write confidently that the Elizabethan settlement was a Nicodemite Reformation," and that "at heart, Elizabeth was a Nicodemite queen" who was "willing to reign as a queen of Nicodemites."[127] On the other hand, an entire collection of essays devoted to dissimulation in early modern Europe can barely refer to it.[128]

Dissimulation in Eastern Europe

Nicodemism has received the lions' share of attention in discussions of early modern dissimulation. By contrast, parallel phenomena in Eastern Europe have until recently, been

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[124] Carlos M.N. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin*, p. 253
[125] Perez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying*, p. 70.
[126] M. Anne Overell, *Nicodemites*, p. 3.
[127] Peter Marshall, *Heretics and Believers: A History of the English Reformation*, (New Haven, Yale University Press: 2017, p. 449, cited in Overell, *Nicodemites*, p. 186.
[128] ed. Miriam Eliav-Feldon and Tamar Herzig, *Dissimulation and Deceit in Early Modern Europe*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

subject to much less scrutiny. This is an unfortunate omission, since the conditions of confessional discord which led dissimulation to thrive in the West were even more present in the East, for instance in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, divided as it was not just between Catholic and Protestant, but the Eastern Orthodox and Anti-Trinitarian churches as well. Indeed, the fact that Orthodox thinkers in the Commonwealth could be pulled in so many directions – Calvinist, Socinian, Uniate – has led Maria Ivanova to argue Orthodox clerics in Catholic Poland-Lithuania numbered "among the greatest of all early modern dissimulators."[129]

Ivanova builds her case on the back of a pioneering 1991 article by David Frick on the famed - and controversial - Ruthenian churchman Meletij Smotryts´kyi (1577-1633). Frick observed that Smotrytc'kyj employed methods of dissimulation both in his writings and in his private life.[130] Smotryc'kyj, was a convert from Orthodoxy to Catholicism or more precisely, to the Uniate Church established by the Union of Brest (1595-96) which retained the Eastern rite and Slavic liturgy while recognizing the supremacy of the Pope. For many years, Smotryc'kyj, who had risen through the Orthodox hierarchy to become the Archbishop of Polatsk, had been a bitter opponent of the Union, personally and in writing. In 1627 he experienced a sudden change of heart, and embraced the Uniate side.[131] However, in a letter to Rome, he asked that his conversion be kept secret, arguing that he could gain further converts among the Orthodox by working covertly. Smotryc'kyj justified his request for secrecy by comparing his situation – that of a Uniate cleric surrounded by a hostile, Orthodox populace – to that of Jesuits preaching in the Indies: "Wherefore, indeed, if the fathers of the Society of Jesus and the other priests in India can live with the heathens in secular habit, this should cause no one scandal, especially since, with God's help, we will hope for the much greater fruit of holy Union from his hidden Catholicism . . . than if he were now known by all." [132]

The Jesuits were not only known for their habits of secrecy, however, but also for their skill in the *ars dissimulandi*, the various arts of licit deception which they were permitted to employ in the cause of strengthening the faith. Of these, the best known is surely the *reservatio mentalis*, the habit of adding an unspoken mental clause to a statement or oath, thereby rendering it invalid (and making it a common comparison or analogy for the more legalistic applications of taqiyya). Frick argues that Smotryc'kyj, who had studied at the Jesuit-run university in Vilnius, and later in Leipzig, Wittenberg and Nuremberg, was schooled in these arts, and used them actively throughout his career on both sides of the Orthodox-Uniate divide.

He also posits that Smotryc'kyj was a dissembler not out of necessity, but out of ecumenical conviction. In his later, ostensibly pro-Catholic writings, Smotryc'kyj makes reference to his "controversial contemporary," Marcantonio de Dominis. The Archbishop of Split in Dalmatia, de Dominis was one of his epoch's most notorious religious waverers. He very publically converted twice, first from Catholicism to the Church of England and then back again, only to be then imprisoned and posthumously tried for heresy. Found guilty, his cadaver was burned on the

[129] Maria Ivanova and Michelle R. Viise, "Dissimulation and Memory in Early Modern Poland-Lithuania: the Art of Forgetting," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 76, No. 1 (Spring, 2017), p. 99.
[130] David A. Frick, "Fides Meletiana: Marcantonio de Dominis and Meletij Smotryc'kyj," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, December 1991, Vol. 15, No. 3/4, pp. 383-414.
[131] Maria Ivanova, "'Sub pallio . . . latens' [hiding under the cover] Technologies of Dissimulation in Early Modern Poland-Lithuania," *Polish Review*, Vol. 63, No. 2, (July, 2018), p. 27.
[132] Maria Ivanova and Michelle R. Viise, "Dissimulation and Memory in Early Modern Poland-Lithuania: the Art of Forgetting," p. 98.

Campo dei Fiori and the ashes thrown into the Tiber on Decem ber 21, 1624.[133] Although the unfortunate de Dominis was reviled by much of the Catholic world, and a subject of scorn among Anglicans, for Smotryc'kyj, he became a totem. During his lifetime, de Dominis harbored dreams of a great union between his churches, a plan which must have appealed to Smotryc'kyj, who was similarly caught between confessions and searching for a "third way" he could not spearhead on his own.[134]

Torquato Accetto: On Honest Dissimulation

An era of heightened religious conflict pushed Smotryc'kyj and the Nicodemites to conceal their religious affiliations. Their turns toward dissimulation had broader ramifications as well. It also coincided with a newly secular view of politics and social relations, whose leading theorists (among them Machiavelli, Castiglione and Montaigne) had much to say about the usefulness of strategic lying and interpersonal gamesmanship, whether in the service of exercising power or of maintaining one's position at court. The presence of strict censorship on published texts and state surveillance of public worship added a further impetus to secrecy and misdirection in private lives and written work. By 1588, when Montaigne wrote in his essay 'Du démentir' that "dissimulation is among the most notable qualities of this century," the thought was very nearly a commonplace.

Twentieth-century historians have retrospectively described this period as an "Age of Dissimulation," to borrow Perez Zagorin's phrase. It began in the early 16th century with the Reformation, and ended in the mid-18th century, with the rise of a Rousseauian cult of sensibility and sincerity in Enlightenment France.[135] The intervening two hundred years witnessed a blossoming of texts and discussions concerning lying, flattery, concealment, and secrecy.

Even in this golden age of the courtier and the masquerade, dissimulation – the sustained performance of an identity at odds with one's own – stood a bit outside the pale. One of the very few explicit endorsements of it was a brief and rather obscure treatise from 1641 titled *Della dissimulazione onesta*, or "On honest dissimulation" by the Italian humanist Torquato Accetto. As its title suggests, Accetto's pamphlet was a defense of dissimulation, as well as an attempt to define its limits, explain its origins and justify its necessity. Read between the lines, it was also a scathing critique of tyrants, and an indictment of the types of rulers who forced their subjects to dissimulate.

Accetto's treatise is an exceptional work in several respects. It is remarkable both for its literary quality (it is now considered a masterpiece of Baroque Italian prose), and for its subject matter. Even in the early 17th century, the highpoint of the "Age of Dissimulation," works in praise of feigning were exceedingly rare. According to Jon R. Snyder, *Della dissimulazione onesta* was the "single most important work" on the topic of its era. It was also the "only one of its kind ever to be published."[136]

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[133] David A. Frick, "Fides Meletiana: Marcantonio de Dominis and Meletij Smotryc'kyj," p. 394.
[134] David A. Frick, "Fides Meletiana: Marcantonio de Dominis and Meletij Smotryc'kyj," pp. 408-9.
[135] Michael Bell "Affective Individualism' and the Cult of Sentiment," in *Sentimentalism, Ethics and the Culture of Feeling*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000). pp. 11-56.
[136] Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe*, p. 22.

The importance of Accetto's work has only been recognized retroactively, beginning with an edition published by the Neapolitan philosopher and historian Benedetto Croce in 1928. Indeed, in Accetto's own lifetime, *Della dissimulazione onesta* seems to have gone completely unnoticed. Indeed, it seems to have had no reception at all. Although it was published in Naples with a regular *imprimatur*, so far no evidence has surfaced that any of Accetto's contemporaries recording a reaction to the booklet.[137] Accetto himself remains a fairly shadowy figure. He was born in the Apulian town of Trani sometime in the 1580s, to parents of modest means.[138] The recipient of an education in classics and law, he spent most of his life employed as a secretary to the powerful Carafa clan, who owned the nearby town of Andria. Between 1618 and 1640, Accetto seems to have spent much of his time in Naples and, briefly, Rome. During this time, he published a volume of verse which was well-received (it went through three editions) and drew the attention of some leading Neapolitan humanists and patrons of the arts. Some of these verses hint at dissatisfaction with his job as secretary, but they otherwise give us little information about his private life.[139] After the publication of *Della dissimulazione onesta* in 1641, all records of Accetto cease.

Although we know relatively little about Accetto's life, it is clear that most of his life and career unfolded within the Kingdom of Naples. It stands to reason then that the inner workings of the kingdom, which he was privy to as secretary to two of its greatest Dukes (Antonio and Fabrizio Carafa), was the context which shaped the writing *Della dissimulazione onesta*, and that its subjects formed the audience he hoped to reach with his treatise. During Accetto's lifetime, the Kingdom of Naples was a Habsburg possession, integrated into the Spanish Empire and ruled by a viceroy and the Council of Italy or *Consejo*. Vice-regal rule could be harsh. Dissent in the kingdom was quashed through a mixture of censorship and terror. The historian Rosario Villari, an expert on Naples of the 17th century, describes "a climate of oppression, conformism, traditionalism, and the spirit of resignation, which few succeeded in escaping."[140]

Spain's declining economic position and military defeats in the 17th century led to inflation and increased taxation. With them came waves of popular protest. These were typically put down with shows of extreme brutality. One episode, also documented by Villari, stands out for its spectacular cruelty. In the 1620s, seven Neapolitans were convicted of treason for throwing stones at the Spanish viceroy Cardinal Zapata. As punishment, they were marched through the streets naked, while their jailers tore at them with red-hot pincers. They then had their limbs broken with sledgehammers while stretched atop wagon wheels, after which they were decapitated and quartered and then thrown to the dogs.[141]

It is likely that Accetto witnessed this event in person. If not, he certainly heard about it. At least one passage of *Della dissimulazione onesta* seems to be written in its shadow. In Chapter 19 of his treatise, *On Dissembling Before an Unjust Power*, begins with a strident condemnation of tyrants: "Horrible monsters are the powerful who devour the substance of those subject to

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[137] Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe*, p. 59.
[138] Torquato Accetto, "Honest Dissimulation," in ed. Brendan Dooley, *Italy in the Baroque: Selected Readings,* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), p. 368.
[139] James H. Johnson, *Venice Incognito: Masks in the Serene Republic*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2017), p. 88.
[140] James H. Johnson, *Venice Incognito: Masks in the Serene Republic*, p. 92.
[141] James H. Johnson, *Venice Incognito: Masks in the Serene Republic*, p. 91.

them."[142] The rest of the chapter describes the fear-inducing atmosphere of a tyrant's court. By way of example, Accetto cites Tacitus' description of the Emperor Domitian, under whom "it was no small part of our sufferings that we saw him and were seen of him; that our sighs were counted in his books; that not a pale cheek of all that company escaped those brutal eyes."[143] Domitian scrutinized every face and every gesture of those around him for signs of dissent. Like tyrants in Accetto's time, his oppressive gaze forced its way into his subjects' minds as well as their bodies. As Accetto remarks, "There can be no sighs when the tyrant forbids everyone to breathe." Unsure of his position, the unjust ruler suspects all those wiser and more virtuous than himself. In such an environment, "the highest virtue of all is to dissemble virtue itself."

This chapter on Unjust Power is quite unlike anything that comes before it and forces a reinterpretation of the work as a whole. (Prior chapters include "Of the Good Produced By Dissembling, "The Pleasure of Dissembling and "Dissembling Between Lovers.") The rest of Accetto's treatise is a sinuous, witty and deeply learned encomium in praise of dissembling, whose summed up by a line from Chapter 10, "dissembling is honest, useful and even pleasurable."[144] Accetto writes of dissembling as something that makes life better and more beautiful. But more than that, for Accetto, dissembling makes life bearable. It appears in his work as almost a form of Stoic enlightenment, in which the passions are tamed by reason as a result of profound introspection. The result is that "total peace comes from the victory of reason over sense."[145]

This raises the question of exactly what message Croce wanted hoped to communicate through his 1928 edition of *Della dissimulazione onesta*: the passionate opponent of oppression, or the equally enthusiastic eulogist of dissembling? Croce's brief, elliptical introduction to the work does not reveal much about his thought on the matter. In it, he praises Accetto's pamphlet as "the meditation of a soul, full of light and love of truth," which "by demonstrating and recommending dissimulation, demonstrates and recommends sincerity."[146] The emphasis here is on Accetto as a truth-teller, who in describing dissimulation accurately at least holds a mirror up to mankind. Elsewhere in the introduction, Croce writes that "if this is the condition of man, it will be enough to know it and live among the deceptions not deceived." [147]

In his history of the reception of Renaissance humanism in Italian philosophic tradition in the years following 1922, Rocco Rubini reads Croce's preface to *Della dissumulazione onesta* rather cynically, as an apologia for conformism: "with the message that not all dissimulation is hypocrisy, this work seemed to have been written for the very purpose of absolving and comforting the unquiet consciences of a generation too young to raise its voice against the regime."[148] A more charitable interpretation might be that Croce meant the treatise to signal that

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[142] Torquato Accetto, "Honest Dissimulation," p. 381.
[143] Torquato Accetto, "Honest Dissimulation," p. 381.
[144] Torquato Accetto, "Honest Dissimulation," p. 375.
[145] Torquato Accetto, "Honest Dissimulation," p. 375.
[146] Benedetto Croce, "Apunti di Letteratura Secentesca inedita o rara – Torquato Accetto e il suo trattatello "Della dissimulazione onesta," *La Critica* 26, (1928), p. 226.
[147] Benedetto Croce, "Apunti di Letteratura Secentesca inedita o rara – Torquato Accetto e il suo trattatello "Della dissimulazione onesta," p. 222.
[148] Rocco Rubini, *The other Renaissance: Italian humanism between Hegel and Heidegger*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), p. 231.

silence did not mean complicity, while also letting Accetto's pointed words about unjust rulers serve as a tacit critique of fascist rule.

Few Italians reading Accetto in 1928 would have mistaken Croce for a friend of the regime. From the beginning of the century, Croce held a towering presence in Italy's intellectual scene.[149] His position was only rivaled by that of his friend and collaborator, Giovanni Gentile with whom Croce started the review *La Critica*, in which the preface to *Della dissumulazione onesta* first appeared. The arrival of fascist rule ended their partnership. In 1925, Gentile authored a manifesto of the fascist intellectuals.[150] Nine days later, Croce responded with his own manifesto of the anti-fascist intellectuals,[151] from which point on, he was indissolubly linked with the opposition.

Indeed, it was Croce's role as a cultural leader against fascism which drew Polish intellectuals to Croce after World War II. The first page of the first issue of *Kultura* from 1947, the journal which in 1951 would be the first to publish Miłosz's essay on ketman, praises Croce as the "most implacable enemy of Italian fascism and Mussolini."[152] That inaugural issue of *Kultura* opens with two lead-off essays which were meant to exemplify the journal's mission. One of them was a translation of a 1946 essay by Croce on the "Twilight of Civilization"[153] (the other was a translation of Paul Valèry on "The Crisis of the Spirit," from 1919).

A later issue of *Kultura* from 1952, (which also contained a folio of Miłosz's poems), also featured an essay by Croce on "Strictly political historiography and moral pessimism."[154] But the links between *Kultura* and Croce were personal as well as intellectual. Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, one of the two editors of that first issue, (and who would later write a scathing critique of the idea of ketman), was a long time admirer of Croce's work. Even before the war was over, he visited Croce at his villa in Sorrento, arriving almost as soon as he disembarked in Italy with Anders' army in 1944. Croce recorded the visit in his diary: "A soldier from the Polish unit came, Gustavo Herling-Grudzinski, scholar of philosophy, reader of my books translated into German and member of a Warsaw group that follows my philosophy; he wants to translate my books into Polish."[155] Also present at Croce's villa in those summer months of 1944 was Józef Czapski, who had made a pilgrimage to pay homage to the anti-fascist (and anti-communist) intellectual as soon as he was able to get leave from his duties as a propaganda officer for Polish Army (2 Korpus Polski) in Italy. Czapski wrote a delightful memoir of his time there, "Croce's House" (*Dom Crocego*), which appeared in a 1966 issue of *Kultura*.[156] That initial visit was not to be Herling's last visit to the Villa Tritone. After fighting in the battle of Monte Cassino and spending several years in London, where he wrote *A World Apart. A Memoir of the Gulag*, he returned to Sorrento and married Croce's daughter Lidia.

Delio Cantimori and Stanisław Kot

[149] For a fuller portrait of Croce's place in Italian intellectual life, see Arnaldo Momigliano, "Reconsidering B. Croce (1866-1952)," in *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography*, (Chicago: 2012), pp. 345-364.
[150] Giovanni Gentile, "Manifesto degli intellettuali del fascismo," *Popolo d'Italia*, 21st April 1925.
[151] Benedetto Croce, "Manifesto deli intellettuali antifascisti," «Il mondo», 1st May 1925.
[152] "najbardziej nieprzejednany wróg faszyzmu włoskiego i Mussoliniego," in *Kultura*, n. 1 (1947), p. 1.
[153] Benedetto Croce, "Zmierzch cywilizacji," *Kultura*, n. 1 (1947), p. 3.
[154] Benedetto Croce, "Historiografia wyłącznie polityczna i pesymizm moralny," *Kultura*, June 1952, pp. 10-17.
[155] Benedetto Croce, *Quando l'Italia era tagliata in due. Estratto di un Diario*, 21 March – 1 April 1944.
[156] Józef Czapski, "Dom Crocego," *Kultura*, November 1966, pp. 141-45.

Benedetto Croce found, in Torquato Accetto's forgotten treatise on dissimulation, a figure for his own predicament as an anti-fascist intellectual in fascist Italy. Increasingly sidelined from public life, he felt a kinship with his predecessor from Bari, who resorted to praising dishonesty as a way of highlighting the hypocrisy and unfreedom of his times.

Croce was not the only Italian scholar to look to past forms of dissimulation to understand their ideologically-charged present. Delio Cantimori, the 20th century's foremost historian of the Italian Reformation, also came to see his own situation, as it appeared in the 1930s, reflected in early modern sources. A fascist intellectual increasingly (but secretly) drawn to communism, Cantimori's status as a modern day 'heretic' led him to study Italian religious reformers who likewise had to use the instruments of misdirection and disguise to survive the epoch of the Roman Inquisition and Counter Reformation. Cantimori's studies led him to revive (if not invent), the study of Nicodemism, a topic which he later introduced to perhaps his best-known student, Carlo Ginzburg.

Cantimori's vision of Nicodemism differed substantially from Ginzburg's later version. Where Ginzburg saw a pan-European movement, centered in Strasbourg and derived from specific beliefs articulated (albeit in coded fashion) by one man and propounded by his disciples, Cantimori described an almost purely Italian phenomenon,[157] which was less a movement than a "moral attitude."[158] Where Ginzburg's Nicodemism started very early in the Reformation, and was already a force in the 1520s, to Cantimori it emerged quite late, gaining a sizeable foothold in the Italian peninsula in the 1550s, only after Calvin issued his twin treatises on the subject. It did not consist of a doctrinal embrace of a dissimulation, but rather of a muted compromise with the present: "To know the truth and still go about consenting and approving false and illicit forms of worship – that, in its most general form, was the phenomenon of Nicodemism."[159] It was a compromise moreover, made not out of absolute necessity, but in anticipation of a better future. These were not believers in a secret teaching but waverers, and temporisers. Cantimori's Nicodemites looked forward to a great reform within the Catholic Church, which might bring it in line with their protestant beliefs. They pinned their greatest hopes on the Council of Trent, only to have them dashed.

After the triumph of the Reformation's opponents at Trent, these Italian Nicodemites were "walking on a razor's edge."[160] In general, they were highly educated, aristocratic, and skilled in all the arts of argument and disputation. Perhaps too skilled, for they fell easily into ambiguity and vagueness. They were prone to communicating in symbols and through elaborate circumlocutions. Questioned by the Inquisition, they could tie themselves into knots explaining why they praised those co-believers who fled Italy to Protestant countries while not joining them in exile themselves. Convinced by the Reform movement but still anticipating a change within the Catholic Church, they kept a foot in both camps. This made it hard for either side to trust them, and it made it difficult for even the Nicodemites to keep a clear line on their own beliefs.

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[157] The Waldensians of the Swiss and Piedmontese Alps, who for Cantimori definitely belong to Nicodemism, form the one major geographical exception.
[158] Delio Cantimori, "Nicodemismo' e speranze conciliari nel Cinquecento italiano," in *Studi di Storia* (Turin: 1959), 519, cited in Rocco Rubini, *The other Renaissance: Italian humanism between Hegel and Heidegger*, p. 231.
[159] Delio Cantimori, "Submission and Conformity: "Nicodemism" and the Expectations of a Conciliar Solution to the Religious Question," in ed. Eric Cochrane, *The Late Italian Renaissance*, p. 247.
[160] Delio Cantimori, "Submission and Conformity," p. 259.

In Cantimori's words, "It was all too easy for them to fall into ambiguities, not only into intellectual and doctrinal ambiguities, but also into psychological ones."[161]

This is hardly a flattering portrait of dissimulation, but it is one which may nonetheless reflect the ambiguities of Cantimori's personal position, especially at the moment when he published his great study of Italian 'Heretics' in 1939. The year before he had distanced himself inwardly from the fascist party and began to identify as a communist.[162] However, he would not be able to make his conversion public until the end of the war. For the next seven years , he had to keep his change of secular faith secret, even as he kept publishing works in fascist journals. In writing about dissimulation, he had to dissimulate himself. For Rocco Rubini, this means that Cantimori's work on heretics should be seen as a reflection of the "vicissitudes" experienced by his generation of anti-fascist and non-conforming Italian intellectuals.[163] The truth, however, is somewhat more complex. Cantimori began his work on heretics while still a convinced fascist, and he continued to study them even after he left the Communist party following the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. As his politics shifted, the meaning these Reformation-era movements held for him shifted too. What attracted Cantimori most to some of the more extreme branches of the Reformation such as Socinianism and Anabaptism was not their practice of dissimulation, but their cultivation of tolerance as a principle. Over the course of his prolific career, the meaning Cantimori ascribed to toleration shifted as well, from seeing it as a tool for European integration to valuing it as an end in itself.

Delio Cantimori was born in 1904 in the town of Russi in Emilia-Romagna. In 1926 he joined the fascist party along with his father Carlo. In 1928, Delio began attending courses in philosophy at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, where he came under the influence of its director, Giovanni Gentile, by then past his split with Croce and the leading philosopher of fascism in the country. As a student of the Scuola, Cantimori was already a fully-fledged fascist intellectual. He had begun to articulate a revised vision of Italian history, in which fascism appeared as the spiritual heir of the Renaissance, Italy's "last truly European movement."[164] Already in 1927, he had published an article in the *Giornale critica della filsofia* in which he analyzed the lives and deaths of two Renaissance humanist-turned-tyrant-slayers, Girolamo Ogliati of Milan and Pier Paolo Boscoli of Florence.[165] Each was a humanist scholar who had taken up the sword in imitation of Brutus. In them, Cantimori found a model for a kind of 'muscular humanism,' which thrust his protagonists from a life of detached contemplation into one of vigorous action. This was the Renaissance tradition, in which thinking was wedded to doing, that he wanted to import into the fascist present.

Cantimori did not only look to the past for support for his politics. Initially trained as a philosopher, he kept abreast of developments in right-wing thought across Europe and

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[161] Delio Cantimori, "Submission and Conformity," p. 260.

[162] Cantimori is thought to have left fascism for communism around 1938, but the exact date is subject to dispute. See Patricia Chiantera-Stutte, "From Fascism to Communism: Delio Cantimori," p. 1. Paper presented at the EUI conference on Historians at Work organized by H. Trueper (2010). Accessed at https://www.academia.edu/2633251/from_Fascism_to_Communism_Delio_Cantimori

[163] Rocco Rubini, *The other Renaissance: Italian humanism between Hegel and Heidegger*, p. 231.

[164] Stephanie H. Jed, *Wings for Our Courage*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), p. 32.

[165] Delio Cantimori, "Il caso Boscoli e la vita del Rinascimento,"*Giornale critica della filsofia* 8 (1927), pp. 241-55

contributed numerous reviews and essays to fascist journals.[166] Cantimori commented on the *Scritti e discorsi* of Mussolini and appraised a translation of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (negatively, as the Italian version left too much of the original out, distorting the Führer's message[167]), and himself translated Carl Schmitt's *The Principles of National Socialism*. A staunch Italian patriot, he nonetheless learned much from German conservatism. Besides Schmitt, he particularly admired the Karl-Anton Rohan's vision of a united Europe and the national bolshevism of the Strasser brothers.[168]

During the late 1920s and early 1930s, Cantimori was preoccupied by two related questions: what role Italy would play in the united Europe of the future, and what exactly it had contributed to its cultural unification in the past. The second of these questions appeared to have both a positive and a negative response. Italy had helped create a unified Europe through the "spiritual imperialism" of the Renaissance. It had then been cut off from the most dynamic currents of European development by its lack of a successful Reformation. Why did the Reformation fail in Italy, when Italians contributed to it so much as a whole?

This tension between Italy and Europe seems to have been the impetus spurring Cantimori's research into the Italian heretics which would occupy much of the rest of his career. When Cantimori announced his intentions to study the Italian heretics in 1929 in an article in *Vita nova*, he stated that "Italy needed to affirm its own unique contribution to the construction of the United States of Europe."[169] His pursuit was thus at once nationalist and internationalist – a search for a specifically *Italian* component in a wider European intellectual movement. Cantimori's 'heretics' – those reform thinkers who stood outside the main Lutheran and Calvinist camps, and were therefore looked at with suspicion by both the Catholic Church and the more established reformed churches – articulated some of the most radical and lasting ideas in the whole of the Reformation. Failures and outcasts at home, in their exile, they spread these same ideas across Europe. These exiles also took with them a form of intellectual baggage: the philological method of Lorenzo Valla, which they now applied to sacred texts. By following in their footsteps, from Switzerland to Poland, Cantimori could track how this particular product of the Italian Renaissance became a part of a wider European tradition.[170]

Cantimori began research for the *Eretici* in December of 1931 with a trip to Basel, which he followed-up with stays in Zurich, Bern and Tübingen.[171] While in Basel, he read a recent American book titled *Persecution and Liberty,* which included essays on various figures in the radical reformation, including some of the Italians he was just then studying, such as Leilo Sozzini.[172] One contribution in particular caught his eye: it was by Professor Roland Bainton of

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[166] Corrado Vivanti gives an accounting of Cantimori's political writings during this period in "Politica e riflessione storiografica: Delio Cantimori," *Studi Storici*, Oct. - Dec., 1991, Anno 32, No. 4 (Oct. - Dec., 1991), which is particularly valuable on his reception of Schmitt and his interpretation of National-Socialism.
[167] John Tedeschi, "Ancora su Delio Cantimori: "Per la Storia Degli Eretici Italiani," *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*. Classe di Lettere e Filosofia, Serie IV, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2004), p. 35.
[168] Corrado Vivanti, "Politica e riflessione storiografica: Delio Cantimori," p. 787.
[169] Stephanie H. Jed, *Wings for Our Courage*, p. 31
[170] For more on the decision to write the *Eretici*, see Michele Ciliberto, "Cantimori e gli eretici: Filosofia, storiografia e politica tra gli anni venti e gli anni trenta" in ed. Bruno V. Bandini, *Storia e storiografia: Studi su Delio Cantimori*, (Rome: 1979), pp. 152-193
[171] John Tedeschi, "Ancora su Delio Cantimori," p. 20
[172] John Tedeschi, "Ancora su Delio Cantimori," p. 21

Yale and concerned Sebastian Castellio,the Savoyard theologian who was most famous for leading the protest against Calvin following the burning of Michael Servetus for heresy in Geneva, and his subsequent pamphlet in favor of religious toleration, *Should Heretics be Persecuted?* Cantimori immediately wrote to Bainton, beginning a correspondence which would last the next thirty years.[173]

Subsequent trips took him from Krakow to Dublin, with stays in Vienna, Heidelberg and Berlin. In pursuing the trail of the Socinians, followers of the Sienese anti-Trinitarian reformers Leilo and Fausto Sozzini, Cantimori delved into the archives of eastern Europe especially in Poland and Transylvania, where the Socinians had taken refuge in the early 17th century. While in Poland in 1934, he made the acquaintance of Poland's greatest scholar of the Reformation, Stanisław Kot.

Kot, who would later serve as Poland's ambassador to the Soviet Union (1941-42) and Italy (1945-1947), quickly became a mentor to Cantimori. Along with Bainton, Werner Kaegi, and Walther Köhler, Kot was part of a quartet of foreign scholars whose friendship was to have a profound influence on Cantimori's life and intellectual development. Twenty years earlier, Kot had performed Cantimori's journey in reverse, following the path of Polish students to Basel, Zurich and Italy, and tracing the variety of their connections to Italian reformers including Castellio and the Sozzinis. Now, he showed the younger Italian scholar the ins and outs of Polish archives and gave him advice on how to follow the trail of his heretics on their journey to Romania and across Western Europe. He also published some of Cantimori's existing work (in Polish translation) in *Reformacja w Polsce*, the journal he founded and edited.

In 1959, twenty-five years after that first stay in Poland, Cantimori would visit Kot in Paris, where the Polish scholar was then living as a political exile. Cantimori was accompanied by his student Corrado Vivanti, who was astounded by the degree of deference his teacher showed to the older professor. When he asked Cantimori about it, he explained that "when he had met Kot for the first time, he had held him back a long time to discuss his research thoroughly and the problems it presented, not only for the retrieval of materials, but for their understanding. At the end of their time together, with the authority that came from his deep knowledge of the characters and of the times that the young Italian scholar was preparing to examine, Kot admonished him: "Remember that those men wanted one thing above all: Freedom (*la libertà*)."[174]

It might be too much to imagine that this conversation was a conversion moment for Cantimori. In 1934, he was still a convinced fascist, or at the very least, a person of the right. That same year, he wrote on a very approving appraisal of Carl Schmitt's *Staat, Bewegung, Volk*,[175] one of a series of reviews which helped cement his reputation as Italy's leading expert on contemporary German thought. Moreover, the decisive change in his political orientation seems to have only started from the time of his marriage to Emma Mezzomonti in 1935. Mezzomonti, who would go on to be Cantimori's closest intellectual collaborator, was by then already a militant communist.

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[173] Roland H. Bainton and Delio Cantimori. *The Correspondence of Roland H. Bainton and Delio Cantimori 1932-1966: An Enduring Transatlantic Friendship between Two Historians of Religious Toleration*, ed. John A. Tedeschi, (Studi e testi per la storia della tolleranza in Europa nei secoli XVI-XVIII, 6.), (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2002).
[174] Corrado Vivanti, "Politica e riflessione storiografica: Delio Cantimori," p. 783.
[175] Corrado Vivanti, "Politica e riflessione storiografica: Delio Cantimori," p. 784.

(The timing of her influence on Delio is somewhat unclear though; Cantimori alluded to smuggling 'red' pamphlets from Vienna to Italy shortly before the Anschluss, so presumably it was complete by at least 1938).[176]

Even if it did not spur a transformation in his politics, the discussion with Kot changed the way in which Cantimori regarded his heretics. When he originally announced his intention to study the *eretici*, Giovanni Gentile, his teacher at the Scuole Normale in Pisa, scornfully referred to them as the "losers of history" (*i vinti della storia*).[177] Cantimori did not share this estimation of them; for him they were bearers of a particular, Italian, tradition of humanism.

Over the course of his researches across the 1930s, Cantimori came to value his Italian heretics for a different achievement. In his eyes, they were Europe's great pioneers and innovators of the principle of religious toleration. Religious toleration was not the creation of disinterested rulers, attempting to keep the peace among warring religious factions, but of the most extreme reformers themselves, committed as they were to holding everything about their faith up to open scrutiny. Theirs was an active tolerance, which consisted of "raising questions, raising controversies, keeping minds awake."[178] Its first great martyr was Servetus, burned at the stake in Geneva. Among the heretics, the Socinians – among them, the Polish Brethren analyzed by Kot – were the keepers of his memory and upholders of his tradition. As Miłosz would later note in his novel *The Issa Valley* (1955),[179] drawing on an article by Stanisław Kot,[180] it was these Polish heretics who copied the manuscript of an eyewitness account of the burning. The work was by the Dutch reformer Petrus Hyperphragmus Gandavus (Pieter Overd'hage), and was entitled *Historia de Serveto et eius morte*. A Polish Socinian named Andrzej Wojdowski, who was a student in the Netherlands and met Overd'hage in Leiden in 1597, is thought to have made the copy and brought it back to Poland, where it stayed in circulation long after it had been banned in the rest of Europe.

Congress for Tolerance

The case of Servetus shows how many different meanings could be attached to the early modern heretics. The Nicodemites and their descendants, the *libertins* and *achristes* of the Second Reformation, became models of the need for intellectuals to conceal their true beliefs when living under a hostile regime. Servetus, meanwhile, dying for his rather idiosyncratic and truculently-held beliefs, became a "martyr for tolerance," whose example took on new relevance at the outset of the Cold War. But very little separated the defiant truth-tellers from the experts at concealment; they were merely two sides of the same coin of religious intolerance and interrogation. At the time of Servetus' burning, Lelio Sozzini, one of the founders of Socinianism, was an intimate of both Calvin and Sebastian Castellio, Servetus' great defender. He was widely rumored to have had a hand in writing Castellio's plea for religious tolerance, *On Heretics and Whether They Should Be Persecuted*. He never admitted to it publicly though. Nor would he give a full accounting of his beliefs. Asked to prove his orthodoxy by the Zurich reformer Henry Bullinger, Sozzini drew up a confession of faith which, according to Perez

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[176] Corrado Vivanti, "Politica e riflessione storiografica: Delio Cantimori," p. 783.
[177] Corrado Vivanti, "Politica e riflessione storiografica: Delio Cantimori," p. 784.
[178] Cantimori, *Eretici*, p. 139.
[179] Czesław Miłosz, *The Issa Valley*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978), p. 114.
[180] Stanislas Kot, "L'influence de Michel Servet sur le mouvement antitrinitairien en Pologne et en Transylvanie," in ed. Bruno Becker, *Autour de Michel Servet et de Sebastien Castellion*, (Haarlem: Tjeenk, Willink, 1953), p. 109f.

Zagorin, “must be regarded as a masterpiece of Nicodemism.”[181] It worked well enough to reassure Bullinger though, which allowed Sozzini to further develop the anti-trinitarian creed which would one day spread to far-away Poland and Lithuania.

The 400th anniversary of Servetus’ burning at the stake in 1953 marked the high point of Servetus’ modern fame. His example, of martyrdom in the name of freedom of religion, seemed especially pertinent at this tense moment in the Cold War - particularly, as one reviewer remarked, in those countries where “freedom of thought” was not “taken for granted.”[182] A slew of publications appeared that year, devoted to the nonconformist Spaniard. The most notable of these was Roland Bainton’s book-length biography *The Hunted Heretic*,[183] which quickly became a major critical (and to some extent, commercial) success. That year also witnessed a major international conference in Servetus’ honor. Held in Geneva, it was organized by the International Association for Religious Freedom and the Swiss Union for Liberal Christianity in cooperation with the International Servetus-Castellio Committee (itself specially convened for this purpose), the International ‘Congress for Tolerance’ brought leading historians of the Reformation and experts on 16th century heresy together with liberal protestant theologians in an atmosphere of ecumenical comity. Delio Cantimori helped organize the conference as a member of the Servetus-Castellio Committee, and Stanisław Kot attended, delivering a “rather anti-communist speech” in front of a memorial to Sebastian Castellio.[184]

Summarizing the activities of the Congress in a subsequent article subtitled “martyr and tolerance,” Kot asked whether the “century of Katyń and Oradour”[185] really had the right to look down from on high at the epoch of Servetus’ execution. The rest of the article surveyed some of the many works on Servetus that had come out on the anniversary of his death. Kot and Cantimori themselves contributed to one of these, a set of seventeen essays published in the Netherlands as *Autour de Michel Servet et de Sébastien Castellion*.[186] It was there that Miłosz read Kot’s article about the influence of Servetus on the Polish anti-Trinitarians[187] which he cites in a footnote to his novel *The Issa Valley*.[188]

Miłosz and the Heretics

Miłosz’s correspondence reveals that he became increasingly interested in the history of Polish Reformation in the two years leading up to his flight to the West on February 1, 1951. In the early months of 1949, Miłosz gave a lecture on Poland to a group of seventy Protestant clergymen. The talk was mostly about Protestantism in Poland, and Miłosz drew much of its content from Earl Morse Wilbur’s *A History of Unitarianism, Socinianism and its Antecedents*,

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[181] Perez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying*, p. 96.
[182] Henry E. Sigerist, Review of *Michel Servet, hérétique et martyr, 1553-1953* by Roland H. Bainton; *Autour de Michel Servet et de Sébastien Castellion* by B. Becker, *Isis* 45, No. 3 (Sep., 1954), p. 313.
[183] Ronald Bainton, *The Hunted Heretic: The Life and Death of Michael Servetus, 1511-1553*, (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1953).
[184] Valentine Zuber, “Le Congrès pour la tolérance (Genève, août 1953) Histoire et mémoire chez les protestants libéraux,” *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français*, Juillet-Août-Septembre 2000, Vol. 146, p. 514.
[185] Stanislas Kot and Pierre Mesnard, “Michel Servet et Sébastien Castellion: Martyre et Tolérance,” *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, T. 16, No. 2 (1954), p. 222.
[186] ed. B. Becker, *Autour de Michel Servet et de Sébastien Castellion*, (Haarlem: Tjeenk, Willink, 1953).
[187] Stanisław Kot, “L’influence de Michel Servet sur le movement antitrinitarien en Pologne et en Transylvanie”
[188] Czesław Miłosz, *The Issa Valley*, p. 109.

which he was pleased to discover was "one-half devoted to Poland."[189] Later that year, on November 10, in a letter to Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Miłosz mentioned that he had recently been immersed in reading about that Arians in general, Bernardino Ochino in particular, "a Franciscan prior and the most famous preacher in Italy, who ran away, [first] to Calvin, and from there to England, then on to Germany and Poland, and from Poland to Transylvania."[190] It's likely that Miłosz read about Ochino – who was far from being in the first-rung of anti-Trinitarian reformers, being remembered mostly for a polemical work on polygamy – in Wilbur's book,[191] but if he pursued his interest any further, it would have led him to a pioneering article by Delio Cantimori from 1929.[192]

After Miłosz defected, the precedent of these Renaissance heretics became all the more painfully relevant. Having applied for asylum in France on February 1, 1951, Miłosz found himself at sea, cut off from his native language and without a clear home, either in space (he was in France, while his wife and child were in the U.S.) or ideology. He responded to this situation by writing two books in quick succession. The first was *The Captive Mind*, which he began in spring 1951 and finished that fall. The second was *The Seizure of Power*, which he wrote very quickly over the span of two months in the summer of 1952. This novel, which was written for an international contest (hence the haste), tells the story of young Peter Kwinto, (a rather transparent stand-in for the author), who has just returned to Poland from Russia with the First Polish Army. Unsure how to proceed in the new post-war reality, he turns to his friend, the wise old socialist Artym, for guidance. Artym is "a legend: of past struggles of the the workers against Czarism, of faith in progress, in a European community of nations," whose book-filled apartment is "an island where truth and frankness were obligatory." Rather surprisingly, he begins his long speech summarizing the current political situation in Poland and the world by invoking the memory of the pacifism of the radical reformers:

Our anti-Trinitarians carried wooden sabers to manifest their absolute pacifism," he said. "And that happened in the bloodthirsty sixteenth century. They disputed whether a Christian could hold public office, because every office was an office of the sword. At that time the might of Ivan the Terrible was growing in the East. Now we resorted to violence against the Czarist police, but our ideal of the future was as non-violent as that of those humanists. We believed that the people themselves would recognize who had served them well. Today our people, for nationalistic reasons, are opposing the successors of Ivan. But has not a trace of our work, of our vanquished dream, been preserved in their distaste for oppression?[193]

Miłosz began writing his next novel, *The Issa Valley* in the fall of 1953 and finished it in June of 1954. It was then published serially in *Kultura* over the course of five issues in 1955. The novel is set in a small Lithuanian village shortly after the declaration of Polish (and Lithuanian) independence. The protagonist is a young boy named Thomas, and much of the book concerns

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[189] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 213.
[190] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 213.
[191] Wilbur describes Ochino not so much as a great theologian, but as a famous defector, noting that his flight from Italy "created the greatest sensation," and made Pope Paul III so angry that he "threatened to suppress the Capuchins altogether as accomplices in the matter." Earl Morse Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism, Socinianism and its Antecedents*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945), p. 96.
[192] Delio Cantimori, "Bernardino Ochino Uomo del Rinascimento e Riformatore," *Annali della R. Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Classe di Lettere e Filosofia*, Vol. 30, No. 1, pp. 1-40.
[193] Czesław Miłosz, *The Seizure of Power*, (New York: New York: Criterion Books, 1955), p. 215.

his coming-of-age: his life in nature, his first love and first contact with death. These experiences mirror those of Miłosz's own childhood (though with some transposition slightly in time, from the mid-teens to the early 1920s).

Though most of the novel is told in the present, one character, Thomas' grandfather, Kazimierz Surkont, forms a link with the distant past. A member of the local Polish-speaking gentry, Kazimierz's family have resided in the Issa valley for hundreds of years. In his house, Thomas discovers an ancient book, which turns out to be "On the Office of Swordbearing,"[194] a defense of the institution of serfdom written by Simon Budny, a radical Antitrinitarian theologian of the 16th century, (and a pioneering translator of the Bible into Polish), whose views were so extreme that they caused him to be shunned even by his fellow heretics. [195] (That Budny was excommunicated by the Socinians and at odds with his former Calvinist patrons, likely accounts for the fact that his texts are extremely rare – many exist in only a single copy, or are lost).

Kazimierz explains to Thomas that his distant ancestor Hieronymous Surkont was a Socinian who served at the court of Prince Radziwiłł in Kedainiai. The knowledge that their shared ancestor was a "heretic" thrills Thomas: "He regarded it as an honor to have been initiated into such a shameful secret."[196] For a Pole to whom membership in the Catholic Church seemed an innate part of their national identity, a 'heretical' ancestor stood out as an exciting – and somewhat dangerous – departure from the norm. As if taking up his reverie, the next chapter abruptly shifts focus from the Lithuanian countryside to Geneva in 1553. Miłosz describes Servetus' agonizing death in detail, after which he spends several pages outlining a speculative spiritual and intellectual trajectory for his imaginary 17th century Lithuanian-German Socinian.

In his telling, Hieronymous Surkont turns on Catholicism on his own. He drifts to the court at Kedainiai, where, under Prince Radziwiłł's patronage, "not a few Arians from Poland had found a haven on his estate, though to be sure, at the price of exercising a certain caution."[197]Under the influence of Socinian teaching, Surkont frees his serfs and sells off all his worldly goods. Then came the moment of his greatest test: the invasion of Karl-Gustav of Sweden in 1655, when Prince Radziwiłł sided with the Swedes, and Surkont sided with his prince. Radziwiłł betrayed the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, hoping thereby to win for himself an independent and Protestant Lithuania. He lost, and Surkont lost with him. In defeat, he consoles himself with the example of Servetus' heroic death at the stake. It was not enough. Surkont had "endured spiritual torture, the stigma of a traitor, the burden of self-doubt that came from not knowing whether he had made the right choice."[198]Surkont had become a man without a spiritual or political home of his own, caught between his allegiance to the Res Publica and his loyalty to his Prince. He was repelled by the Catholic victors, who considered him a heretic, but also shunned by most of his fellow Protestants.

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[194] Czesław Miłosz, *The Issa Valley*, pp. 106-7. The modern edition of "On the Office of Swordbearing" was prepared by Stanisław Kot: see Szymon Budny, *O Urzedzie miecza uzywajacem (1583)*, Warsaw: 1932.
[195] Budny's religious status changed several times over the course of his life. Stanisław Kot performed a masterful reconstruction of his various doctrinal peregrinations in *Szymon Budny, der grösste Häretiker Litauens im 16. Jahrhundert*, Graz: 1956. The degree to which Budny concealed his views at different points in his life is disputed, though Maria Ivanova considers him a "remarkable example of a protean thinker who practiced dissimulation." See Maria Ivanova, "'Sub pallio . . . latens,'" p. 34.
[196] Czesław Miłosz, *The Issa Valley*, p. 106.
[197] Czesław Miłosz, *The Issa Valley*, p. 111.
[198] Czesław Miłosz, *The Issa Valley*, p. 115.

It is not hard to see in this portrait of a disappointed, yet resolute, heretic a picture of Miłosz's own position following the publication of *Captive Mind* at the turn of 1953/54, when he was a total outcast to his former friends in Communist Poland, but still regarded with suspicion by many of the Polish emigres who surrounded him in his exile. Nor were things that much easier for Miłosz in his new home in France, where he was looked at askance by French Marxists, but found himself at the same time wary of American-led anti-Communism. (For a time, while working as a cultural attaché for the PRL embassy in Washington D.C., Miłosz even considered joining a Hutterite commune in Paraguay (presumably the Primavera Colony). He would have thus committed himself to living in an Anabaptist community organized along principles little changed since the 16th century – a step back in time to the era of the Radical Reformation which had been so on his mind. Miłosz later described the choice of working on this "Christian kibbutz" as logical for someone who "does not like the taste of capitalism or of Soviet 'socialism,'" and so would naturally go in search of a "third option" (*czegoś trzeciego*).[199]

These personal parallels to the situation of the 17th century Lithuanian Antitrinitarians were not the sole reason for weaving the story of the heretics into his text. Another one was local patriotism. The Socinians were one of the few things to inscribe his native corner of central Lithuania, which otherwise did not produce "a single figure who swayed the world's destiny," on the map of European civilization. As he writes in *Native Realm*, "only historians of the Reformation know the name of the capital of that province, Kiejdany, where many Protestant books were printed and where the Princes Radziwiłł, powerful protectors of heresy, resided."[200]

Yet another reason was that Miłosz had long been fascinated by various Christian heresies, which he learned about as a high school student in Vilnius from a very thorough textbook in church history. He was especially drawn to the doctrines of the Gnostics, and their inheritors, the Bogomils and Manichaeans, and found himself "intoxicated" by the "bitterness of dualism."[201] He would later teach a class on 'Manichaeism Old and New' at UC Berkeley and devoted an entry in his personal dictionary (*Miłosz's ABC's*)to the Bogomils.[202] He also wrote an article on Dostoevsky in which he call the author a "heresiarch," and describes the theology operating in his novels as following a Gnostic mode.[203]

Though Miłosz mentions Anti-trinitarianism in this piece, he has comparatively little to say about it; he seems to have always been drawn more to the bizarre cosmologies of the dualists than the radical social teachings of the protestant heretics. Hieronymus Surkont does show up, briefly, in a later poetic cycle "From the Rising of the Sun," from 1974, which also makes reference to the "textbook of Church History" and its "Manichean poison."[204]However, Miłosz's deepest encounter with Socinian thought, comes in the 1959 poem "Conversation at Easter 1620," ("Rozmowa na Wielkanoc 1620 roku"). The poem, written in Baroque style, is a dialogue

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[199] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 513.
[200] Czesław Miłosz, *Native Realm*, p. 13.
[201] Czesław Miłosz, *Native Realm*, p. 78.
[202] Czesław Miłosz, *Miłosz's ABC's*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), pp. 65-6. Stanley Bill has devoted an article to a perceptive reading of Miłosz's attraction to dualist heresies and their influence on his reading of Russian culture. See, Stanley Bill, "Dualism, Dostoevskii and the Devil in History: Czesław Miłosz's 'Neo-Manichaean' Theory of Russian Culture," *The Slavonic and East European Review,* Vol. 93 No. 3 (July 2015), pp. 401-428.
[203] Czeslaw Milosz, "Dostoevsky and Swedenborg," *Slavic Review,* Vol. 34, No. 2 (Jun., 1975), pp. 302-318
[204] Czesław Miłosz, *Gdzie słonce wschodzi i kedy zapada*, (Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1974).

between an unnamed man and the devil. In a later interview with Renata Gorczyńska, Miłosz described its protagonist as a radical Calvinist or Arian who had come back to Catholicism, and notes that in this case "the poet closely identifies with this nobleman." He chose the date 1620 because this marked the end of the Polish Renaissance and the start of the Baroque period, as well as the final "triumph of the counter-reformation."[205]

But this was hardly the first time that Miłosz had made use of the history of the Inquisition in his poetry. In the 1943 poem "Campo Dei Fiori," the indifference of the crowd watching Giordano Bruno's execution for heresy in Rome is made to stand in metonymically for the indifference of Polish bystanders to the elimination of the Warsaw Ghetto. Before he was burned on the pyre, Bruno met two other heretics in the Roman prison of Castel Sant'Angelo, Tommaso Campanella and Francesco Pucci. Campanella, the author of the utopian treatise *The City of the Sun*, was in prison for plotting a revolution against Spanish rule in Naples. He avoided the death penalty by feigning madness for almost thirty years. Pucci was another utopian, who arrived in the Castel Sant'Angelo after long wanderings across confessions and countries – including lengthy stays in Poland and Prague. He had debated Fausto Sozzini in Switzerland on the immortality of the soul, and later impressed Campanella with the long passages of Luther and Calvin he had memorized for this occasion.[206] His utopian plan was to create a secret organization of learned men who would act covertly on behalf of true religion. Its members would avoid detection by using disguised speech, irony, allegory and "other equivocal language."[207] In his *Eretici italiani*, Cantimori described this scheme as a virtual "codification of Nicodemism."[208] It was never put into effect: in 1597, Pucci was burned at the stake on the Campo dei Fiori by orders of the Inquisition.

Thus we have two groups looking at each other across a chasm of four hundred years: Miłosz, Czapski, Herling-Grudziński, Kot, Croce and Cantimori in mid-20th century Poland, Italy and France, and Pucci, Bruno, Campanella, Sozzini, Servetus, Castellio, Wojdowski and Budny in Italy, Switzerland, and Poland in the decades around 1600. What do they have to say to each other? Are they connected by a golden thread of influence, or the whiff of some subterranean conspiracy, such as that imagined by Pucci?

I think not. What really connects these two diffuse, dissident conventicles is not a common inheritance, but a shared stance towards reigning ideologies. Both are filled with confessional waverers and searchers after third ways. In a polarized world, such quests are usually dangerous and taken on by small numbers of highly literate individuals whose views overlapped but did not coincide. Nevertheless, given their intellectual preoccupations, and their status as outcasts, they were always running into each other. They wrote for the same little journals, and met in the same prisons. Alienation brought them together. In one epoch, it was from Geneva and Rome, and in another, from Moscow and Berlin. The pressures they experienced were the same, but the heretics provided a model. To the later dissidents, they offered a twin lesson: in the art of silence, and the courage it took to truly speak one's mind.

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[205] Renata Gorczyńska, *Rozmowy Czesław Miłosz: podróżny świata*, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2002), p.168.
[206] Giorgio Caravale, "Dissimulation and Conversion: Francesco Pucci's Return to Catholicism, in eds. Miriam Eliav-Feldon and Tamar Herzig, *Dissimulation and Deceit in Early Modern Europe*, p. 63, *f*52.
[207]Perez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying*, p. 98.
[208] Delio Cantimori, *Eretici italiani*, p. 392.

Chapter 3: Miłosz and Ketman

'A Treatise on Morals'

Czesław Miłosz wrote *The Captive Mind* over a span of a few months in 1951. He began the book shortly after leaving the Polish embassy and asking for asylum from the French government on February 1, 1951, and he wrote the bulk of it while living in *Kultura*'s headquarters in Maisons-Laffitte. In a later interview with Aleksander Fiut, Miłosz would confess that while he wrote the book out of a feeling of moral obligation (as well of despair at being – in his mind – finished as a poet), he also wrote it to cover a more tangible debt. Penniless and cut off from any alternate sources of support, writing *The Captive Mind* was his way of paying rent to his landlords-cum-patrons.[209]

But although Miłosz wrote *The Captive Mind* very quickly, he had begun thinking about the ideas contained within it for several years before his defection, and continued to elaborate them in the decade that followed. Writing to the Trappist monk, author and activist Thomas Merton, Miłosz stated that before writing *The Captive Mind* in 1951, he had "written it in verse" in the form of a long poem titled "The Treatise on Morals" (*Traktat Moralny*).[210] (In a later exchange with Herling-Grudziński, Miłosz stated that *The Captive Mind* was merely an "elaboration" of the "Moral Treatise" in prose)[211]. In the same letter, Miłosz described the 'Treatise' as "a very malicious long treatise in iambic verse," inspired by W.H. Auden's "New Year's Letter." Miłosz composed the "Treatise on Morals" in 1947, and published it in 1948, in the literary journal *Twórczość*.[212] This was the last possible moment when such a work could appear, just a few months before the Szczecin meeting which would announce the arrival of socialist realism as the official literary school of People's Poland.

The literary critic Joanna Zach describes the "Moral Treatise" as "Miłosz's bravest political work."[213] Given the date and circumstances of its composition, Zach considers it to have been written with an "astonishing boldness of expression." According to her, the effect of the "Moral Treatise" had on Polish readers during the Stalinist period was electric.[214] However, few commentators now agree as to why that was. Most of Miłosz's leading critics have avoided the "Moral Treatise" as a topic of exegesis.[215] In 2006, Henryk Markiewicz of the Jagiellonian University devoted an article to listing the various things he didn't understand in the poem, and the difficulties they pose in providing an overall account of the works' meaning.[216]

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[209] Aleksander Fiut, *Rozmowy z Czesławem Miłoszem*, (Kraków: 1981), p. 113.
[210] ed. Robert Faggen, *Striving Towards Being: The Letters of Thomas Merton and Czeslaw Milosz*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), p. 34.
[211] Czesław Miłosz, "Odpowiedź," *Kultura* 1959, n. 4, pp. 152–153.
[212] Czesław Miłosz, "Traktat Moralny," *Twórczość*, 1948: № 4, pp. 5–16.
[213] Joanna Zach, "Traktat moralny": poezja jako 'akt umysłu,'" *Teksty Drugie* 5, 2008, p. 180.
[214] Joanna Zach, "Traktat moralny": poezja jako 'akt umysłu,'", p. 182.
[215] For a notable exception, see Łukasz Tischner, *Sekrety mamchejskich trucizn: Miłosz wobec zła*, (Kraków: Znak, 2001).
[216] Henryk Markiewicz, "Czego nie rozumiem w Traktacie moralnym," *Teksty Drugie* 5, No. 101 (2006), pp. 205-212. Joanna Zach's article is a partial rejoinder to this provocation, providing a partial reading of the poem and reasons for suspecting that a fuller reading remains possible.

The “Moral Treatise” is a long poem, of nearly four hundred lines, written in rhyming couplets. Its overall form has been compared to one of Robert Browning’s dramatic monologues or to didactic works from the era of the Enlightenment.[217]

Despite various problems of interpretation, a few things can be said with some confidence about its meaning and intent. At the outset, it appears to be the monologue of a poet, caught between clashing worldviews, or systems promising universal salvation. Early on, it mentions episodes of mass violence against perceived ideological outsiders, such as the Salem witch trials and the murder of the pagan philosopher Hypatia by a Christian mob in Alexandria, and counsels the reader to look for understanding in Thucydides over the more naïve Herodotus.[218] It then takes up and rejects various current philosophies as insufficient to overcome the schizophrenia of the post-war era. Existentialism is called out by name, as are the works of Sartre, Henri Bergson and Stanisław Witkiewicz (the author of *Insatiability* and coiner of the term “Pill of Murti-Bing, later to appear in *The Captive Mind*). He also takes a swipe at contemporary German philosophy, when he writes mockingly of “Heidelberg.”[219] Although not named explicitly, several verses seem to describe Marxism, although only obliquely, as “the method”.[220]

In a later interview, Miłosz called the ‘Treatise’ a “satire (*kpina*) of socialist realism,”[221] although that hardly seems accurate of the poem as a whole. He also pointed to what he described as several clear allusions to the situation in Poland, namely, to the secret police and to Gomułka, although to a present-day reader these seem heavily veiled (and indeed, within the poem, the mention of Boschian devils holding pitchforks seems to apply as much to the Gestapo as anything else). Elsewhere though, a mention of a gravedigger equipped with a *nagan*, a type of pistol characteristic of the NKVD, is a genuinely bold invocation of the Stalinist secret police, although it figures here in the guise of a burier of intellectual systems rather than men.

We might read the “Treatise on Morals” as a whole, then, as operating on two levels. Close to the surface, the poem is a lament for a time out of joint, sardonic survey of various contemporary efforts by intellectuals and philosophers to navigate their way through a world in which all systems of values seem up for grabs. While the immediate inspiration for this topic might have been Auden’s “Letter,” Yeats’ poems of despair following the First World War and culture-surveying sweep T.S. Eliot’s “The Wasteland,” which Miłosz translated into Polish during the War, also served as models for this approach. The second level requires a degree of reading between the lines. In it, Miłosz pushed the limits of what was sayable in 1947/48, criticizing Marxism, the Soviet Union, and specific Polish leaders in a way that was thrilling to his readers but can seem somewhat opaque to us now. But there remains the question of what is Miłosz’s attitude in all this towards his fellow Left-intellectuals and their participation in the cultural life of People’s Poland? And how does this poem pre-figure the writing of *The Captive Mind*?

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[217] Joanna Zach, “Traktat moralny”: poezja jako ‘akt umysłu,’” *Teksty Drugie* 5, No. 113 (2008), p. 182.

[218] One recalls here the character of the Professor from Miłosz’s *Seizure of Power*, dismissed from his chair and scraping by on translation work, who reads Thucydides’ account of the civil war in Corcyra for consolation.

[219] It seems Heidegger is meant here, as he is mentioned by name in an earlier draft shared with the Krońskis. Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po wojnie*, p. 276.

[220] “Pokochać sprzeczność. Z Czesławem Miłoszem rozmawiają Aleksander Fiut i Andrzej Franaszek,” in Cz. Miłosz Traktat moralny. Traktat poetycki,” in *Traktat moralny. Traktat poetycki*, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1996). Accessed at: http://hamlet.edu.pl/milosz-traktaty

[221] Renata Gorczyńska and Czesław Miłosz, *Rozmowy: podróżny świata*, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2002), p. 88.

Łukasz Tischner has argued that Miłosz's references to a madness (*obłęd*) in which, "willingly or unwillingly, we are all embraced" (*chęcią czy też mimo chęci*, / *wszyscy jesteśmy nim objęci*), is in fact a coded reference to what he would later term *ketman*.[222] Markiewicz, however, rejects this reading outright, since based on its placement in the text, 'madness' would also have to refer to members of the Gestapo and Polish Secret Police mentioned above.[223] It seems to me that the truth lies somewhere in the middle. *Obłęd* is not yet the fully-formed idea of ketman, but it does carry a degree of self-scrutiny. On one hand, it is a lesser degree of the madness that possessed the Nazis and the NKVD. But on the other hand, it is the "price of doing business in the world" (*Obłęd dziś ceną jest działania*), and only a hermit, locked in an ivory tower reading St. Augustine, could think of avoiding it.

Miłosz wrote that he and everyone around him are possessed to some degree by the madness of the age. How they should respond is another matter. A crucial passage earlier in the poem seems to offer an answer. It has often been cited in accounts of the period, and was even the source of the name of a popular history of writers in the immediate postwar period.[224] Here is my free translation:

> "And if you were but like a stone in a field/the avalanche's course will change/depending on the stones over which it flows/and, as someone else would often say/you can steer the avalanche's stream/Calm its wildness, and its cruelty/ for this too, requires bravery."

Many Polish readers interpreted this passage as being in favor of resistance to Communist rule. Stanisław Barańczak even saw it as a moral clarion call ("*posłanie moralne*") of the opposition. In a conversation held in 1998, Miłosz himself indicated a much more pessimistic reading, calling it an "expression of the philosophy of collaborators, who joined the Party in order to influence it from within."[225] He continued:

> "From this fragment itself however, one should rather find an ideology of cooperation with People's Poland. I would describe my state at the time – through a discussion with Kroński – as a kind of split consciousness (*rozdwojenie*). My intellect was with Kroński, but morally I was against him."[226]

The Krońskis, Tadeusz and his wife Irena, were two of Miłosz's closest friends during the Occupation. Tadeusz was a philosopher who had studied with Władysław Tatarkiewicz in Warsaw and the phenomenologist Jan Patočka in Prague. Irena had studied classics in Lwów, and would go one be a leading editor of philosophical classics in Polish translation. Both were convinced Marxists, and were deeply opposed to any revival of pre-war political life in Poland. This stance had much to do with a formative experience of anti-Semitism in Polish Universities. Irena was Jewish and Tadeusz was half-Jewish. They survived the war in Warsaw outside the

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[222] Łukasz Tischner, *Sekrety mamchejskich trucizn: Miłosz wobec zła*, p. 138.
[223] Markiewicz, "Czego nie rozumiem w Traktacie moralnym," p. 210.
[224] Anna Bikont and Joanna Szczęsna, *Lawina i Kamienie: Pisarze wobec komunizmu,* (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2021).
[225] "Pokochać sprzeczność. Z Czesławem Miłoszem rozmawiają Aleksander Fiut i Andrzej Franaszek." in Cz. Miłosz Traktat moralny. Traktat poetycki," in *Traktat moralny. Traktat poetycki*, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1996), p. 15.
[226] "Pokochać sprzeczność. Z Czesławem Miłoszem rozmawiają Aleksander Fiut i Andrzej Franaszek."

Ghetto. They made their living rolling cigarettes for the black market. Evacuated out of Warsaw in the last months of the war, they found themselves abroad, in a displaced persons camp in Germany and then in Paris, where they renewed their contacts with Miłosz and strove to win him over to their side.

Tadeusz, especially, worked assiduously to bring Miłosz into the Marxist camp. He also became a major influence on his writing. Miłosz would often share early drafts of his poems with Kroński, and edited them according to his advice. In the interview cited above, Miłosz said that the "Moral Treatise" arose out of intense discussions with his friend Tadeusz Kroński, a "very interesting Marxist," whose philosophical rejection of existentialism deeply shaped Miłosz's attitude towards it in the poem.

Kroński considered Miłosz to be postwar Poland's only true Marxist poet, not in the sense of actually believing in Marxism, but in the sense of translating social change into artistic development, much in the way that Lukács considered Balzac a "progressive" writer in spite of being a reactionary.[227] The two men shared a distaste for Romanticism and a love of the more even-tempered classicists who preceded them. But even though Miłosz was close to Kroński aesthetically, he never fully shared his politics, which accounts for some of the self-described "schizophrenia" of the "Treatise on Morals." This split allegiance, re-figured as an inner division (*rozdwojenie*) might explain some the more puzzling features of the poem, such as its enthusiastic praise of "heresy,"(in my theory / heresy walks in glory)[228] and its description of a devil, who, "as I've read, is *séparé de lui-même*."

The "Treatise on Morals" then has one foot in one camp, and one in another. It castigates modernity, while giving the Devil his due. But does the passage about avalanche and the stones really reflect an "ideology of cooperation" as Miłosz claimed fifty years later? As Henryk Markiewicz points out, the poem itself is much more ambiguous. After all, if it requires courage (*męstwo*) to join the avalanche, is that not a sign it might be worth doing?

Postal Battles

One mystery remains in this stretch: who is the person who would "often say" that you could "steer the avalanche's path"? Here, Miłosz's postwar correspondence may provide an answer. In a letter dated June 24, 1946, Jerzy Putrament urged Miłosz, an acquaintance and political enemy from their pre-war student days in Vilnius, (and 'Gamma,' in *The Captive Mind*) to abandon his pose of aloofness and commit himself to fully to the political life of the present. After telling Miłosz off for wasting his enormous talent and being prey to fads (like existentialism), and for imagining that he could have a literary career abroad like Joseph Conrad or his uncle Oscar Milosz, Putrament laments "If only you knew, how much one can accomplish, if one doesn't just wave one's arms, but steps into the middle of the avalanche."[229]

Miłosz was not in Poland for most of the immediate postwar period. Diplomatic postings took him to New York, Washington D.C., and later, the Polish embassy in Paris. He visited Poland for a long vacation in the fall of 1949, and came back for a pivotal final visit over the Christmas and New Years' holidays in 1950. However, for the most part, he observed the goings-on there

[227] "Pokochać sprzeczność. Z Czesławem Miłoszem rozmawiają Aleksander Fiut i Andrzej Franaszek."
[228] "bo w mojej teorii/ Herezja w wielkiej chodzi glorii."
[229] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 359

through the keyhole of his correspondence. His image of the transformation that was taking place in Poland, and the threat it posed to his own creative work, arrived almost entirely by mail. Because of this, *Zaraz po wojnie*, the collection of his correspondence from 1945 to 1950 which Milosz published in 1998, is an invaluable resource for tracking his evolving relationship to People's Poland, his fellow writers and the changing situation in the literary sphere.[230]

Miłosz was aware that mail sent to Poland was being read by censors and adjusted accordingly (he was much freer in his correspondence with friends in France). In the preface to the collection, he writes that "a practiced eye will spot allusions and circumlocutions throughout, or aspects of so-called Aesopian speech."[231] One of these circumlocutions was *nuda*, or boredom. In letters to Ryszard Matuszewski, a young literary critic then working as an editor at *Kuźnica*, (Forge), a journal on the younger and more left-leaning side of the publishing spectrum, Miłosz complains frequently of the boredom and nihilism prevalent in contemporary Polish literature. For Miłosz, this boredom is connected with the new language of social values promulgated by leading critics (among them, Matuszewski): "socialized boredom, or boredom which best passes a social exam is still only boredom, nothing more."[232]

Even from a distance of three thousand miles, Miłosz chafed at the tightening of publishing controls: "There is a feverish atmosphere in the country, which makes it impossible to break out of a charmed circle."[233] To Paweł Hertz, another editor at *Kuźnica*, he complained about the political forewords appended to his poems: "I would prefer that *Kuźnica* did not add commentaries to [my] poems, indicating American bloodthirstiness."[234] The procedure reminded Miłosz of the parallel process he was witnessing in the American press, which branded everything a bit less reactionary 'anti-American.'"

Iwaszkiewicz

If Kroński tried to convince Miłosz to come over to the communist side entirely, another group of correspondents, made up of more established editors and older writers, including Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Tadeusz Breza and Kazimierz Wyka, offered a different sort of temptation – namely, that of accommodation. For Miłosz, Iwaszkiewicz was the most emotionally significant of this trio. When Miłosz was a fledgling poet, Iwaszkiewicz appeared to him as his poetic lodestar. When Miłosz was nineteen, he sent Iwaszkiewicz a letter begging "I adore you" ("*Uwielbiam Pana*") along with two of his earliest poems. Iwaszkiewicz, seventeen years older than Miłosz, replied immediately, inviting the younger man to stay at his villa outside Warsaw in

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[230] This compilation is of course not complete, and questions remain over the criteria used for their selection. Andrzej Mencwel has been particularly critical of the collection for this reason, alleging that Miłosz assembled it with the intent of making himself look better while blackening the reputation of some of his contemporaries – notably Kroński. Only time and further publication from the archives will tell. See also Andrzej Kołakowski, "Predmowa," in Tadeusz Kroński, *Faszyzm a Tradycja Europejska*, (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IFIS PAN, 2014), p. 11.

[231] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 13

[232] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 376

[233] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 375

[234] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 453

Stawisko.[235] This was the beginning of a friendship which continued through the war years and after.

Iwaszkiewicz signaled his ambivalence towards ideology early on. In 1942, he penned a story, "The Battle of Sedgemoor Plain," whose action takes place in England in 1685, during the Monmouth Rebellion – a Protestant-led attempt to overthrow King James II. The narrator focuses on the actions of the rebels. The leading characters are devoted partisans of the cause; in Miłosz's words, they are men who "are capable of every sacrifice" and "refute the image of man as a being who is concerned above all with its own interests."[236] And yet – the reward for all their bravery is oblivion. Neither they nor their ideals survive the trials of battle. In time, the very reasons they fought come to seem absurd. Looking back from the perspective of old age, one of the story's heroines reflects that all her youthful bravery was pointless; "she cannot even remember why she acted one way and not another." To Miłosz, the allegorical meaning seemed clear: Iwaszkiewicz thought that the factional struggles which loomed so large during the war would eventually be forgotten. He also thought this stance explained Iwaszkiewicz after the war, when he adopted "an open, programmatic collaboration with the Communists." After all, why risk everything in a conflict that could not be won?

By the time of the *Zaraz po wojnie* correspondence, the relationship between the two men had somewhat reversed: Iwaszkiewicz now felt himself lost, and Miłosz was the one counseling him on how to navigate the new reality. Not certain what to write or what kind of projects to take on, Iwaszkiewicz wrote that he felt "like a person of the past, but conservatism is not in fashion these days, as one knows."[237] Miłosz advised him to take up historical fiction, and try his hand at a novel about his late friend (and distant relative), the composer Karol Szymanowski, or about the Polish Arians, the Socinian heretics Miłosz had recently been reading up on in Washington D.C.[238] Miłosz also complained about a review of his recent poetry which appeared in a journal Iwaszkiewicz edited under the title "Poetry of the double face," (*Poezja podwójnego oblicza*) – "a disgusting title," according to Miłosz, which means "I am not PPR (Polish Workers' Party) enough."[239]

Throughout it all however, Iwaszkiewicz carries on almost as if nothing had changed from before the war. He entertains in his villa; he travels to Italy and to Buenos Aires. His dilemma was of how to regain his audience in a new environment; his place in the world was already secure. He writes of the new, post-1948 government in Poland that "There is no other path but ours, I see this every day more clearly," – a clear declaration of allegiance, if in a world without real alternatives. Ultimately, Iwaszkiewicz would settle into an easy co-existence with the government for which he was rewarded with a seat as a non-party member of the Sejm. The cost

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[235] For more on the relationship between Iwaszkiewicz and Miłosz, see eds. Barbara Toruńczyk, Robert Papieski, *Portret podwójny: wykonany z listów, wierszy, zapisków intymnych, wywiadów i publikacji*, (Warsaw: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich, 2011), and Renata Gorczyńska, "Przyjaźń czy Kochanie," in *Małe miłosziana*, (Warsaw: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich , 2017), pp. 99-110.

[236] Czesław Miłosz, *A Year of the Hunter*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994), p. 162.

[237] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 130.

[238] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 201.

[239] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 185. The review, by Henry Vogler, appeared in *Nowiny Literackie*, 1948, No. 20.

of this later on was denouncing Miłosz and breaking with him completely once he left Poland for the West.

Tadeusz Breza, was another well-placed writer who seduced Miłosz with the "wisdom of cynicism." Unlike Iwaszkiewicz, Breza was not a close friend of Miłosz's. They only met after the war, in Kraków, when both men were looking for a place to live after having fled Warsaw following the August, 1944 Uprising. Breza was the scion of a Volhynian noble family, and before the war he was known for his psychological fiction and for his critical appraisal of the Catholic hierarchy. After the war, he worked for the journal *Odrodzenie*, and in 1946 won its inaugural fiction prize for his novel *Mury Jerycha* (The Walls of Jericho) which described (and was written during) the Nazi Occupation. Breza kept himself aloof from politics, remaining concerned only with his own artistic-intellectual sphere. According to Miłosz, he was a member of the 'salon' surrounding Luna Bristigerowa, the secret police officer in charge of monitoring writers. Breza's example indicated that an intelligent writer could easily adapt to the new regime and maintain the appearance of independence, so long as he or she maintained good relations with those in power." One could see him as the model of the writer-opportunist, interested above everything in his own ease, and at the same time ensuring for himself a comfortable perch from which to observe a changing society."[240]

Putrament

Of all Miłosz's correspondents, Putrament emerges as the most sinister and the most nakedly ambitious. At times, he seems to revel in his role as tempter-in-chief. Like Miłosz, Putrament had roots in Lithuania. Almost the same age, they attended Vilnius University at the same time, and were both members of the Żagary literary society. Putrament idolized Miłosz's poetic talent, and also seems to have envied him to a degree. Their rivalry began early. In a college puppet show put on by their literary magazine, Putrament had one of the dolls sing "For Miłosz is a Gypsy child, so don't trust him or believe what he says/For when you praise him, he writes trash, when you don't – beware, beware."[241] When Putrament published his first work of prose, a novella (*Wczoraj powrót*) which appeared in a 1934 issue of the Wilno journal *Piony*, it was accompanied by a scathing – and unsigned – review, penned, of course, by Miłosz.[242]

Over the course of their acquaintance, Putrament underwent a swift political transformation, moving from the extreme right to the extreme left, while Miłosz stayed put a bit more left of center. When they first met, Putrament was a member of the far-right nationalist youth organization Młodzież Wszechpolska, a predecessor of the ONR. Supposedly, he and Miłosz even faced off in clashes surrounding the visit of the National Democrat Minister Stroński (although Putrament would later claim that he in fact rescued Miłosz from being clubbed by some of his fellow street fighters).[243]

In the mid-1930's Putrament underwent an ideological volte-face, and switched his allegiance to the Polish Communist Party. By 1937, along with the rest of the staff of *Po prostu*, he stood trial for promoting Communism. (During that same trial, Henryk Dembiński, the founder and editor of *Po prostu*, and a recent convert from devout Catholicism to the radical Left, wrote to his wife

[240] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 467.
[241] Renata Gorczyńska and Czesław Miłosz, *Rozmowy: podróżny świata*, p. 239.
[242] Renata Gorczyńska, *Małe miłosziana*, p. 55.
[243] Renata Gorczyńska, *Małe miłosziana*, p. 52.

from prison that his own revolutionary activity was “only a cheap, 20th century reflection of the radicalism of Him, whose image appears on the cross on the judge’s table.)”[244] In 1940, Putrament worked for the Soviet Press in Lwów/Lviv alongside Jerzy Borejsza. With Borejsza, he is thought to have taken part in the group denunciation which landed most of the Polish Communists then residing in Lviv in jail (Aleksander Wat was especially vehement on this point, blaming most of his subsequent difficulties on Putrament’s influence). Later, Putrament seems to have been recruited by the NKVD, at whose behest he made contact with groups of the AK or Home Army in Lithuania.

Separated from each other for most of the War by the “Peace Boundary” between Nazi and Soviet spheres of influence, Miłosz and Putrament did not meet again until 1945. By then, Putrament was a major in the Army, and editor-in-chief of *Dziennik Polski*. Soon, he would move into the diplomatic service, to which he would soon recruit Miłosz as well. Putrament’s first posting was to Bern, in Switzerland. Miłosz was supposed to serve as his cultural attaché. Putrament wanted to keep him close – and as much as possible, under his control. He still admired Miłosz’s talent greatly, but considered him politically naïve. In one letter he wrote that Miłosz’s “talent was so great, he didn’t know what to do with it.”[245] Elsewhere, he told him that he wanted to “channel this geyser into a socialist pipe.”

In the edited edition of the letters, Miłosz described the correspondence with Putrament as a “game,” “played by two Vilnians, aware, that politics have changed them, one into a mouse, and the other into a cat.”[246] Throughout, Putrament tries to impress Miłosz with his power, his political acumen, and his lack of illusions. He describes himself as a convinced Marxist, whose motto is “existence precedes consciousness.” At times, he boasts about his fine house in Switzerland, and all the free time he now has to work on his writing. At others, he is openly contemptuous of democracy, as when he writes “Freedom. Why is this supposed to be such a great value? Why is it supposed to be the highest human happiness? I think, that freedom is a negation of humanity – it is rather an attribute of animals.”[247] Elsewhere, Putrament waxes poetic about the “great historical destiny” that has befallen him and a few other fellow people from Vilnius. Their task was “not to reconcile East and West” but to help each “understand one another, and maybe rise above it all.”[248]

The naked will to power present in many of these letters must have been something of a pose on Putrament’s part, but it also expressed a truth, especially about the two men’s relative standing with one another. But they also mask something, a current of admiration, and even affection. Writing in 1998, Miłosz describes their relationship as a very “specific psychic knot, not without feelings of superiority-inferiority” and regrets that he is forced to write about Putrament as a “demonic figure.” Jerzy Giedroyc, Miłosz’s editor at Kultura, long thought that he harbored

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[244] Jarosław Tomasiewicz, “We wszystkim – miłość (o Henryku Dembińskim),”*Obywatel*, n. (5)37/2007, http://lewicowo.pl/we-wszystkim-milosc-o-henryku-dembinskim/. Dembiński remained a devout believer however, and felt he could reconcile his deep religiosity with allegiance to political activism. For more on this fascinating, contradictory figure, who left a deep impression on many acquaintances from Vilnius, among them Czesław Miłosz and Jerzy Giedroyc, see Paweł Libera, “Henryk Dembiński: The Man Who Became a Communist After Death?,” *Acta Poloniae Historica* 123 (2021), pp. 239-60.

[245] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 359.

[246] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 350.

[247] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 353.

[248] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 359.

mixed emotions about his Putrament, even though, in 1951 Miłosz called him his "enemy number one." In a later letter to Miłosz , Giedroyc wrote that "I always suspected that you had a hidden sympathy for him."[249] In a letter to Thomas Merton, Miłosz himself admitted as much. He called *The Captive Mind* a "political pamphlet" and a work of simplification, which did not communicate his true emotions: "In fact I love those people against whom I directed my anger much more than I show. I did not succeed in showing my love and my whole thought."[250]

That was in 1959. His feelings in 1951 were quite different. Speaking forty-five years later, Ryszard Matuszewski told an interviewer that he thought that Putrament wanted to make Miłosz his "squire."[251] According to him, this was one of the "private reasons" why Miłosz broke with the regime: "Putrament wanted to shower him in privileges, but at the cost of his captivity. And he wouldn't let himself be taken captive."[252]

Kroński

Unlike Putrament, Kroński did not want to overawe Miłosz, or bend him to his will. He did, however, in his words, desire "mastery over his soul." Much of the correspondence took place while Miłosz was in the United States and the Krońskis were in Paris, although contemplating a return to Poland. For much of the exchange, the Krońskis' knowledge of People's Poland was largely theoretical, and depended inordinately on their contacts with the staff of the Polish embassy. This distance lends a certain abstract quality to the letters. Unlike the rest of his correspondence, their discussions with Miłosz do not center individual personalities or journals. Rather, they take place in the realm of ideas.

In their exchanges, questions of aesthetic and politics were intertwined. When Miłosz included a mention of "red paint" in one of his poems, Kroński urged him to "forget for a moment that I am (an unacknowledged) Marxist,"[253] and take it out, since it would be impossible for a contemporary to avoid a political reading of the phrase. Miłosz followed his advice. Later, in 1950, when Miłosz found himself under attack in Poland for an article appraising the current state of Polish poetry,[254] they wrote to reassure him that a few images from his poem "Toast" did "more for the proletariat" than a whole bunch of articles. Apropos of this exchange, they criticized the "very stupid, disgusting and un-Marxist" remarks of Tadeusz Borowski ('Beta' in *The Captive Mind*) and reminded him that despite all this vitriol, "Marxism is the mind and heart of the world."[255]

The Krońskis were Marxists, but Marxists of a peculiar sort. Their convictions mixed social philosophy, politics and religion in a peculiar, but in some ways also very Polish, combination. Throughout the war, they read the Gospels, in Greek, as a source of moral comfort. Both (but especially Tadeusz) were convinced Hegelians, who believed that History had a direction and a definite purpose. This gave rise to a strange superstition: Krońskiwouldn't allow people to say

[249] Renata Gorczyńska, *Małe miłosziana*, p. 61.
[250] ed. Robert Faggen, *Striving Towards Being*, p. 11.
[251] Aleksander Fiut, *Z Miłoszem*, (Sejny: Fundacja Pogranicze, 2011), p. 51.
[252] Aleksander Fiut, *Z Miłoszem*, p. 54.
[253] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 310.
[254] Czesław Miłosz, "O stanie polskiej poezji," *Kuźnica* 1950, n. 3.
[255] In the same letter, they mention Putrament, under the nickname "Tyrant." *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 335.

certain things that went “against the current of history” (and particularly about the Soviet Union), for fear that it would be overheard by “’the Ear’ of history.”[256]

Politically, the Krońskis were against everything to do with the old, pre-war Poland of colonels, feudalism and the Catholic Church, the so-called ‘god-and-father-land’ (*bogojczyzna*).[257] For this reason, Kroński’s old philosophy professor Tatarkiewicz (whose informal seminar Miłosz also attended during the occupation) became his enemy and ideological bête-noire, since he was not only a Catholic, but someone who defended “general absolutes, alienation – the Aristotelian-medieval structure of society.”[258] For her part, Irena Krońska believed in the Party, but kept a watchful eye on her enthusiasm. She kept two books on her bedside table in Paris: when she became too excited about Communism, she read George Orwell’s *1984* to cool down. Conversely, when she feeling anxious about the Marxist future, she read *Son of the People*, a campaign biography of the French Communist leader Maurice Thorez, to restore her faith.[259]

Alone and somewhat adrift in France, all their hopes, the Krońskis began to pin their hopes on Poland – but not the Poland of old. To flourish, it would have to be re-made, rebuilt and philosophically-rehabilitated. Over time, their hopes in this regard became increasingly drastic. In September 1947, Tadeusz wrote that he “is an absolute optimist, when it comes to the future of Eastern Europe. As long as Stalinist communism is established there.” He felt the same way about his homeland, stating that “a good future awaits Poland, so long as it is swiftly Marxicised.”[260] In 1948, he wrote that he “would personally prefer that Poland waged an effective fight against Catholicism,” and that in connection with this, it might be “better to close all the humanities departments and replace them with some better institutions.”[261]

Later in that same letter, Tadeusz lamented the narrow base on which Communist rule depended, in his estimate, the miners, some of the workers, and even Jews,” or “no more than 20%”[262] of the population. Still, this was no reason to “give up on such a historical opportunity,” although the number of their enemies did lead him to a measure of despair. Sometimes, Tadeusz let himself “get carried away,” and imagined that they should “teach the people in this country to think rationally and without alienation” with the aid of “Soviet rifle butts.” The “ultimate goal” of this action was a kind of philosophical utopia, in which “everyone without exception” would be “forced to participate in the cultural life of mankind.”[263]

Since the publication of *Zaraz po wojnie* in 1998, the quote about “Soviet rifle butts” has become Kroński’s calling card. One commentator has even taken it as the starting point for a theory of ‘twin extremisms,’ in which Kroński’s outburst is paired with the work of Juliusz Evola.[264] This

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[256] Aleksander Fiut, *Rozmowy z Czesławem Miłoszem*, (Kraków: 1981), p. 78.
[257] Renata Gorczyńska and Czesław Miłosz, *Rozmowy: podróżny świata*, p. 110.
[258] Elsewhere, Kroński calls this the “reactionary-Aristotelian” or the “Aristotelian-Thomist-Hitlerite camp.” Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 317.
[259] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 328.
[260] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, pp. 289-90.
[261] In the same letter, Kroński says that their mutual friend Ryszard Matuszewski complained that “one day, they will call us traitors.” Kroński explained to him that he wasn’t thinking dialectically – after all, in the future “not they” will be writing Poland’s history textbooks. Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 315.
[262] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 318.
[263] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 318.
[264] Andrzej Mencwel, “Dwa extremizmy,” in *Wyobraźnia antropologiczna*, (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2006).

is too literal a reading however. Kroński delighted in provocation, paradox and extremes, and as we shall see later in this chapter, behind his vehemence stood a great deal of fear.

But the question remains, if, as Miłosz said, Tadeusz Kroński had a "decisive influence" on him, what did that influence consist of, if not politics? What did he mean when he said that he was with Kroński intellectually, but not morally? The literary scholar Maria Janion has devoted a splendid article to the interplay between the poet and the two philosophers.[265] In it, she observes that the Krońskis did indeed influence Miłosz in a number of ways. They shaped him philosophically and aesthetically, setting him against the literary and intellectual traditions of Polish Romanticism and Messianism, while also steeling him against the contemporary influences of existentialism and surrealism. Perhaps most crucially, they helped steer Miłosz towards his great "breakthrough"[266] of 1943, in which he ceased forever to be a poet of the interwar years, and embraced a new poetics of the present.

But Kroński did not succeed in winning Miłosz's 'soul.' The poet was willing to accept communism as the better of two bad options, but never as the 'hope of mankind.' He remained a skeptic, who maintained a prickly independence in anything connected to his literary output.

The Smell of Sulfur

The revolution arrived in Poland with the smell of the Devil's sulfur. Tadeusz Kroński smelt it everywhere: in Paris, among the French Communist intellectuals,[267] and back in Poland, where he and Irena worked for the regime they half-mockingly called "our dear mother." Ryszard Matuszewski recalled him uttering this phrase at the 1951 New Year's Eve party which was be Miłosz's last in Poland – a party held pointedly apart from the official Writer's Union get together organized by Putrament.[268] For his part, Putrament, before Miłosz agreed to serve the regime as a cultural attaché, warned him that he was "signing a pact with the Devil."[269] A few years earlier, in 1941, Aleksander Wat saw the devil appear to him in the flesh while interred in a Soviet prison in Saratov. When he told Miłosz the story in Berkeley, in 1962, during the recording of the tapes that became *My Century*, he recalled that "not only did I see him, but I could almost smell the brimstone."[270] That very night, in 1941, Wat converted to Christianity.

Polish intellectuals after (and sometimes, during) the war staged their changing relationship to Communism as a number of individual dramas of temptation and conversion. The letters collected in *Zaraz po wojnie* continue this tradition. In their letters, Miłosz's correspondents offer, in varying ways, paths for a practical or philosophical reconciliation with power. Iwaszkiewicz, and to a lesser extent Breza offered the temptation of comfort; Putrament offered the temptation of power; and Kroński, that of superiority: the conviction of absolute, moral and historical justification. Some of this was self-conscious posing and some of it was sincere, but as the 1940s drew to a close, the stakes grew ever higher. In other words, even if these were pretend devils, the flames behind them were real.

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[265] Maria Janion, "Kroński-Miłosz: An Episode from the History of Ideas and Poetry," in ed. Zdzisław Łapiński, "*Milosz Like the World": Poet in the Eyes of Polish Literary Critics*, (Frankfurt: 2014), pp. 61-79.
[266] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 230.
[267] Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 263.
[268] Aleksander Fiut, *Z Miłoszem*, p. 53.
[269] Renata Gorczyńska and Czesław Miłosz. *Rozmowy: podróżny świata*, p. 80.
[270] Aleksander Wat, *My Century: The Odyssey of a Polish Intellectual*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), p. 291.

In later recollections, Miłosz dated his own conversion *away* from communism to the Autumn of 1949. He was back in Poland from Washington D.C. for a few months and found himself swept up in the buoyant social life of Warsaw's great and good. As he told an audience almost forty years later:

> I belonged then to a very notable company (*towarzystwo*), people who were well-dressed, living well, simply put, the elite, that ruled Poland. And I was taking part in a party, where there was drinking, and dancing, precisely in these "highest spheres." We were coming home around dawn, it was four in the morning – summer, but the night was cold. And I saw a jeep carrying the arrested. The soldiers, those guards, were in *kożuchs*, (warm sheepskin coats), and the prisoners – in jackets with the collars turned-up, shivered in the cold. Then I became aware of what I was a part of.

This may have been a decisive moment for Miłosz personally, but it does not seem to be when he made his final decision to defect. For the next 18 months, Miłosz remained in Polish diplomatic service, this time in Paris. Shortly before Christmas, 1950, he went back to Poland again, and this time his passport was withdrawn. His wife and infant son were still in the United States, living on the Pennsylvania farm of a childhood friend. (Who was responsible for suspending Miłosz's passport? Putrament later blamed the Communist Minister of Culture Jakub Berman, but circumstantial evidence preserved in the archives makes Putrament the most likely culprit.[271])

Searching for help, he went first to the press baron Jerzy Borejsza (recognizable as the character of Baruga in *Seizure of Power*) and then to Natalia Modzelewska, the wife of the foreign minister Zygmunt Modzelewski. Natalia was Russian, and Zygmunt was a Polish Communist. They met in the Soviet Union in 1937, shortly before he was arrested as part of the Great Purge. Natalia, in part because she was charmed by the poet, and in part (perhaps), because she blamed Stalin for sending her first husband, Aleksander Budniewicz, to the gulag, helped Miłosz secure the restoration of his passport. According to him, she left it up to him whether to stay in Polish service or not, but stipulated that if he chose not to, an "obligation" would weigh on him: "To fight against the executioner [*kat*] of Russia?[272]

There was an official New Year's Eve party at the Literary Union (*Związek Literatów*), then headed by Putrament. Miłosz elected to go to a house party with Aleksander Wat and Jan Parandowski,. According to him, this was tantamount to a "declaration of war."[273] He spent another night with the Krońskis, at their apartment in Marszałkowsa Street. Matuszewski recalled the evening as one of great "joy, tenderness and open heartedness" coupled with fear:

> Everything took place in a humorous atmosphere, full of jokes, but beneath it ran a current of dread. "Czesiu, what beautiful bright clothes you have, you can't wear clothes like that here" – that was one of Kroński's jokes. Later, Czesław: "Let's go somewhere where they have wine." We go to a spot on the corner of

[271] Renata Gorczyńska, *Małe miłosziana*, p. 60.
[272] Renata Gorczyńska and Czesław Miłosz, *Rozmowy: podróżny świata*, p. 83.
[273] Aleksander Fiut, *Rozmowy z Czesławem Miłoszem*, p. 112.

> Marszałkowska and Wilcza. "There's vodka, but no wine." "Well, you see what kind of a country this is, vodka, but no wine."[274]

Negro Spirituals

During the time he spent as a cultural attaché in Washington D.C. and New York, Miłosz became wary of publishing any of his own poetry in the Polish-language press. As he explained in a letter it Iwaszkiewicz dated October 1947, "I have a lot of my own poems, but I suffer from a strange disease, a reluctance to publish that results not so much from pride but from scruples and fears of the pitfalls of popularity, which is an extremely dangerous thing."[275] The 'pitfalls' were two-fold: on one hand, Miłosz could no longer write openly transformations taking place within Poland. On the other hand, (as Kroński was happy to point out), if he was too critical of present realities in America, he risked creating fodder for propaganda back home.

Faced with these two uncongenial possibilities, Miłosz chose translation as a way out of his predicament. Beginning in 1947, translating poetry became his primary creative outlet. In the four years that followed, he translated, among others, work by Walt Whitman, Carl Sandburg, Pablo Neruda, Jorge Andrade, Federico Garcia Lorca, Ildefonso Valdes Pereda, Vachel Lindsay, Theodore Roethke and James Wright.[276] He also published a translation of a collection of poems by five Chinese authors (among them, Mao Tse-Tung), and signed an agreement with Karol Kuryluk to produce a Polish version of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (this was the same period in which he told Tadeusz Kroński that he "planned to hide from social realism in the translation of Shakespeare"[277]).

However, the most notable project Miłosz undertook in this period was his translation of fourteen 'Negro spirituals,' which he hoped to publish as a single set in one of the leading Polish literary journals. Most of them were drawn from collections edited by James Weldon Johnson and Carl Sandburg. He sent the first batch to Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz in May of 1948, hoping that he could include them in an upcoming issue of *Nowiny Literackie*. His only condition for their publication was that they not appear with "any photos of Negros to decorate the page, the text explains itself clearly enough, and I don't want my work in this direction to be used for any propaganda."[278] Iwaszkiewicz accepted four of Miłosz 's translations, and didn't include any photographs with them. This did not fulfill Miłosz's wishes for the collection. (One more poem, "Jericho," later appeared in *Odrodzenie*.[279] In July of 1948, Miłosz complained to Ryszard Matuszewski that he was furious with *Nowiny Literackie* for "killing his Negro Spirituals," by

[274] Aleksander Fiut, *Z Miłoszem*, p. 52.
[275] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 184, cited in Jakubiak, p. 200.
[276] This list is not exhaustive, and only includes translations which appeared in print. Miłosz also produced many translations which remained in manuscript, among them poems by T.S. Eliot and prose by William Faulkner. See Ewa Kołodziejczyk, *Amerykańskie powojnie Czesława Miłosza*, (Warsaw: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2015), pp. 385-389.
[277] Katarzyna Jakubiak, "Translation's Deceit: Czesław Miłosz and Negro Spirituals," *Przekładaniec*. Between Miłosz and Milosz 25 (2011), p. 200.
[278] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 176.
[279] *Nowiny Literackie* of 1948, issue 24, p. 4 published the songs works "Zejdź Mojżeszu," "Kiedy złote trąby zagrają," "Widzę księżyc wschodzi," and "O, chciałbym mieć orle skrzydła." "Jerycho" was published in *Odrodzenie*, 1948, issue 12, p. 4. Ewa Kołodziejczyk, *Czesław Miłosz in Postwar America*, p. 246.

printing a "giant introduction," to the translations of the traditional, anonymously-authored ballads, but "only two or three tiny poems."[280]

Miłosz wrote his own commentary for the spirituals , much of which was drawn from Johnson's and Sandburg's original anthologies.[281] In it, he pointed out that the songs served a 'conspiratorial' purpose in antebellum times:

> For Black slaves, singing (and one must remember, that in Protestantism, group singing is just about the only outward ritual of the sect) was a mass phenomenon, and therefore a dangerous one, which suggested thoughts of conspiracy and the possibility of unwanted reactions. This was the rationale behind their prohibition, and the source of the rather catacomb-like nature of this Christianity. Proof of this appears in one of the best known spirituals (not translated by me), titled "Steal Away to Jesus" – steal away, meaning here to go to a meeting, where one sang and created songs – a type of meeting which was forbidden, and which occurred somewhere beyond the bounds of the plantation barracks.[282]

The literary scholar Katarzyna Jakubiak argues that Miłosz's translations were themselves a form of conspiratorial language or 'Aesopian speech.' She notes that he deliberately selected a number of spirituals which expressed a "craving for freedom" and a desire for escape. In so doing, he crafted a covert critique of present conditions in Poland – one which was sufficiently distanced from his own voice to pass censorship, while simultaneously fulfilling the current demand for 'folk' poetry.[283] Drawing on a term from the theologian James H. Cone's *The Spirituals and the Blues*,[284] Jakubiak sees Miłosz's translations as driven by an "ethics of deception" – a mode of resistance practiced by enslaved peoples according to which "to survive in an oppressive society, it is necessary to outsmart the oppressors and make them think that you are what you know you are not."[285]

Jakubiak further connects this ethic to Miłosz's own description of Ketman in *The Captive Mind*, and suggests that in translating his collection of negro spirituals, Miłosz performed a version of "professional Ketman" himself.[286] Ewa Kołodziejczyk extends this argument even to the poems Miłosz didn't translate. Observing that he considered, but ultimately omitted the song "*Dere's No Hiding Place Down Dere* from his selection, she suggests that he did so because its texts "alluded, perhaps too obviously" to Miłosz's own position "as an anti-regime poet hiding behind a diplomatic position."[287] Miłosz would later describe his work at the Polish embassy as a "game," containing only the illusion of freedom. In *The Captive Mind*, he compared his role to the life of a man "who can move around quite freely, but, behind him, he always drags a long

[280] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 400.
[281] Ewa Kołodziejczyk, *Amerykańskie powojnie Czesława Miłosza*, pp. 452-454.
[282] Ewa Kołodziejczyk, *Amerykańskie powojnie Czesława Miłosza*, p. 453.
[283] "Jericho" was included in a collection of translations of American poetry titled "The People Will Live On." Ewa Kołodziejczyk, *Czesław Miłosz in Postwar America*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), p. 250.
[284] James H. Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues*, New York: Orbis Books, 1991, p. 26, cited in Katarzyna Jakubiak, "Translation's Deceit," p. 204.
[285] Katarzyna Jakubiak, "Translation's Deceit," p. 204.
[286] Katarzyna Jakubiak, "Translation's Deceit," p. 205.
[287] Ewa Kołodziejczyk, "Czesław Miłosz's genetic dossier in the Polish translation of 'Negro Spirituals," in eds. Ariadne Nunes, Joana Moura, Marta Pacheco Pinto, *Genetic Translation Studies: Conflict and Collaboration in Liminal Spaces*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), p. 61.

chain, binding him to one place." The spirituals allowed Miłosz to express some of this ambivalence. They also acted as a form of disguise. They were part of the costume of the committed Leftist poet, outraged by injustice everywhere. It was a mask Miłosz wore willingly, but didn't want to overdo, a fitting illustration that practicing Ketman means finding a home in that part of the enemies' belief which is most congenial to one's own thoughts.

But while "professional Ketman" and the "ethics of deception" might describe Miłosz's actions at this time, it's worth remembering that neither term was available to him in 1948 when his translations first appeared. Instead, we might wonder what his work on the spirituals might have contributed to his formulation of Ketman in the first place. Two terms from African American history and Diasporic thought seem especially pertinent here.

One is "passing." The practice of a person of one race allowing themselves to be perceived or 'passing' themselves off as a member of another race has obvious parallels with Ketman. In each case, a person submerges one, inner, identity within another external one. Miłosz discusses passing briefly in an 1950 essay.[288] In the course of describing some of the internal hierarchies which structured Black life in the United States, he mentions "the problem of "borderline" Negroes, completely white, including: "Should I cross over to the other side?"[289] Miłosz could have become aware of passing through James Weldon Johnson, whose anthologies and writing on spirituals provided the bulk of the content for his translations. Johnson's novel *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, tells the story of a biracial man in the Reconstruction-era South who decides to pass as white following a brutal lynching in his Georgia hometown. It's also possible that Miłosz knew about passing through the immense amount of American press materials he consumed in the course of preparing weekly 'open source' intelligence dossiers at the Polish embassy, where he had over thirty newspapers and journals at his disposal every day.[290]

In addition to passing, W.E.B. Du Bois' idea of double consciousness may have shaped Miłosz's conception of Ketman. Du Bois described 'double-consciousness' as an inward "twoness" experienced by African Americans as a consequence of their racial oppression in the United States. It is a state of inner division, a doubled self-perception created by the conflict between one's own self and the internalized gaze of the surrounding white society. Du Bois first wrote about double consciousness in an 1897 article in *The Atlantic*,[291] where he described it in the following terms:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One feels his two-ness, — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

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[288] Czesław Miłosz, "Obyczaje," *Zeszyty Wrocławskie*, No. 1–2, 1950.
[289] Ewa Kołodziejczyk, *Czesław Miłosz in Postwar America*, p. 243
[290] *The Nation, New Republic* and *Partisan Review* were favorite sources of information, all of which would have kept Miłosz abreast of post-war debates on race in America. See Ewa Kołodziejczyk, *Amerykańskie powojnie Czesława Miłosza*, p. 192.
[291] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Strivings of the Negro People," *The Atlantic Monthly*, August, 1897, pp. 194-197.

Du Bois subsequently included this passage in his 1903 *The Souls of Black Folk*, whose first chapter was a very lightly adapted version of the *Atlantic* article. Later in the book, Du Bois returns to double consciousness (though without referring to it by name) when he writes of doubleness as the structuring feature of the mental lives of Black Americans: "Such a double life, with double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes, must give rise to double words and double ideals, and tempt the mind to pretence or revolt, to hypocrisy or radicalism."

Du Bois never returned at length to the idea of double consciousness, and these two passages became the *loci classici* for all further discussions of the concept. With such a slender amount of text devoted to the idea, it is reasonable to ask whether Miłosz would have been aware of double consciousness. There are several reasons, however, to think he was. We know that Miłosz took notes on Du Bois' *The Negro* during his stay in America, copying out at least one excerpt from the book for his files.[292] Furthermore, *The Souls of Black Folk*, with its copious analyses of individual folk songs and of spirituals as a genre, would have been obvious background reading for Miłosz's translations.

Finally, there was one additional reason why Miłosz might have been paying attention to W.E.B. Du Bois and his work during his time in the Washington embassy. In September of 1949, on his way home from addressing the international Peace Conference in Moscow, Du Bois traveled to Warsaw where he toured the ruins of the Ghetto and visited the newly-constructed Monument to the Heroes of the Ghetto.[293] Du Bois reported on his impressions of the devastated city in an article published in the (then quite pro-Soviet) magazine *Jewish Life* in 1952.[294] In this essay, Du Bois recalled his three previous visits to Poland, including his first trip, to Krakow 1893, made at the behest of his friend, the noted Polish historian of law, Stanisław Estreicher, and reflected on their role in making him aware of the "Jewish problem" in Europe as a parallel to the problem of the color line in the United States.

Miłosz therefore had at least three reasons to be paying close attention to Du Bois in 1949: as a source of information about Negro Spirituals and the broader question of race in America, as a prominent pro-Soviet American intellectual, and finally, as one of the most eloquent of the many Western visitors to Warsaw, whose reconstruction formed the lynchpin of current Communist propaganda efforts. Although he never mentions it by name, it is all but certain that Miłosz was aware and thinking of double consciousness by the time he started composing *The Captive Mind* in 1951.

In the two years before his defection, Miłosz increasingly drew on African American topics and themes in his writing. In November of 1949, he attended a Chopin concert at Howard University.[295] Miłosz quickly turned this experience into a poem, "On a Black Girl Playing Chopin,"[296] which he included in his next collection of poetry (and later suppressed, on account

[292] Ewa Kołodziejczyk, *Czesław Miłosz in Postwar America*, p. 233.
[293] Michael Rothberg, "W.E.B. Du Bois in Warsaw: Holocaust Memory and the Color Line, 1949-1952," *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 2001, (14:1), p. 172. In this article, Rothberg connects the idea of double consciousness to the vexed reception of Nathan Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto Monument.
[294] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto," *Jewish Life*, May 1952, pp. 14-15.
[295] He mentions this in a letter to Iwaszkiewicz. Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 220.
[296] "Na małą murzynkę grającą Chopina." This poem first appeared in the journal *Nowa Kultura* and subsequently in Miłosz's 1953 collection *Światło dzienne.* It has never been translated into English.

of the poem's "socialist realist" character).[297] In 1950, *as part of a collection of historical anecdotes prepared for Nowa Kultura,* Miłosz translated and excerpt from the memoirs of an abolitionist newspaper named after Cassius Marcellus Clay.[298]

On January 16, 1951 – the eve of his final departure from Poland – Miłosz took part in a group poetry recital in Warsaw's National Theater. The audience was made up largely of ZMP youth in red ties, eager to applaud the latest political slogans. The readers that evening were all members of the Writer's Union, selected by Jerzy Putrament, who was also present.[299] Adam Ważyk got some of the biggest applause of the night for his bitterly anti-American "Song about Coca-Cola." Miłosz got a similarly warm response for his translation of Vachel Lindsay's poem "Simon Legree," in which the cruel overseer from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* descends into hell to play dice with the devil.

Miłosz rationalized this performance as his "last calculation," – the last time he would play for the Devil. But as a gesture, it carried a measure of ambiguity. On the face of it, "Simon Legree" perfectly fitted its audience. As Miłosz explained thirty years later, the performance worked according to the following emotional calculation: "Legree is an American – Americans abuse Blacks – Legree goes to hell. Therefore: bad Americans and capitalists will go to hell."[300] Under the surface, the poem also functioned as a mask. It allowed Miłosz to tacitly comment on his own feelings of dependency and subordination.

The twin subjects of masks, masking and race were therefore very much on Miłosz's mind when he began composing *The Captive Mind*. He was not alone in this preoccupation. At the same moment in 1951 that Miłosz was finishing work on *The Captive Mind* in Maisons-Laffitte outside Paris, Frantz Fanon was writing *Black Skins, White Masks* while working as a psychiatry resident at a clinic in Lyon. Written as a dissertation (but rejected by his committee), Fanon's book appeared in print in 1952, just a few months ahead of Miłosz's.

But aside from their publication dates, it would seem that the two writers had little in common. Fanon – only 26 years old in 1952 – had arrived in Paris from Martinique with the Free French forces in World War II. Fanon was already on his way to becoming an ardent communist. *Black Skin, White Masks* was inspired, and largely, written as a response to, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, the 1948 book-length essay by fellow party member Jean-Paul Sartre. Miłosz, meanwhile, was a recent defector from the Communist Bloc. He also hated Sartre, for a mixture of personal political reasons. He blamed Sartre for what described as a tacit "boycott" of the French translation of *A Captive Mind* by the labor unions responsible for book printing and distribution, virtually all of which were dominated by the French Communist Party. Miłosz also became close friends with Albert Camus, and took his side in the infamous split between him and Sartre which followed Camus' publication of *The* Rebel in 1951, a fight which constituted the loudest and most public quarrel in French intellectual life of the post-war moment.[301] (The dislike between

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[297] Ewa Kołodziejczyk, *Czesław Miłosz in Postwar America*, p. 256.

[298] "Zawód dziennikarza czyli 'prawdziwy Amerykanin' w r. 1845" [The Profession of a Journalist or "True American" in 1845], in "Małe wypisy historyczne albo czytanki na lato dla miłośników dawnych dobrych czasów." Selected and translated by Czesław Miłosz, *Nowa Kultura* 1950, issue 20, p. 3.

[299] Andrzej Franaszek, *Miłosz: A Biography*, p. 283.

[300] Anna Bikont and Joanna Szczęsna, *Lawinia i Kamienie*, p. 220.

[301] Miłosz also blamed Sartre, along with the entire French Communist Party, for making it hard to distribute the French edition of *Captive Mind* and burying it under an envelope of press silence.

Miłosz and Sartre appears to have been mutual. Miłosz was later told that Sartre had discussed *The Captive Mind* with Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz during a meeting in Berlin. Sartre was said to have said of Miłosz that "it's not enough to be smart, you also have to have *sagesse*."[302])

Miłosz and Fanon were therefore divided by race, generation, politics and philosophical orientation. However, they also shared key things in common. Although they came to Paris from opposite sides of the globe, by 1952, both were at home in what was then the capital of global intellectual life. Arriving from the provinces, they made homes for themselves within the same, quite small, intellectual-philosophical milieu, and came to adopt many of its concerns. Chief among these was existentialism, and in particular, the existentialist preoccupation with authenticity.

In 1947, in his "Moral Treatise," Miłosz had pointedly parodied the postwar vogue for existentialism in general, and Sartre in particular, directing particularly vicious jibes at his book *L'Être et le Néant*, or *Being and Nothingness*.[303] But after his posting to Paris, and especially after his defection, Miłosz began to take the movement more seriously. While Sartre was too enmeshed in French-Communist politics for Miłosz to take seriously, Camus became a friend. At the same time, the German existentialist Karl Jaspers became something like an intellectual grandfather (he also wrote an enthusiastic introduction for the German-language edition of *The Captive Mind*.

Miłosz was introduced to Jaspers through his French translator, Jeanne Hersch. The daughter of Polish Jews who had emigrated to Switzerland before the First World War, between 1930 and 1933 Hersch studied philosophy with Jaspers at Heidelberg, where Hannah Arendt was one of her classmates. The relationship between student and pupil was close, and Jaspers had a profound influence on Hersch's later academic work as a professor of philosophy faculty at the University of Geneva. In her own words, Jaspers always remained her "master and friend."

In 1948, Hersch translated Jaspers' essay "*The Question of German Guilt*" into French. Just a few years later, she would do the same work for Miłosz. It was on her suggestion that he wrote the novel *The Seizure of Power* as an entry into the international Prix Litteraire Europeèn, which she also translated into French so that it could be read by the prize judges. But Hersch was not only Miłosz's amanuensis; she was also his lover, his introduction and instructor to the true stakes of contemporary philosophy.[304] As he later put it, Hersch was "a pretty good school for me in intellectual mountaineering, and I felt truly fortified whenever she said "*De nouveau tu as oublié d'être bête*," ['You've forgotten again how to be stupid'].[305] Later in life, in his last collection of poetry, Miłosz paid tribute to Hersch's influence on him in the list-poem "What I

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[302] Czesław Miłosz, *A Year of the Hunter*, p. 147.

[303] See the verses that begin: "*W Krakowie zdarzył się wypadek: Ktoś przyniósł pannie czekoladek I tak na łóżku, en passant, Znalazł tam „L'Être et le Néant„*." (In Krakow a certain thing happened/someone brought a lady chocolates/and found in her bed *Being and Nothingness*." The passage ends with the poet imagining a crowd of naked existentialists ("*egzystencjalistek*" sentenced to 55 years hard labor.

[304] She may have also influenced the text of the novel. In an early review, Daniel Bell observed that *The Seizure of Power* was concerned above all with "the question of 'commitment'" by which "as modern existentialism reminds us, character is defined." Bell thought this was in contrast to *The Captive Mind*, which, with its talk of "ketman" and "Diamat" struck him as quintessentially exotic, a description of "a world far removed from ours" which would only be "sufficiently meaningful" in Poland. Daniel Bell, "Out of the Fight for Warsaw," *The New Republic,* September 16, 1953.

[305] Czesław Miłosz, *A Year of the Hunter*, p. 248

learned from Jeanne Hersch" (point #4: "That truth is a proof of freedom and that the sign of slavery is the lie.)"

Jeanne Hersch did more than educate Miłosz in philosophy. Through her translation of Jaspers' work, she also provided a bridge by which his thought was able to reach Franz Fanon. Although the bulk of Fanon's *Black Skins*, *White Masks* was written in the shadow of Sartre, he also drew heavily on Jaspers' assessment of German culpability in the *The Question of German Guilt*, which he read this in Hersch's translation, and cited extensively.[306]

We can now see that Fanon and Miłosz, for all their differences, were taking part in the same moment in postwar intellectual life. They belonged to the same milieu, socially and intellectually, and addressed similar concerns in their breakthrough works of the early 1950s. Both men arrived from Paris from distant locations, where they quickly absorbed the current idiom of existentialist philosophy and phenomenology. Much of this French-, and occasionally, German-language literature, claimed a kind of moral universality, addressing ethical problems of "mankind" in general, (even when they seemed mostly to be about the specifics of the German occupation).[307] Going against the grain in *Black Skins*, *White Masks* and *The Captive Mind*, Miłosz and Fanon addressed the particulars of their past experiences, recasting their previous lives in post-war Poland and pre-war Martinique in the language of existentialist engagement. Although the topics they addressed – racism in the French colonies and conformity under Stalinism – were quite different, both writers approached their subjects in similar ways. They paid careful attention to the inner experience of political or social oppression, and the way ideology was not only imposed, but internalized by its subjects. This last insight led them both to be preoccupied with questions of authenticity and falsehood. In their separate ways, *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Captive Mind* conjured worlds concealment and disguise were virtually universal, and life became (in Miłosz's words) "a constant and universal masquerade."[308]

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[306] This was only part of Fanon's broader engagement with phenomenology, a topic which has received insufficient attention. For an exception, see Robert Bernasconi.,"Frantz Fanon's engagement with phenomenology: Unlocking the temporal architecture of black skin, white masks. *Research in Phenomenology,* 50, No. 3 (2020): 386-406.
[307] See Mark Grief, *Age of the Crisis of Man: Thought and Fiction in America, 1933-1977*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), for the parallel movement to address problems of "mankind" in the United States.
[308] Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, p. 53.

Chapter 4: *The Captive Mind* and After – Miłosz in the 1950s

In September 1951, just seven months after his defection to the West, Czesław Miłosz presented the germ of what would become *The Captive Mind* as a talk at a conference held in a castle in Andlau, France.[309] The conference - really, a "closed intellectual symposium," whose invited guests included Roger Caillois, Nicola Chiaramonte, John Hopkins, and Sidney Hook – was organized by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and was inspired - at least in part – by Miłosz's defection.[310] It sought to answer two questions: "How do we reach the mind of the communist intellectual?" and how can the "intellectuals of the free world" respond to the challenge posed by "Diamat (Dialectical Materialism)."[311] Miłosz's speech, entitled "The Great Temptation: the Drama of Intellectuals in the People's Democracies,"[312] addressed the first of these questions head-on. It was both an account of his own conduct leading up to his escape to the west and a report from inside the belly of the beast. It was also the first time he introduced the concept of ketman as a way of explaining a seeming paradox: that intellectuals from countries under Stalinist rule, despite seeming to be unified by a ruling orthodoxy, were in fact (like himself), riven by doubt, disdain, and barely suppressed rebellion against their new rulers.

Miłosz begins his talk by presenting the countries of the Eastern Bloc as "philosophical dictatorships," whose rulers relied on culture to shape – and suppress – the perception of reality on the part of the ruled. The cultural institutions in these countries, whose cultural institutions, the whole complex of "Writer's Unions, Institutes of Dialectical-Materialism, editorial offices, official publishers, galleries and concert halls" formed a world apart, reminiscent of flying island of philosophers conjured by Swift in *Gulliver's Travels*. As a recent escapee from this island, Miłosz could explain both how this cultural-propagandistic machine had come into existence, and why so many previously unaffiliated intellectuals had joined its ranks. First, Miłosz addressed the difficulty of escape, and the personal and societal pressures which induced Poles to return to Poland from the West after the War. The remainder of his talk is divided into two parts. The first concerns the tactics used by those in power to lure intellectuals into their employ. These include "give freely and expecting nothing in return (at first)"; "increasing pressure gradually"; "pour old wine into new bottles" (i.e., using existing institutions and figures as much as possible); avoid direct demands, and use social pressure instead"; and "prevent the formation of group solidarity."

This presentation of Communist methods focuses on the co-optation of institutions and individuals through mostly financial and pragmatic means, while limiting the agency of enemy formations. It is very similar to what was happening in politics before the great changes of 1948 – a sort of "salami tactics" for the cultural sphere. It is notable that Miłosz did not take this topic up in *The Captive Mind*, preferring to expand the second half of his talk, which focused on the

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[309] Andlau is in Alsace, near Strasbourg, directly beside the village of Mittelbergheim, the setting (and title) of one of Miłosz's greatest poems.

[310] Giles Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Political Economy of American Hegemony 1945-1955*, (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2002).

[311] Siegfried Weichlein, "Representation and Recoding: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Cold War Cultures," in eds. Andreas Etges, Konrad H. Jarausch, Christian F. Ostermann, *The Cold War: Historiography, Memory, Representation*, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017).

[312] Czesław Miłosz, *Wielkie pokuszenie; Bieliński i jednorożec*, (Toruń: Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, 2002).

inner transformations wrought by the new system on the minds of intellectuals. He introduces the topic with a startling claim: that many communist party members in fact hate the party, but find themselves trapped inside its confines: “A large number of party members despise the system. Yet, in a similar fashion to the non-party members, they are subjected to an inner division (*wewnętrznemu rozdwojeniu*), which makes impossible to classify according to Western criteria.”[313]

Miłosz states that this inner division is just one of the many “fascinating…psychic phenomena” which can be observed in the new people’s democracies, and promises that a more thorough analysis will follow in his “forthcoming book.” Within the talk, however, Miłosz proposes a few explanations to why intellectuals allow themselves to participate in a system which had been imposed on them from outside, and for which most harbored grave reservations. The first, and most powerful, in his estimation, is “historical necessity” – the seemingly incontrovertible victory of the Soviet Union on the world stage, and the concomitant powerlessness of Poland as an individual actor on the world stage. Despite being hard to counter, this “Hegelian freedom” is “difficult to achieve,” fragile, and shot through with hatred.

The other factors Miłosz lists are more practical, including intellectuals’ disaffection with the West, their fear of being excluded from the cultural sphere, and their need to make a living. The last point, however, was more unexpected, and more purely psychological. This was ketman. In the course of explaining this rather unfamiliar term from Islamic religious history to the Western Western dignitaries assembled the Aldau castle, Miłosz gave it a more succinct definition than any included in the *The Captive Mind*:

> In the countries of Islam, in the days when sectarianism was blossoming, there were no, it seems, absolute Muslims. An external unity hid an uncounted diversity of beliefs – even of philosophes, which secretly rejected Islam, but externally maintained their respect for it. A method of action by which one said things which were in complete contradiction with one’s inner convictions, so as to protect oneself from suspicion, was called in these Islamic countries “Ketman.” Practicing Ketman was thought to bring one honor. It was proof of dexterity. Besides which, Ketman was often a matter of life and death.[314]

Here was the explanation for why so many Poles could join or work with the Party while harboring a secret hatred against it. Ketman was not just an ideological disguise; it was also a form of spiritual revolt. Miłosz claimed that it was “universally practiced” in the countries under Stalinist rule, which were full of people who questioned various aspects of the ruling party ideology, for instance its theory of art, Lysenkoism, or its policy on nationalism. Ketman gave them space to doubt, and yet still obey and maintain their honor. It was thus a passive, and ultimately self-defeating form of rebellion. As Miłosz summed it up, “Ketman, which possesses many varieties, does not lead to a true opposition against Stalinism. Quite the opposite, a person loves his Ketman, and thanks to this begins to love the New Faith, because without it, [practicing] Ketman would no longer be possible.”[315]

[313] Czesław Miłosz, *Wielkie pokuszenie; Bieliński i jednorożec*.
[314] Czesław Miłosz, *Wielkie pokuszenie; Bieliński i jednorożec*.
[315] Czesław Miłosz, *Wielkie pokuszenie; Bieliński i jednorożec*.

In "The Great Temptation" Miłosz describes the relationship between intellectuals and their Communist rulers as a "game," – one with complex, and often hidden rules, in which the Party ultimately holds all the best cards. In expanding the talk into the book-length *Captive Mind*, he shifts the dominant metaphor for ketman from one of competition to one of performance. The world he now describes is one in which the chess match he had previously described was no longer possible, and everyone was in some sense an actor.

According to Miłosz, virtually every interaction in the countries of the 'Imperium' was infected by a degree of acting. This acting was not mere mimicry or "automatic imitation," of the kind which happens in every social environment, and which would soon be described by Erving Goffman in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956). It was a more "conscious" play, a calculated performance, which required constant concentration. Indeed, the remarkable thing about coming to the West for Miłosz was the lack of this concentration among the people he met, and the ease and relaxation with which they spoke to one another, prompting him to ask whether it was really "possible that human relations can be so direct?"

This constant, focused, deliberate performance turned life in the countries of Communist Europe into "a constant and universal masquerade." Miłosz thought it was a nearly unprecedented development in human history. "Acting on a comparable scale has not occurred often in the history of the human race," he writes. Because of it, the world inhabited by citizens of the East was as remote from that of the West as "that of the men from Mars." The major parallel Miłosz could find for this almost unprecedented social phenomenon was in the Islamic doctrine of ketman that we encountered in chapter one. In describing this "institution," Miłosz returns to the metaphor of a game. Ketman is a game of concealment. It is "played in defense of one's thoughts and feelings." Usually, one simply stays quiet about one's true beliefs. In certain situations, however, it becomes necessary to aver doctrines which run contrary to one's true convictions. This is when ketman comes into play. Miłosz quotes Gobineau at length on the "multiple satisfactions" which this deception confers on its perpetrators, and on the "sense of superiority" which it bestows on the person who carries it out. He notes that acting is also a game, which confers similar psychic rewards to those who manage to successfully trick their opponents. Both techniques require cleverness and skill, and both contain an element of psychic revenge or one-upmanship. In both cases, the victories won thereby tended to be hollow ones.

Miłosz adds two other examples from Gobineau to illustrate the meaning of ketman. One concerns the founder of a heretical sect, a certain Hadzhi-Sheikh-Ahmed, who managed to maintain a convincing veneer of orthodoxy in public while avowing radical doctrines in secret. The second anecdote centers on itinerant preacher and disciple of Avicenna named Sadra, who skillfully wormed himself into the Shi'ite clergy through a pretense of absolute conformity. As he became accepted, and even lauded, in theological circles, Sadra began introducing suspect doctrines, before throwing off his disguise completely and preaching an open Avicennism. Miłosz concludes the story by noting that no one in Europe today could afford this degree of boldness, and that modern-day Sadra would have met a bad end much earlier in his campaign.

As the chapter continues, Miłosz lists a number of different types of ketman, and explains how they are practiced in the people's democracies. It is significant that nearly all of these forms involve a tension between adherence to the ruling dogma and an inner doubt. They are not, notably, wholesale rejections however. They are, rather, the rebellions of the only-halfway persuaded. As Miłosz explains with reference to Islam, "A true Moslem, even though he be

deeply attached to his Ketman, never seeks to injure Islam in those areas where it is fighting for its life against unbelievers."[316] Similarly, in People's Poland, those who practice ketman feel that some of the changes implemented by the government are justified, even necessary, even as the overall pattern of implementation was faulty. Ketman was not practiced by outright insurgents, but by members of the disappointed left (and to a lesser extent, the morally-compromised right).

This tension between adherence and doubt is most evident in national ketman, the first of Miłosz's seven forms. Practitioners of this ketman do not doubt the validity of socialism, but they do harbor a serious revulsion against its implementation by the Soviet Union. In a phrase, their stance can be described as "Socialism – yes, Russia – no."[317]

As described by Miłosz, national ketman roughly corresponds to Titoism and allied deviations from Stalinist orthodoxy. His other 'ketmans' likewise have equivalents in the world of contemporary politics and art. Most of them are not too difficult to decipher. The "Ketman of Revolutionary Purity" is found mostly in the Soviet Union, and refers to those who believe that the revolution would have kept to a truer course had Lenin lived (or Trotsky triumphed). Those who practice "Aesthetic Ketman" by contrast cannot reconcile themselves to the low artistic quality of the regime's cultural offerings, no matter how much they might approve of its political message. To free themselves of the contradiction, they escape into the work of translating classics or putting them on stage. (Miłosz 's hosts on that last night in Warsaw, Aleksander War and especially Jan Parandowski, who spent the post-war years translating Julius Caesar's *Wars* and the *Odyssey* come to mind here. So does Miłosz himself, who writes in the Preface to *The Captive Mind* that he could easily have settled into a comfortable career translating Shakespeare if he hadn't left for the West).

"Professional Ketman" is similar to aesthetic ketman, insofar as it involves remaining true to an individual standard (for instance of science, or scholarship) while remaining a quietist on questions of politics. "Skeptical Ketman" is somewhat harder to parse, although it seems to describe those who think the Soviet Union may indeed triumph over the capitalist West, and are therefore forced to conform out of fear or prudence. "Metaphysical Ketman,"despite its rather opaque name, is clearly identifiable with those Catholic movements in Poland which sided with the Communist government – most notably PAX, whose leader Bolesław Piasecki, Miłosz would use as the model for a character in *The Seizure of Power*.

"Ethical Ketman," Miłosz's last form, is harder to pin to a specific political formation. These are individuals who are genuine believers in Communism, and often quite highly placed in the Party, but held back in some way in their political work by an attachment to morality, especially at the level of relations with friends and acquaintances. As Miłosz puts it, they are "blameless as theoreticians, but hampered in action by ethical considerations."[318] Their "capacity to sympathize and help is almost unlimited." Writing just months after his defection, here Miłosz was perhaps thinking of Zygmunt Modzelewski and his wife Natalia, who were so instrumental in securing the return of his passport and thus allowing his miraculous last-second escape from Poland.

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[316]Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, p. 63.
[317]Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, p. 59.
[318] Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, p. 77

In the final pages of the “Ketman” chapter, Miłosz reflects on some of its “advantages” as a “social institution.” For him, Ketman is a kind of athletic training for the mind. It is a strenuous activity, a form of “mental acrobatics” comparable to a “match of philosophical chess.” Because the act has to be maintained continuously, it exerts a constant pressure on the psyche. It “develops those traits which one uses most in one’s role, just as a man who became a runner because he had good legs develops his legs even more in training.”[319]

Here it is worth pausing for a moment to ask why Miłosz specifically chose ketman to describe this process of mental gymnastics, instead of opting for a more familiar metaphor from either sport or theater. The answer has to do with belief. The world Miłosz is describing is not one of mere authoritarianism, or the “masquerade” of fascism. It is precisely a *philosophical* dictatorship, whose ruling ideology is not hollow, but has a true hold on the minds of many of its subjects. It is thus closer to the way religion operated in the past, when one could be a heretic of a specific creed, but total doubt or disbelief was almost impossible. This was true of Christianity in Europe before the Enlightenment, and of Islam (as Miłosz imagined it, basing himself on Gobineau) up to the present day. In places where a dominant faith held sway, merely to question was to step outside the bounds of society. Opposition to ruling dogmas was thus largely internal, providing psychological consolation, but no active impetus to rebel.

Ketman, as Miłosz describes it, allows its practitioner to at once doubt and obey. In forcing one to adopt such a split mindset, holding two opposing views constantly in tension, it requires an almost spiritual discipline. More than a disguise, it is a technology of the self. Ketman provides a person with a script to adopt socially, and one to struggle against internally. It thus brings things out of a person; in a more metaphysical register, it acts on their soul. In Miłosz’s phrase, “after long acquaintance with his role, a man grows into it so closely that he can no longer differentiate his true self from the self he simulates.”[320]

Ketman molds a person both internally and externally. It acts simultaneously on a person’s social self and their private, inner life. This is what Miłosz means when he writes that “Ketman means self-realization against something.”[321] This is a major reason why ketman is should not be confused with mere cynicism or hypocrisy. It is not a craven acceptance of power or a pragmatic adaptation to social mores. It is rather a creative working through of a set of beliefs. To qualify as ketman, there must be a level of consideration for the oppressive ‘framing’ ideology, a partial acknowledgment of the truth of Christianity, Islam or Marxism, which allows for its nuanced rejection.

Seizure of Power

The following year, Miłosz took up the subject of ketman again, albeit more obliquely, in his novel *The Seizure of Power*. Miłosz would later claim not to have much affection for this book, and considered it one of his ‘unloved children’ (although Miłosz in general valued his poetry much more than his prose, even among his novels he harbored far more affection for his

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[319] Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, p. 55
[320] Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, p. 52.
[321] Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, p. 80. Erving Goffman closes his discussion of live inside “total institutions” such as prisons, training camps and especially mental asylums, by quoting this exact passage from *The Captive Mind*. See Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, (New York: 1961), p. 321

following book, *The Issa Valley*). He wrote *The Seizure of Power* very quickly, with an eye towards winning a European novel prize (which it did in fact co-win, splitting the award with Werner Warsinsky's Eastern Front drama, *Kimmerische Fahrt*).

Miłosz's novel likewise concerns World War II, though it is more interested in the war's immediate aftermath than the war itself. The book paints a broad canvas, shifting focus across a dozen characters. It centers on a group of young Polish intellectuals variously affiliated with the new Communist authorities, either by virtue of serving in the Soviet-backed First Polish Army or because they are searching for a perch in the new structure of power. However, these young writers and editors are not the sole focus. In a tight two hundred-or-so pages, the book also describes the lives of a group of Home Army partisans fighting through the Warsaw Uprising, as well as those of various other figures, such as a Polish nationalist (fascist?) in NKVD custody, and a classics professor dismissed from his position for refusing to proclaim his adherence to "the principles of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism."[322]

Miłosz seems to have considered *The Seizure of Power* as a response to Jerzy Andrzejewski's *Ashes and Diamonds*,[323] his 1948 novel about a self-doubting Polish partisan tasked with killing a Communist official, whose writing he witnessed and which had been a sensation in Poland when it came out. Miłosz was harshly critical of that book in letters to its author, his friend Jerzy Andrzejewski (Alpha in *The Captive Mind*), calling it "hagiographic" and a contradiction of realism."[324] He blamed Andrzejewski failure on trying to write "in a Marxist vein," but allowed that the book wasn't completely bad, since the "process of stiffening" had not yet gone too far. Miłosz then makes a striking historical metaphor, comparing Andrzejewski to one of the "first Church Fathers," in whom "the influence of the pagans was so strong," and antique culture still "so alive" that they were still able to write "good literature" in spite of being Christians.

If Andrzejewski's book is about the tragedy of sacrificing oneself for a hopeless cause (or a wrong idea), Miłosz's is about the practical mechanisms of power. It is, in other words, a book about politics rather than faith. Its characters have a correspondingly distant attitude towards their own beliefs. They calculate, scheme and posture for the sake of advancement. Peter Kwinto, the protagonist, reflects at one point on his facility for ideological masquerade. He traces it back to his school days, when one day he realized that he could excel if he wrote essays that contained what his teacher expected and not what he himself believed: "The whole secret lay in a pliant yielding to social pressure; it was important not to believe too much in what was recommended … and not to believe too little." Cozying up to Baruga, the emerging press 'dictator' of the new Poland, in the hopes of landing a diplomatic post, Kwinto realizes that he was doing the same thing he had once done in his literary essays, ant that he wasn't alone in this:

> "the new system was just like a big school, and millions of people had discovered its mechanism. It was not in the least important to accept it with sincerity; but when expressing an opinion, it was necessary to make internal arrangements to ensure that you really believed what you were saying. Five minutes later you

[322] Czesław Miłosz, *The Seizure of Power*, p. 113.
[323] Asked by Renata Gorczyńska whether this was the case, Miłosz equivocates, but ultimately agrees. Renata Gorczyńska and Czesław Miłosz, *Podróżny świata*, p. 114.
[324] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 66.

> could begin to doubt privately (as in school in front of the blackboard) every single word."[325]

In addition to being a portrait of the mechanisms by which Communist rule established itself over Polish territory, *Seizure of Power* is also a roman a clef, involving many of the figures Miłosz corresponded with in *Zaraz po Wojnie*. Miłosz claimed that he based Peter Kwinto on Paweł Hertz, a Warsaw dandy who was deported before returning with the First Polish Army and joining the editorial team at *Kuźnica*, although it seems that the character also includes elements of his own character and biography. The character of Winter, who denounces Kwinto to the Soviets in Vilnius at the start of the war, corresponds to Putrament. Baruga, the budding press lord, is transparently Jerzy Borejsza. The journal *Odrodzenie* ('Rebirth'), edited (in part) by Breza, appears as *Nowa Epoka* ('New Age'). Michał Kaniowski, imprisoned by the NKVD, is Bolesław Piasecki, is the former Falangist and founder of the pro-Communist PAX Association.

This profusion of characters drawn from life is significant. Although *Seizure of Power* was not ultimately successful as either a work of fiction or a statement about the present state of Polish intellectual life, it shows Miłosz continuing to work through both his relationship to his former milieu, and their collective response to the arrival of Soviet power on Polish soil. This now appeared to him as a more significant, and more lasting, moment of transformation than any which had come before. He would spend much of the rest of the decade meditating on it, and on the lives of intellectuals confronted with a seemingly unopposable force.

Belinsky

In 1976, Gustaw Herling-Grudziński accused Miłosz of an essential naiveté in composing *The Captive Mind*, which he thought had been "thought up from behind a desk" (*wydumaną za biurkiem*), and otherwise full of self-serving dishonesty, particularly on the subject of ketman. In the ensuing polemic, Miłosz countered that the book was written in "live blood." He also explained that the true subject of the book was not ketman, but the "Hegelian sting(*ukąszenie heglowskie*) to which human intellects have been subjected in our century."[326]

Miłosz did not discuss Hegel at length in *The Captive Mind* itself, but the Hegelian idea of freedom as the recognition of necessity (in this case, the historical necessity of the Soviet Union's triumph) was already a major feature of his 1951 lecture "The Great Temptation." Four years later, he found a specific historical example on which to hang this idea. This was the great 19th century Russian literary critic, and moral censor of Czardom, Vissarion Belinsky. In his youth, Belinsky became enamored with the philosophy of Hegel. He was particularly struck by Hegel's pronouncement that the "real is rational; the rational is real" (*was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig*). For Belinsky, who tended to treat idealist philosophy not as a description of the world, but as a direct moral injunction,[327] these words, which he read to mean that "force is the law, and law is force," held a tremendous significance. They were a revelation, and, as he wrote

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[325] Czesław Miłosz, *The Seizure of Power*, p. 166.
[326] Czesław Miłosz, "Biesy," in *Ogród Nauk*, (Kraków: Znak, 1998), p. 137. This text originally appeared in *Kultura*, 1976 nr. 12, pp. 47-54.
[327] This is something he had in common with other intelligentsia members of his generation – see Martin Malia's *Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism, 1812-1855*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 69-98.

to a friend, a "liberation." Belinsky felt that at he had, at last, understood the secret laws underpinning all of history:

> "I understood that there is no such thing as brute force, the rule of the bayonet and saber, that there is nothing arbitrary or random. The depressing melancholy which usually accompanied my ruminations on the fate of mankind vanished, and the role played by my fatherland appeared in a completely new light. To me, the world "reality" became an exact synonym for the word "God."[328]

This realization led Belinsky to a personal crisis and a political about-face. Afterwards, this radical critic of the Russian State became completely enamored with the might of the Czar. Russia had a role to play in the historical development of mankind, and to Belinsky it seemed that the only rational course of action left was to accept this fact, and let history unfold as it must – and even spur it on, if need be. It took Belinsky almost two years to free himself from this conviction, which he was only able to do by countering it with another Hegelian idea, that of negation, and of revolution as another force which could likewise realize the "objective laws of development."

Miłosz learned about Belinsky's short-lived conversion from a 1953 article[329] by Andrzej Walicki (only twenty-three at the time!) in the Polish philosophical journal *Myśl Filozoficzna* (Philosophical Thought). During his time in Paris, Miłosz read the Polish press very closely, both to keep up with running debates in philosophy and literature, and to search for signs of thaw. In the same 1955 essay, ("Unicorn and Belinsky"), in which he described his discovery of Belinsky's embrace of necessity, Miłosz quoted a passage from recent article in *Nowa Kultura*, in which a young Leszek Kołakowski, admitted that Marxism, was not able to "describe everything which happens in social life."[330]

Returning to the subject of Hegel twenty years later, during his polemic with Herling-Grudziński, Miłosz cast the attraction of submitting to historical necessity in a different light. In an essay for *Kultura* entitled "Biesy," after the Russian title of Dostoevsky's novel *Demons* (or *The Possessed*) he defends *The Captive Mind* against charges that it was "made-up," and an intellectual's fancy. Miłosz begins by describing an episode that had recently happened to him on Berkeley's campus. One of his former students stopped him and told him that his course on Dostoevsky had changed his life. When it started, the student had been a biology major. After reading Dostoevsky's *Demons*, he switched his major to social science. A few days later, Miłosz saw him passing out flyers for the American Communist Party.[331]

This student, according to Miłosz, had succumbed to the same "Hegelian sting" that the protagonists of *The Captive Mind* experienced in the early 1950s. The lure of Marxism for those writers was not – contra Herling-Grudziński – a simple question of brutalization of fear. The idea of historical necessity had a magnetism of its own. It seized the poet Władysław Broniewski in 1920, when he discovered the works of Lenin in a Russian trench during the Polish-Soviet war,

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[328] Czesław Miłosz, "Bieliński i jednorożec," *Archiwum Emigracki: studia, szkice, dokumenty*, Vol. 1, (1998), pp. 112-120.
[329] Or possibly later – Walicki published his work on Belinsky, the topic of his master's thesis, in a series of articles from 1953 to 1955.
[330] Leszek Kołakowski, "Światopogląd i krytyka," *Nowa Kultura*, 1955 nr 3, p. 9.
[331] Czesław Miłosz, "Biesy," in *Ogród Nauk*, (Kraków: Znak, 1998), p. 134.

just as it had grabbed Miłosz's cohort of writers in the wake of Soviet victory in World War II. Even if it was a spent force in Poland, it was still capable of attracting new acolytes, as the example of the Berkeley student showed. And the person who best understood this attraction, who penetrated to its deepest psychological roots, was precisely Dostoevsky, who in his *Biesy* "revealed the demonic correctness and even inevitability of the changes the Russian intelligentsia underwent in the previous century."

We can see Miłosz here continuing to put himself and his work into a larger, and (fittingly for a Slavic professor), Russian-inflected genealogy, first by equating his fellow Polish writers with Vissarion Belinsky, and then by positioning *The Captive Mind* as a successor to *The Demons*. Their kinship stemmed from their shared attention to the psychological and philosophical attractions of power – something he was convinced his critics among the Polish emigres consistently misunderstood about his work.

The Last Pagans

Another historical analogy which loomed large in the imaginations of Polish intellectuals in the late 1940s and early 1950s made its way into Miłosz's thinking. This was the example of the last pagans in the Roman Empire. In this analogy, it was the pagans who stood for the vanishing values of European civilization, and the Christianized Romans who represented the imposition of a new morality, whose relationship to the old order was yet to be determined. In the foreword to *The Captive Mind*, Miłosz wrote that after 1945, intellectual circles in Warsaw liked to compare Communism with early Christianity. Writing of himself, Miłosz said that, on account of his opposition to right-totalitarianism, he was often taken for a 'good pagan' by communists, explaining that a good pagan was one who could be gradually persuaded about the truth of orthodoxy.[332]

In Miłosz's poetry from this period, the 'pagans' appear chiefly through the figure of Hypatia (c. 370-415 AD), a leading teacher of mathematics and Neo-Platonist philosophy in 5th century Alexandria. Hypatia is thought to have been the last pagan to hold so public of a role in the intellectual life of the ancient world, a position which came to a tragic end when she was beaten to death by a mob instigated against her by Alexandria's Christian bishop.[333] She appears early in Miłosz's *Moral Treatise* - "Poor Hypatia, whose dress was torn off in Alexandria's Square"[334] – immediately before the "witches of Salem."

In *Native Realm*, Miłosz claims that Tadeusz Kroński likewise "adored"[335] Hypatia, and despised the "dirty, terrifying mob" of Christians who tore her apart. (Once again, we can observe the two friends' mutual influence on one another). However, Kroński was convinced that the future belonged to the Christians rather than to the pagans. According to him, the correct path for the philosopher was not to resist the oncoming tide, but to merge with it. By converting to the new faith, an intellectual could serve as a "bridge" between the old world and the new. In this way,

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[332] Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, p. 237.

[333] Hypatia's death does not seem to have been a result of pure anti-pagan violence on the part of Christians. She fell victim to political maneuvers between Alexandria's Orthodox Bishop and its Roman governor. For more, see Pierre Chuvin, *A Chronicle of the Last Pagans*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 85-90.

[334] "Biedna Hypatia, z której zdarli Suknie na placu Aleksandrii/I czarownice w mieście Salem Szły na śmierć (pewnie z wielkim żalem)," Miłosz, Czesław Miłosz, "*Traktat Moralny*."

[335] Czesław Miłosz, *Native Realm*, p. 271.

they could import some of the knowledge of the past, in the form of aesthetic ideals and intellectual standards, into the new moral climate of the present.

Kroński was not alone in this estimation. The ebbing of the pagan world became a rich subject for Polish prose writers after the war. As a metaphor for their present situation, it appeared especially pertinent in the early 1950s, during the imposition of High Stalinism in the arts and universities. In 1954, Hanna Malewska published her novel *The Passing of a World* (*Przemija postać świata*).[336] Over 900 pages, and two volumes, it tells the story of Cassiodorus, a cultured Roman who nonetheless serves at the court of barbarian Ostrogoths. Cassiodorus' work necessitates many painful, and even humiliating, moral compromises. However, he perseveres, thanks to a singular goal: passing on the fruits classical civilization to posterity.[337]

This stance – collaboration for the sake of cultural preservation – also forms the leitmotif of Witold Kula's *Gusła* (Hexes).[338] Kula, perhaps his generation's leading economic historian, began writing this short text in 1947, and completed it in 1951.[339] (Kula was also the husband of Nina Assorodobraj, a founding member of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas; Andrzej Walicki worked as an instructor under her at the University of Warsaw). It takes the form of an exchange of letters between two learned Roman gentlemen, Lucius and Claudius. Living in the waning years of the Western Empire, the two men regard the reality surrounding them with apprehension. Both miss the beautiful pagan temples of the past, where, nonetheless, they "did not pray." However, they disagree over the need to engage with this new, Christian world. Lucius cannot overcome his distaste at Christian superstition, holding firm in his admiration for the rationality of classical philosophy. Claudius, on the other hand, thinks that they have a duty to teach the young Christians in the ways of the old world. At the end of the exchange, he takes a job at the Library of Alexandria, translating sacred texts from Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew into fine classical Latin.

Kula's epistolary novella didn't appear until two years after the thaw in 1958. Miłosz read it immediately. In a 1959 review for *Kultura*, he called it a "beautiful book," and deftly summarized what he saw as *Gusła*'s allegorical intent:

> At the books' end there is an astonishing document, "Gusła," a kind of memoir in the form of an exchange of letters between two Romans of the VIth century. This memoir was created between 1947 and 1953. Should one accept the New Faith, despite its absurdities, or should one remain a pagan – this is the dilemma of the Romans, who finally incline towards Christianity, because "after all."… The allegory is so transparent, that every description in it is simply a description of Stalinist rites. But I don't know Kula, and it seems significant that he too embraced these motifs, which were in any case common among intellectual circles of the time. As to "crossings" from sincerity to masquerade, these were fluid, and one must think twice before locating any faults [with his argument].[340]

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[336] Hanna Malewska, *Przemija postać świata*, (Warsaw: Pax, 1954).
[337] Jan Garewicz, "Kroński i jego filozofia dziejów," p. 129.
[338] included in Witold Kula, *Rozważania o historii*, (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1958).
[339] Witold Kula, "Mon <<education sentimentale>>," *Annales*, 1989, p. 140.
[340] In the same article, a response to Herling-Grudziński's renewed criticisms of *The Captive Mind*, Miłosz notes that the first use of the word "communist" in Polish came in an Arian treastise from 1569. Stanisław Kot discovered

That same year, in *Native Realm*, Miłosz wrote of the “citizens of the declining Roman Empire, eaten up by boredom and inner emptiness” who “felt weak in the face of Christian fanatics announcing the good news of the Last Judgment.”[341] Fifteen hundred years before Hegel and Marx, they too, felt the weight of “inevitable” progress, compelling them to bow before the altar of historical necessity.

Tiger

In 1959, Czesław Miłosz finished writing *Native Realm*, the last of his books to take up the topic of ketman. In the book, most of the sustained discussion of dissimulation takes place in the last two chapters entitled “Tiger” and “Tiger II,” both of which concern Tadeusz Kroński. Unlike the rest of the book, which provides a synoptic overview of life in a corner of eastern Europe during the turbulent 20th century, these chapters have been seen by many critics as a direct continuation of Miłosz’s arguments from The Captive Mind.[342] Miłosz himself said as much. While working on *Native Realm*, he wrote a letter to Thomas Merton in which he described his struggles with the ‘Tiger’ chapters. Writing about Kroński, who had only recently died, was bringing him great pain. He described his friend as “a master of Ketman,” who was constantly “pretending, lying,” making believe that he was a Marxist when he was really a Hegelian, and that strange kind of materialist who perversely thinks that “only idiots” could fail to believe in the immortality of the soul.[343]

The description of Kroński in *Native Realm* is a miniature masterpiece of literary portraiture. In Miłosz’s telling, Kroński did not merely study or teach philosophy: he lived it. “He [Kroński] philosophized incessantly, and with his whole body.” He did not argue his points; rather, he “danced” them, making his points through movement, mockery and impersonation and “transposing” the philosophical systems of his adversaries “into the behavior of their adherents.”[344]

This Kroński was a creature of contradictions. He was someone who was prepared to use St. Aquinas to prove the truth of Marx. A strict metaphysician, who revered Plato and Hegel, he nonetheless, served (and taught) a materialist philosophy. A cultural elitist, for whom “style was a matter of life and death,”[345] he nevertheless plunged into the life of socialist-realism. A self-professed snob, carrying a deep revulsion for plebian sentimentality and the opinions of the mob (an attitude strengthened by an understandable horror of anti-Semitism), he was still someone for whom the victory of communism was a question not of politics, but of salvation – and, paradoxically, his own self-aggrandizement.

For Kroński, embracing contradiction was a way of thinking – and really, living – dialectically. A sparkling conversationalist (and to judge from his comments on Miłosz’s verse, a first-rate

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the reference. Czesław Miłosz, “Odpowiedź,” *Kultura* 1959, n. 4, pp. 152–153. quoted in Karina Jarzyńska, *Literatura jako ćwiczenie duchowe: Dzieło Czesława Miłosza w Perspektywie Postsekularnej*, (Krakow: Universitas, 2018), p. 120.

[341] Czesław Miłosz, *Native Realm*, p. 271.

[342] Irena Grudzińska-Gross, *Czesław Miłosz and Joseph Brodsky: fellowship of poets*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 56.

[343] ed. Robert Faggen, *Striving Towards Being: The Letters of Thomas Merton and Czeslaw Milosz*, p. 47.

[344] Czesław Miłosz, *Native Realm*, p. 266.

[345] Czesław Miłosz, *Native Realm*, p. 267.

literary critic), little of Kroński's native wit made its way onto the page. He was not a gifted writer, as Miłosz himself admitted. This was partly a feature of caution; Kroński was not willing to reveal his true thoughts in his written work, for fear of being rejected by the Communist Party or his academic peers. In Miłosz's phrase, he adopted a strategy of disguise, behaving "like those insects who resemble a piece of bark or a blade of grass."[346]

For as long as he was employed as a Polish cultural attaché at the American embassy, Miłosz had likewise worn a "mask." As Miłosz admits in *Native Realm*, in those years he practiced his own version of ketman[347] (a stance he is careful to differentiate from "hypocrisy" on one hand, and "cynicism" on the other. In 1951, Miłosz and Kroński's positions flipped: Miłosz defected to the West, while Kroński, already a member of the French Communist Party, returned to Poland, taking up a post as an instructor at the Polish Communist Party's Special Party School in Warsaw. In doing so, Miłosz took off his disguise, while Kroński adopted his. After this critical juncture, the two men rarely spoke, even by mail. For Kroński, any contact with Miłosz was politically toxic.

In 1952, shortly after Miłosz's defection to the West and Kroński's return to Poland, the poet addressed his friend directly in the poem 'Warsaw Faust' (*Faust Warszawski*).[348] Miłosz imagines summoning him back to the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris with a magic spell, and then castigates Kroński for becoming an exile-in-reverse. Miłosz describes Kroński's choice in terms of cowardice and self-delusion. In the second stanza, he asks: "what right do you have/To lie to yourself and call/your own fear by the name of order and might?"

The recurring refrain throughout 'Warsaw Faust' is the word *strach* – 'fear.' The poem becomes a catalog of all the anxieties driving Kroński back to Warsaw. Chief among these is the desire to act consciously, in harmony with history, and not to "fall amongst those, who live / like water in overgrown gardens /In the darkness of ruins." According to Miłosz, for Kroński, this would be nothing more than a "blind enduring" (*ślepe trwanie*), a "fulfillment of death before dying."

At the end of the poem, Miłosz imagines Kroński's life back in Warsaw: driven by a chauffeur through the ruins of Warsaw, wiping the sweat off his forehead with a foreign scarf. In this vision, Kroński is a "sorcerer" (*czarnoksiężnik*) who is fatally burdened by a knowledge of the "terror known as History," "the punishment born in the smoke [stacks] of this age" (*karę zrodzoną w dymach tego wieku*).

The Kroński of *Faust Warszawski* is thus a kind of inverse figure of Miłosz. He is a wizard, and a coward; someone making a leap into danger because of a greater fear of being on the wrong side of history. Miłosz meanwhile, still strolling the Luxembourg Gardens, emerges as his opposite: the courageous exile, brave enough to do what is sensible and shoulder the burden of individual choice, even if it means being pursued by a "pack of torturers."

Across the following decade, Kroński became Miłosz's tragic mirror, the embodiment of the ketman he himself had once practiced. He was a new Belinsky, making an accommodation with

[346] Czesław Miłosz, *Native Realm*, p. 270.
[347] Czesław Miłosz, *Native Realm*, p. 269.
[348] Miłosz addresses Kroński, but never names him; the target of his criticism would thus only be obvious to the initiated. Czesław Miłosz, "Faust Warszawski" in *Wiersze*, (Krakow: Znak, 2001), Vol. 1, p. 328-9.

history after suffering his own version of the “Hegelian Sting.”[349] Kroński’s death from a heart attack in 1958 freed Miłosz to create the literary picture of his friend in *Native Realm*. This image of Kroński, as at once overwhelmingly brilliant and “pitiful, perhaps even contemptible,” was, however, one that few of his colleagues or students from the Special Party School were apt to recognize. In a later interview, Miłosz said that Kroński’s friends blamed him for turning an “ordinary cat into a tiger.”[350]

The Kroński his Polish peers came to know was quite different from the picture painted in *Native Realm*. For one thing, he appeared to them not as a complex, contradictory metaphysician, but as a strictly orthodox Marxist. Soon after returning to Poland, Kroński launched several attacks on members of the pre-war academic community or “old professoriate.” He began with a highly critical review of Roman Ingarden’s *Spór o istnienie świata* (Debate Over the Existence of the World), published in the inaugural issue of the journal *Myśl Filozoficzna* (Philosophical Thought) in 1951.[351]

A student of Husserl and a leading Polish phenomenologist and esthetician, in 1945 Ingarden was appointed to a professorship at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. He was dismissed the following year however, after which he took a position at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. In 1949, Ingarden was removed from all teaching duties and forbidden from publishing further works of philosophy (however, he appears to have been simultaneously offered a spot at the State Academy of Sciences (PAN), which didn’t involve contact with students, after which he was placed on paid leave until 1957).[352] In his review, Kroński described Ingarden’s book as a “glaring example of sterility, decay and bankruptcy of modern bourgeois philosophy.”[353] He further attacked Husserl’s phenomenology as a pernicious philosophy, which helped to pave the way for fascism by “disarming” German society.

In 1952, Kroński attacked Władysław Tatarkiewicz’s *Historia filozofii* (History of Philosophy) in a review. To Andrzej Walicki, then a student at the University of Warsaw, this seemed an especially grave violation of professional etiquette, since Tatarkiewicz had only recently been removed from the University, and it was Kroński who had taken over his chair. There is a question, however, over how genuine these criticisms were. Kroński does seem to have harbored a genuine antipathy for Tatarkiewicz, whom he blamed for tolerating 'ghetto benches (*getto ławkowe*), the practice of forcibly segregating college classrooms, usually instituted by radical right-wing students, before the war. However, in conversation with Walicki, he described Ingarden as a “real philosopher,” whom he valued a great deal.[354]

In general, it is hard to determine how much of Kroński’s behavior in Poland after his return was genuine. To onlookers, he appeared immensely anxious, neurotic, and even paranoid (he told Walicki after their meeting that spies had followed him and listened in on their meeting.)

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[349] On Miłosz and Kroński’s mutual relationship to Hegel, see Edyta Tuz-Jurecka, “Juliusz Tadeusz Kroński — "heglowskie ukąszenie," *Prace Literackie* 50 (2010), pp. 103-13.

[350] Renata Gorczyńska and Czesław Miłosz. *Rozmowy: podróżny świata*, p. 159.

[351] Tadeusz Kroński, “Świat w klamrach ontologii,” *Myśl Filozoficzna*, 1952, Vol. 1. No. 3, pp. 318 – 331.

[352] Filip Kobiela, “’Tygrys’ contra ‘Mefisto’: O ataku Krońskiego na Ingardena po 60 latach.” *Kwartalnik Filozoficzny*, 2011, p. 91.

[353] “*Książka Ingardena jest jaskrawym przykładem bezpłodności, rozkładu i bankructwa współczesnej filozofii burżuazyjne*.” Tadeusz Kroński, “Świat w klamrach ontologii,” p. 325.

[354] Andrzej Walicki, *Spotkania z Miłoszem*, p. 49.

Kroński badly wanted to join the Polish Communist Party, and applied more than once, but was rejected each time. According to Miłosz, writing half a century later, in this period Kroński aroused suspicion as a "bourgeois intellectual." One of the main complaints against him was supposedly his distaste for cravats and his preference for "individualistic" bowties.[355] Therefore, there may have been an element of overcompensation in some of his attacks.

There are hints, also, that Kroński was not as convinced a Stalinist as he made himself appear. Although he wrote articles critical of the thaw following Stalin's death in 1953, an incident from 1956 makes one doubt the sincerity of those views. In February of that year, he was in East Berlin for a conference on the idea of freedom in light of scientific socialism. During the congress, the participants received news of Khrushchev's secret speech to the 20th Party Congress denouncing Stalin's crimes. The Polish delegation, which included Leszek Kołakowski, immediately began preparing a response which criticized Khrushchev for ignoring "historical necessity." According to the Hungarian philosopher Agnes Heller, who was also present, Kroński objected to this, saying that Stalinism was itself "non-dialectical" and anti-Semitic to boot.[356]

A further anecdote from Kroński's years as a philosophy instructor at the University of Warsaw sheds light on the ambiguity of his political position in the 1950s. This story is related by Jan Garewicz, and took place in the academic year 1953/54 ("the worst time in the university") when Kroński was lecturing on the philosophy of the first half of the 19th century:

> The scene, which I wish to describe, took place during a lecture on Dembowski, supposedly the greatest Polish philosopher of the first half of the 19th century. Such was the judgment handed down, and one could only negate it by refusing to lecture. Kroński sits at the lectern, lights a cigarette and waving his leg asks "Children, do you smoke cigarettes with Mr. John's filters? Always smoke cigarettes with Mr. John's filters!" Kroński spins a huge tale out of this, and the filter of Mr. John grows into a metaphysical category. Suddenly he looks at his watch and grabs his head – there are only ten minutes left before the end of the session. No time left to do anything but say a few words about the greatness of Dembowski. This scene was described to me by someone rolling with laughter: the listener knew exactly, what Kroński was trying to say.[357]

Commenting on this scene, Garewicz writes that it was a piece of buffoonery (*błazeństwo*) which was itself one of Kroński's most important teaching tools. "He was ready to teach the most absurd Marxist theses, which he did not believe" if he could also convey those philosophical values which meant the most for him namely "irony and auto-irony."[358] In Garewicz's estimate, this was a tactic of self-defense: pressed by the "monster of historical necessity, " Kroński developed a kind of schizophrenia. Buffoonery was his escape. It ensured on one hand "a maximum of safety," and on the other hand, a "maximum of freedom."

For Walicki, Kroński in the early 1950s was someone who lived in constant fear. To him, he represented the epitome of Stalinist ideocracy and "interiorized terror." Garewicz, a witness to

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[355] Czesław Miłosz, *Zaraz po Wojnie*, p. 242.
[356] Andrzej Walicki, *Spotkania z Miłoszem*, p. 65.
[357] Jan Garewicz, "Kroński i jego filozofia dziejów," p. 126.
[358] Jan Garewicz, "Kroński i jego filozofia dziejów," p. 126.

the same events, had a somewhat different analysis. He concludes his recollections of Kroński by writing that he "knowingly played the fool in order to be certified as insane" (*błaznował świadomie, by mieć wariackie papiery*).[359] In his eyes, Kroński was playing a part, and playing a game, by means of which he thought could win back a measure of freedom. But as happens with all dissimulation, and especially ketman, the lines between performance and inner truth tend to blur, even to the actor. Or put another way, one danger in acting crazy is that one may end up in the asylum all the same.

[359] Jan Garewicz, "Kroński i jego filozofia dziejów," p. 129.

Chapter 5: *Captive Mind* - Patterns of Reception

International Rollout

Almost from the moment it appeared in print, *The Captive Mind* emerged as an international publishing sensation. Miłosz wrote in one of his many later prefaces to the book that he never intended the work to be merely for Poles abroad, but rather hoped that it would gain a wider audience of readers across the West, who he wanted to inform of the "gravity of the ideological offensive in the East."[360] The publishing plan put together by *Kultura* reflected this desire to reach an international public. The first, Polish, edition of Miłosz's book came out in Paris at the beginning of March 1953. It was joined almost immediately by translations into French, English and German, all of which came out before the end of the year. To facilitate this nearly simultaneous rollout, the translators had already received their texts by the end of 1951.[361] (Nor did the rollout end there: *The Captive Mind* appeared in Spanish in 1954, in Italian in 1955, and in Swedish in 1956).[362]

The book's reception in the Western press was almost unanimously positive. In the *New* Yorker, Dwight Macdonald wrote that he did not know of any book "apart from Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism*" which dissected the "totalitarian mindset" with equal subtlety.[363] Edwin Gritz in the *Washington Post* wrote that the book went beyond usual accounts of communist "terror" to " reveal man's far more terrible struggle against intellectual perversion to Red tyranny."[364] Internationally, Nichola Chiaromonte wrote glowingly of the book in the *Partisan Review*, as did Heinrich Böll in Germany. (Despite all of this positive attention, *The Captive Mind* did not particularly well on the marketplace, selling only 2600 copies in its first 18 months).[365]

There were a few dissenters amidst this tide of praise, however. French Communist circles were almost wholly dismissive, receiving *The Captive Mind* as little more than a work of "American propaganda."[366] On the other end of the political spectrum, the conservative writer Peter Viereck struck a somewhat ambiguous note in his *New York Times* review, at once praising Miłosz a "great poet," and a "hero of the resistance," and dismissing him as a "fellow traveler" in thrall to a ridiculous ideology which could only act as a sop for "self-hating" "middle-class intellectuals."[367]

Despite these differences of opinion about its author's character, most reviewers of *The Captive Mind* agreed on its psychological acuity. Albert Einstein praised the book for its "deeper

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[360] Aleksandra Dębska-Kossakowska, "Ponadsystemowe próby uchwycenia sensu. Uwagi o recepcji Zniewolonego umysłu Czesława Miłosza," *Sensus Historiae*, Vol. 32 (2018/3), p. 162.
[361] Andrzej Franaszek, *Miłosz: A Biography*, p. 302.
[362] Dariusz Pawelec, "Zniewolony umysł" - zmiana biegunów recepcji," *Postsciptum Polonistyczne* Vol. 1, No. 7, (2011), p. 183.
[363] Andrzej Franaszek, *Miłosz: A Biography*, p. 305.
[364] cited in Melissa Feinberg, *Curtain of Lies*, p. 82.
[365] Melissa Feinberg, *Curtain of Lies*, p. 80.
[366] Aleksandra Dębska-Kossakowska, "Ponadsystemowe próby uchwycenia sensu," p. 169.
[367] Melissa Feinberg, *Curtain of Lies*, p. 81.

psychological picture"[368] of intellectuals under Communism. In a forward appended to the French and German editions of the book, the German philosopher Karl Jaspers framed *The Captive Mind* as a universal story, which revealed what could happen to any human being faced with totalitarian pressures. Jaspers commended Miłosz for his style and the acuity with which he interpreted the inner motivations of his protagonists. Miłosz's account of Ketman made a particularly vivid impression on the professor of psychology at the University of Heidelberg. He wrote of being shaken by his portrayal of life under Communism as a nightmarish masquerade, in which all are engaged "in a merciless struggle between people wearing masks, in performing parts, which, in the end become our second nature."[369]

Very quickly then, *The Captive Mind* established itself as something of a modern classic, which took its place next to Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism* and Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* as one of the most insightful interpretations of the modern, ideologically-governed state. Such was its acclaim in fact that Miłosz became worried that the *The Captive Mind* would completely overshadow his work as a poet, and that he would never be known as anything but a writer of political prose.

Miłosz and the Émigrés

The Captive Mind's reception in the Polish émigré community was decidedly more mixed however. The appearance of the book – which was presaged by a series of articles in *Kultura*, featuring drafts of chapters, including the one on Ketman – was greeted with a mixture of skepticism, praise, and outright hostility.

Much of this had to do with the circumstances surrounding Miłosz's arrival in the West. In May of 1951, four months after his arrival at the *Kultura* offices in Maisons-Laffitte, Miłosz made his first public statements regarding the reasons for his defection from People's Poland. He delivered part of this statement at a public address at a press conference for the French magazine *Preuves*, and the rest in an article entitled 'Nie' or 'No' in that month's issue of *Kultura*. In that piece, Miłosz described himself as a "celebrated Polish poet and translator," whose "name was uttered with respect."[370] He wrote that he found much to admire in the new postwar regime. He was happy that it broke the "semi-feudal" character of Polish society, and that a generation of "young people from working-class and peasant backgrounds" were now filling the nation's universities. Although he seemed assured of a "promising career," Miłosz felt that he could no longer work for a Communist government, since to do so was necessarily to become a propagandist for its gravest misdeeds. In his coda, Miłosz described his decision to defect as akin to "suicide," as well as the "end of my literary career."

This article, with its frankness and genuine lack of modesty, provoked a firestorm of criticism from the émigré press. Matters were not helped when Miłosz, in his first public appearance, described his antipathy towards the whole Polish émigré community, whose many factions and quarrels seemed to resemble "characters in a vaudeville." In the subsequent round of polemics, many of which were published in the pages of the London-based journal *Wiadomości*, Miłosz was accused of arrogance, blindness, servility, disloyalty, and stupidity, and he was described

[368] Joanna Mazurska, "Making Sense of Czeslaw Milosz: A Poet's Formative Dialogue With His Transnational Audiences," Ph.D. Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 2013, p. 138.
[369] Andrzej Franaszek, *Miłosz: A Biography*, p. 305.
[370] Czesław Miłosz, "Nie," *Kultura* 5, 1951, p. 3-13.

variously as a "pen mercenary," an "arch-loyal ex-esoteric"[371] [sic] and a Bolshevik agent.[372] Mieczysław Grydzewski wrote that after Miłosz should follow his "six years of devoted service in captivity" with "six years of silence." Jan Lechoń, another émigré poet, was even more drastic, claiming in a letter that if Miłosz had an "ounce of honesty, he ought to hang himself, or at least work as a laborer to prove that he is with "the common people."[373] (There were glimmers of light though. Michał Chmielowiec wrote in *Życie* that he had spent "two winters" in a Soviet internment camp, during which, in between bouts of extreme hunger, he had kept faith with his countrymen in part by reciting Miłosz's poem "Lullaby").[374]

The most savage attack on Miłosz's person and character, however, was contained in a lengthy article in *Wiadomości* by Sergiusz Piasecki entitled "The Former Poputchik Miłosz"[375] after the early Bolshevik term for fellow-traveler. In it, Piasecki, a Vilnian acquainted with many members of Miłosz's pre-war literary and social circle, laid out a detailed history of the writer's Communist sympathies and the supposed collaboration of his friends with the Soviet occupation in Lithuania. Piasecki continued his indictment of Miłosz into the present day, meditating at length on his diplomatic career, and highlighting ideologically craven points in his literary output, such as his translation of a poem by Mao Tze-Tung as late as 1950.

Dripping with irony, Piasecki wrote in the hopes of exposing the "full monstrousness of the psyche of this Bierut-owite" (that is, a follower of Poland's Stalinist dictator, Bolesław Bierut).[376] He was hardly an impartial observer. A novelist, former prisoner and sometime smuggler of cocaine into the Soviet Union, Piasecki was also (so he claimed) a former member of prewar Polish counter-intelligence, and the organizer of a web of anti-Soviet agents in Belarus.[377] Perhaps more pertinently to the issue at hand, Piasecki was once married to a woman Miłosz had wronged in his youth, leaving her pregnant and refusing to either marry her or help with an abortion.[378] Piasecki thus had multiple reasons to disdain Miłosz. Nonetheless, amidst his outpouring of vitriol, Piasecki admitted that Miłosz was an able student of the Communist system. The proof of this was his article on Ketman, which beautifully demonstrated that the "changes in consciousness" taking place in Poland were in fact an "adaptation to circumstances and an actor's game."[379]

Piasecki was not the only member of the emigration to embrace the explanatory power of Ketman. Even as Polish émigrés criticized Miłosz's character and political past, as more sections of *The Captive Mind* appeared in the press, they tended to accept some of its conclusions. This is not to say that the mockery ended outright. Z. Daszewski, the author of a short work published in

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[371] Mieczysław Grydzewski, *Wiadomości*" 1951, 22(270), p. 4, reproduced in Mirosław Supruniuk, "Miłosz '51 – Raz Jeszcze: Studium o Pożytku z Czytania Źródeł," *Archiwum Emigracji*, (Toruń: 2011), 1–2 (14–15), p. 57.
[372] Andrzej Franaszek, *Miłosz: a Biography*, p. 289.
[373] Andrzej Franaszek, *Miłosz: a Biography*, p. 288.
[374] Michał Chmielowiec, *Życie* 1951, 29, p. 4, in Supruniuk, p. 65.
[375] Sergiusz Piasecki, "Były Poputczik Miłosz," *Wiadomości*, 1951 44 (292), p. 3, reproduced in Mirosław Supruniuk, "Miłosz '51" p. 71.
[376] Sergiusz Piasecki, "Były Poputczik Miłosz," p. 3, reproduced in Mirosław Supruniuk, "Miłosz '51," p. 74.
[377] This comes from Piasecki's own published statements. There are serious questions whether any of these are true. See Sławomir Andruszkiewicz, "Sergiusza Piaseckiego droga do „Wieży Babel," *Nasz Czas*.
[378] Andrzej Franaszek, *Miłosz: a Biography*, p. 289.
[379] Sergiusz Piasecki, "Były Poputczik Miłosz," *Wiadomości*, 1951 44(292), p. 3, reproduced in Mirosław Supruniuk, "Miłosz '51," p. 76.

New York entitled *Three Books: G. Orwell, Cz. Miłosz and W. Gombrowicz (A Polemic)* finished his argument by calling *The Captive Mind* an "embarrassment" before confiding to his Polish readers that he wished "Pan Miłosz would stop ketman-ing us" (*niech nam pan Miłosz nie ketmani*)."[380] However, this type of joke was now more the exception than the rule. Even Jan Lechoń, who had called on Miłosz to hang himself, admitted in a letter that he found the book to be a "masterpiece of a psychological analysis" – the product of a mind that was "razor sharp, but also cold and cruel as a razor."[381]

The Captive Mind* and *Kultura

While *The Captive Mind* drew grudging admiration in émigré circles, within the orbit of *Kultura* itself the book evoked a more skeptical response. Some respondents, to be sure, praised it without qualification. Witold Gombrowicz, arguably the most distinguished Polish writer-in-exile among the journal's contributors, said that the book was "excellent" and was soon discussing the presence of Ketman in his own community of Buenos Aires expatriates.[382] Juliusz Mieroszewski, the London correspondent for *Kultura*, wrote in a letter to the *Kultura* editor Jerzy Giedroyc that "when it comes to inner or spiritual mechanics, then Miłosz explains things far better and more deeply than Koestler."[383]

Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, one of the co-founders of Kultura, struck a far more critical note. Writing just as *A World Apart*, his memoir of his time spent in the work camp of Yertsevo in the Arkhangelsk oblast, was just about to appear in English, Herling found Miłosz's articles on Ketman and Murti-Bing to be "exaggerated, and over-theorized," and based more on self-autopsy than on observation of others.[384] Where Miłosz emphasized the tremendous force of ideas and intellectual pressure, Herling-Grudziński observed only brute force. He chalked up the rest of Miłosz's conclusions to his infatuation with Marxism, which he took to be a symptom of the writer's intellectual "infantilism," and proof that intellectuals of his stripe had "very weak heads and could be lead astray by just about anything."[385]

Despite personally overseeing the publication of *The Captive Mind* (and hosting Miłosz in *Kultura*'*s* offices while he wrote it), Jerzy Giedroyc, the lead editor of *Kultura*, came in time to share Herling-Grudziński's assessment of the book. In his autobiography, (published in 1994), Giedroyc wrote that *The Captive Mind* was an important book, but a "false one" in that it "created the myth of Ketman," when the reality of the situation was characterized by nothing more than "ordinary fear and opportunism."[386] He continued that while the book did not make it easier for him to understand the Communist world, it did help him to understand the more narrow orbit of Polish intellectuals, ridding him of "many illusions," particularly in regards to Jerzy Andrzejewski.

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[380] Renata Gorczyńska and Czesław Miłosz. *Rozmowy: podróżny świata*, p. 93.
[381] Andrzej Franaszek, *Miłosz: a Biography*, p. 305.
[382] Witold Gombrowicz, *Diary*, trans. Lillian Vallee, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 69.
[383] Andrzej Franaszek, *Miłosz: A Biography*, p. 305.
[384] Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, "Czasopisma Obce: Murti-Bing," *Wiadomości*, 1951 34 (282), p. 4, reproduced in Mirosław Supruniuk, "Miłosz '51 – Raz Jeszcze: Studium o Pożytku z Czytania Źródeł," p. 69
[385] Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, "Czasopisma Obce: Murti-Bing," reproduced in Mirosław Supruniuk, "Miłosz '51 – Raz Jeszcze: Studium o Pożytku z Czytania Źródeł," p. 70.
[386] Jerzy Giedroyc, *Autobiografia na cztery ręce, Czytelnik*, (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1994), p. 163. Cited in Aleksandra Dębska-Kossakowska, "Ponadsystemowe próby uchwycenia sensu," p. 167.

However, in private correspondence from the time, Giedroyc was much more conciliatory. When Andrzej Bobkowski (yet another frequent *Kultura* contributor) wrote to him that he thought *The Captive Mind* was merely "anti-Stalinist, and nothing more" and that it would affirm young people in their belief in "progressive blather from a hundred years ago," Giedroyc spoke out in Miłosz's defense, writing that he considered his book to be "not only humble, but very sincere." Moreover, he was convinced of the book's "authenticity" based on the "reaction it inspired in [Poland]."[387]

The events of 1956 – in particular the bloody protests in Poland and the armed uprising in Hungary – challenged some readers' belief in Miłosz's depiction of Stalinism as an all-powerful ideocratic system. Writing in the French journal *Preuves,* Konstanty Jeleński, predicted that the end of Stalinism would likewise mean the death "of two anti-Stalinist myths: the myth of Ketman and the myth of [*Darkness at Noon's*] Rubashov,"[388] or of total ideological disguise on the one hand, and a Marxism so idealistic it necessitates self-capitulation, on the other. In the pages of *Kultura* itself, Jeleński looked back on what had drawn him to *The Captive Mind* in the first place, and why it no longer seemed an adequate description of reality.

> The concepts of 'Murti-Bing' and 'Ketman' seemed so logical, and to explain so much that had previously seemed unexplainable, that we in the West had a tendency to ascribe them universal significance. Now, it seems, that there never were as many 'captive' minds as we thought. … Miłosz's thesis explains peoples' acquiescence through the incredible might of the system. Through this, the motives of cowardice, opportunism and weakness of character retreat into the background…What mattered was not so much fascination with 'history', but plain fear, fear before the secret police. Not so much the interpretation of 'objective processes,' as ordinary opportunism. Not the attraction of a "new faith" as personal ambition.[389]

Jeleński also worried that in the post-Stalinist future, collaborators with the previous regime would justify their actions by calling on Miłosz's terms – or, in short, that ketman would come to function as an alibi, explaining away their participation in terms of spiritual traps and necessary compromises.

The Captive Mind in People's Poland

As Jeleński was voicing his concerns, *The Captive Mind* was already being read and digested in Poland, albeit by a fairly small and select audience. How the book first appeared in the country is uncertain. In 1980, Miłosz told an interviewer that shortly after its publication, without his knowledge *The Captive Mind* was reproduced in a miniature edition printed on "Bible paper." Copies where then dropped over Poland from balloons by a Western agency (presumably the CIA).[390]

The truth of this tale has never been confirmed. But it was certainly not the only attempt at smuggling the message of Miłosz's book into People's Poland. In 1951, at the same time that

[387] Aleksander Fiut, *Z Miłoszem*, p. 201.
[388] Aleksandra Dębska-Kossakowska, "Ponadsystemowe próby uchwycenia sensu," p. 166.
[389] Konstanty Jeleński, "Po trzęsieniu ziemi," *Kultura* 1956, 5, p. 20.
[390] Renata Gorczyńska and Czesław Miłosz. *Rozmowy: podróżny świata*, p. 94.

'*Nie'* appeared in *Kultura*, Miłosz wrote an open letter to readers in Poland, which the editors of *Kultura* included with issues smuggled behind the Iron Curtain. They also sent several hundred copies of the letter to noted figures in People's Poland, on the assumption that at least a few would make it past the censors. It ran, in part:

> "Dearest Countrymen! As a Polish poet, whose every word is written with a thought to the fatherland, I feel obliged to give my hearers the reasons for which I decided not to return to the country. I did not go into exile, in order to shut myself inside my own petty, private affairs….I am aware of my responsibilities, and the enormity of them is crushing…I have only one life and I cannot spend it on dialectical proofs that fear is a part of human dignity, and that informing (*donosicelstwo*) is a virtue….Becoming an exile is for me a greater tragedy than anyone can judge. However, it is better to remain a poet in exile, that to yield and search for learned arguments for justifying one's own disgrace, as so many writers do in Warsaw."[391]

It's not clear how many people actually received this letter, but this was not a message calculated to garner sympathy among Miłosz's former comrades in the Writer's Union. It hardly mattered, since for them, *The Captive Mind* was forbidden reading material – and all the more appealing precisely *because* it was banned. It is clear that by at least the start of 1954, a fair number of people in Poland - and especially writers – had read part or all of *The Captive Mind*. Most of the first readers did so with an eye to giving the book an official response. Miłosz had already been condemned by most of Poland's leading writers following his defection in January, 1951. Shortly thereafter, his books were banned from publication and existing copies removed from Polish libraries. A few months later, in October, 1951, Over the course of a two-day conference held in Warsaw, Miłosz underwent what Andrzej Franaszek has termed "trial *in absentia*."[392]

The purpose of this trial was to "stigmatize Miłosz as a renegade," and also to clear his former friends and associates of any lingering guilt by association. This was accomplished through a ritual of denunciation. Over the course of the conference, Jan Kott called Miłosz a "traitor" and a "liar," while Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, a bit more ambiguously, wrote that Miłosz's example was proof that for Polish writers there could be "no escape to an ivory tower." They could either side with the government, or find themselves in exile with Miłosz, sharing a byline with Vlasov and "other Hitlerites."[393] The noted humorist Antoni Słonimski, meanwhile, who had advised Miłosz to stay abroad 'as long as possible' during his Washington days, now accused him in the pages of *Trybuna Ludu* ("Tribune of the People") of endangering Poland's reconstruction and emboldening saboteurs: "You are an enemy of our present, and what's most frightening, of our future."[394]

(Miłosz replied with a furious open letter to Słonimski in *Kultura*,[395] some of which ran: "I hope that this attack has improved your situation in Warsaw, which is something I want for you. Someone, whom you well know, said, as you remember, "If you are already going to be in Hell,

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[391] Anna Bikont and Joanna Szczęsna, *Lawina i Kamienie*, p. 229.
[392] Andrzej Franaszek, *Miłosz: a Biography*, p. 291.
[393] Andrzej Franaszek, *Miłosz: a Biography*, p. 292.
[394] Anna Bikont and Joanna Szczęsna, *Lawina i Kamienie*, p. 231.
[395] Czesław Miłosz, "Do Antoniego Słonimskiego," *Kultura*, 1951, n. 20.

it's better to be a devil, who pushes souls into the burning pitch, than a poor little soul sizzling there. Push the souls into the pitch, Antoni. Push them into the pitch and for that price you can enjoy a moment of aesthetic delight in your book-lined apartment. But it must be bitter for you, when you remember your past as a humanist."[396])

In the months and years that followed, other writers joined their voices to the chorus. Konstanty Gałczyński, (Miłosz's Delta), composed his "Poem for a Traitor." Kazimierz Brandys, "in a rage" [397] after reading *The Captive Mind*, wrote a satirical story, "Until he is Forgotten," in which a transparently Miłosz-like character abandons his country to become a turncoat and traitor in the West.[398] Arnold Słucki summed up the prevailing feeling with a work titled simply "The Deserter." By the time *The Captive Mind* appeared, Miłosz was already firmly established as the Polish literary world's premier *persona non grata*. The discussion of the book itself was therefore somewhat muted in comparison to the opprobrium which accompanied his defection. As among the Polish émigrés, the poet's action seemed more provocative than his arguments.

Jerzy Putrament was the first to discuss *The Captive Mind* in print, seeing in it nothing more than a gross flirtation with the West and calling Miłosz himself a "coward *honoris causa*."[399] Roman Bratny called him the "Technical Editor of Anti-Communism." Zygmunta Kałużyński grouped the book with Orwell's *1984* and Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, considering all of them as little more than "a waste product of the great conflict.[400]

But while the official response was one of disdain verging on boredom, behind the scenes Miłosz's book was having a tremendous impact. Among Poland's literary intelligentsia, the latter part of the book – his portraits of three of the country's leading writers (Borowski, the fourth, was already dead by suicide) – were read with particularly searching attention. On March 30, 1954, Maria Dąbrowska wrote in her journal that Jerzy Andrzejewski had been harmed by the portrait of him included in Miłosz's book *The Captive Mind*, "which of course the Party dignitaries read assiduously." She reported that Jerzy Putrament's reputation had been similarly hurt, especially by the mention that he "'beat Jews with a cane' during his *Endek* [National Democrat] youth. Although Dąbrowska does not seem to have read *The Captive Mind* yet, her friend Ewa Kuryluk had, and told her that its characterizations of writers were "excellent."[401]

In 1955, the composer Andrzej Panufnik, who fled to the West following a concert in Zurich on July 11, 1954, wrote in the journal *Encounter* that he was already familiar with *The Captive Mind* prior to his defection. According to him, the "book circulated clandestinely among writers and artists, and had already been familiar to this milieu for several years. Panufnik was quite taken with Miłosz's book, in which he "found, for the first time, a really true and penetrating interpretation of the psychological trials of the artist under a Communist régime."[402]

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[396] Anna Bikont and Joanna Szczęsna, *Lawina i Kamienie*, p. 233.
[397] Anna Bikont and Joanna Szczęsna, *Lawina i Kamienie*, p. 237.
[398] Kazimierz Brandys, "Nim będzie zapomniany," *Nowa Kultura*, 1955, n. 38. Miłosz nursed a life-long grudge against Brandys for the story, not least of all because it repeated the rumor that he had spent the War on a Lithuanian passport.
[399] Dariusz Pawelec, *Debiuty i powroty*, (Katowice: Wydawnictwo PARA, 1998), p. 17.
[400] Dariusz Pawelec, *Debiuty i powroty*, p. 18.
[401] Maria Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki 1914-1965*, p. 92, entry for March 30, 1954.
[402] Andrzej Panufnik. Composers and Commissars." *Encounter*, March 1955, p. 3.

The literary critic and historian Kazimierz Wyka was similarly enthusiastic. Wyka had corresponded with Miłosz in the late 1940s. Between 1952 and 1956, he served as a deputy to the Sejm. According to his friend Tadeusz Kwiatkowski, in spite of his high position Wyka disapproved of the current reality inwardly, but would never do so openly, since in those times "one could go to jail for anything, and that was not a place which was conducive to academic work." Because of this, Wyka spoke "very admiringly" (*z wielkimi pochwałami*) of Miłosz's idea of Ketman, having received a copy of *The Captive Mind* from Giedroyc.[403] Kwiatkowski brought his own copy back from France in 1957. He later claimed that among his friends, Miłosz was thought to express the "hidden thoughts" of the intelligentsia, especially the part of it that was engaged in literary work.

Leopold Tyrmand

The Captive Mind circulated beyond a narrow elite of well-connected writers. Even people without Party contacts or the ability to travel to Paris were able to come across its ideas. In a few months, these had achieved a kind of virality in Poland –despite (or possibly in part, because) they had no official means of being reproduced.

On February 1, 1954, Leopold Tyrmand wrote in his diary that his friend, a young writer named Paweł Gawlik, had just told him about something called "Ketman." Confusing it with the "Pill of Murti-Bing" Gawlik thought that the term had been coined by the avant-garde writer Witkacy. He knew, however, that it had been brought into wider use by "émigré journalists working for *Kultura*."[404] Speaking "nonstop," Gawlik explained that the "practitioner of *Ketman* is the *marrano* of our times: he preserves his moral purity and fidelity to the old belief while serving the new with contempt and hatred at the bottom of his heart."[405] It all struck Tyrmand as "fairly complicated." Later that night, he attempted to summarize what he understood Ketman to mean in his journal:

> I don't rightly know who today in Poland is a marrano or a *Ketman*: the sole litmus test would be success and good fortune. So it follows that *Ketman*, regarded as a rather perverse Good, paying with a kind of suffering for its double dealing, is in the end, an exceedingly comfortable physical and spiritual state of being: he who practices it is convinced of his inherent nobility because he alone knows the truth about himself, while at the same time he swims in an affluence eagerly provided by the communists, who know very well how to reward those who serve them, even if just for show.[406]

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[403] Tadeusz Kwiatkowski, *Panopticum*, (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1995), p. 148.
[404] Leopold Tyrmand, *Diary 1954* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2014), p. 160.
[405] Leopold Tyrmand, *Diary 1954*, p. 161.
[406] Leopold Tyrmand, *Diary 1954*, p. 161.There are two versions of Tyrmand's diary. The first edition was published in 1980, in London, and included the author's later revisions. There is also a 'original,' unedited version, whose manuscript is held in the Stanford University Library, and which was published in Poland in 1999. The quotes here come from and English language translation by Anita Shelton and A.J. Wrobel of the 1980 version. The translators state in their introduction that Tyrmand's edits "do not constitute major changes in substance." Polish critics tend to disagree, however. For a detailed discussion of how the two version differ, see Konrad Niciński "Dwie wersje "Dziennika 1954" Leopolda Tyrmanda: wokół problemu tożsamości tekstu," *Pamiętnik Literacki : czasopismo kwartalne poświęcone historii i krytyce literatury polskiej* 97, No. 4 (2006): 71-94.

Gawlik was clearly excited by the idea. Both he and Tyrmand had recently lost their jobs as writers for the weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny*. In March 1953, its editors refused to run a laudatory obituary for Stalin, and as a result had the journal taken away from them.[407] Gawlik was now making a meager living working for an office which booked provincial exhibitions. To him, it seemed that the time for resistance was over; "as long as the Weekly existed, it made sense to be in the opposition, ideological as well as moral but since its fall one has to compromise." Ketman offered the perfect path for his current predicament. It was a way of yielding to necessity without giving away anything spiritually, or, in Tyrmand's paraphrase, "to be rewarded by the victor for having ceded nothing in defeat, in one's own mind."

Tyrmand was in a very similar position to Gawlik. After Tygodnik's closure, he was trying to find new outlets in which to publish his journalism, but was finding his path blocked at every turn. As he wrote in his diary: "I am thirty-four years old and rotting. I am a writer – I have no doubts about that – but I don't publish any books. I'm a good publicist, but I don't write any article or polemics. I'm a very good journalist, but I don't work for any paper…I simply don't exist."[408] And yet, despite sharing the same essential dilemma, Tyrmand wrote that he found the idea of Ketman "revolting," adding later, "somehow, it just isn't for me."

A month later, Tyrmand had somewhat softened his stance. He was contemplating signing a contract with a state publishing house to write a novel (which would become the enormously successful Warsaw-thriller *Zły*). Tyrmand was working on a film script about a young girl swimmer "ambushed by life,"[409] and losing her big meet. He dreaded being asked by the producers to add a scene in which she is instead redeemed by joining the communist youth league, but insisted that he would make no changes – even if this meant he wouldn't get paid. In his diary, Tyrmand tried to reassure himself that he was making the right decisions. "Do not bear false witness!" – according to him, this was the single most important commandment of life under communism. He told himself that it was necessary to resist temptation at any price, to avoid the "team of liars" even if it meant missing out on jobs, congresses, literary competitions and the "race for housing allocations." Again, he repeats: "Do not, do not, do not bear false witness."

And yet, in the course of the same diary entry, as he weighs his position as an intransigent opponent of the regime against his losses in earnings, honors and social prestige, Tyrmand begins to falter, and admits to being a "bit schizophrenic." He considers the careers of various artists who have managed to coexist with the authorities without giving up too much of themselves. Jan Parandowski had made it through nine years without writing or saying "anything that could cast a shadow of compromise, let alone of a sellout." A bit less resolute, Maria Dąbrowska had to make a few small concessions, but still retained her honor. The architect Jerzy

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[407] Malgorzata Czeremińska, *The Autobiographical Triangle: Witness, Confession, Challenge*, (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2019), p. 266.

[408] Leopold Tyrmand, cited in Paulina Potasińska, *Kult, mit, i kompleks: Figury autokreacji w twórczości Leopolda Tyrmanda, Marka Hłaski i Tadeusza Konwickiego*, (Warsaw: Wydział Polonistyki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2015), p. 51.

[409] Leopold Tyrmand, *Diary 1954*, p. 251.

Hryniewicki openly mocked socialist realism, but nonetheless managed to be loved by "Maxists and non-Marxist alike."[410]

"How do they all do it?" wondered Tyrmand, as he contemplated joining this group of in-between figures, who had figured out how to live as that paradoxical entity – the successful nonconformist. His whole persona was based around opposition to Communist mores. Along with his two best friends, Stefan Kisielewski and Zbigniew Herbert, they formed a miniature cell of opposition to the prevailing cultural atmosphere. Each of the men had their own area of expertise: Kisiel in journalism and music, Hebert in poetry, and Tyrmand in style: "Kisiel…openly criticizes socialist realism…I wear collars from Dyszkiewicz,"[411] (every Warsaw dandy's favorite tailor, and that city's "last preserve of distinction and refinement"[412]).

And yet, Tyrmand also longed for success, with all its privileges: "I would like to write something that would both hit home and allow the communists to overlook me and my conceits."[413] Kisiel suggested to him a way this might be possible without violating their shared principles – by producing something he called "hinged" literature.[414] Like a saloon door in a Western bar, this work could be kicked in either direction. It could serve as critique, while at the same time allowing the government to pat itself on the back for permitting dissent.

This was a tantalizing possibility for Tyrmand, and yet one which filled him with unexpected scruples. He fretted about the effects of success on his psyche. He was especially worried about his diary; would this "uncompromising record" of his inner self also become 'hinged,' gradually filling up with "conciliation regarded as good sense and maturity."? Or would Tyrmand maintain his private independence, and develop a split personality, a "fractured…two-faced Tyrmand" – a successful, but sensible, independent writer by day, and vituperative critic of present realities by night. To Tyrmand, this seemed like a psychological impossibility. It was a form of "schizophrenia," impossible to sustain in the long run; "you can't go on like that for long, something has to give."

Schizophrenia, if unsustainable, was at least an ethical (or perhaps, honest) response to his predicament. Tyrmand was adamant that the same was not true of Ketman:

> But, wait a minute, aren't we crossing into the *Ketman* territory? Not really, because Ketman isn't schizophrenia, but control and caution, camouflage, meticulous masquerade. Whereas I, the child of sudden fortune, would be splitting in two: the communists would print and praise me; my guaranteed individuality would pay off for them.[415]

Tyrmand's resistance to dissimulation is surprising, since he was himself familiar with various forms of religious and ideological imposture. A staunch anti-Communist, Tyrmand concealed the

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[410] Leopold Tyrmand, *Diary 1954*, p. 252.
[411] Leopold Tyrmand, *Diary 1954*, p. 96.
[412] Leopold Tyrmand, *Diary 1954*, p. 42.
[413] Leopold Tyrmand, *Diary 1954*, p. 253.
[414] For a fuller discussion of 'hinged' literature, see Christopher Caes, "Historical contingency and conceptions of the self in Stalinist and post-Stalinist era Polish literature and film, 1950-1960," Ph.D. Dissertation, UC Berkeley 2004.
[415] Leopold Tyrmand, *Diary 1954*, p. 254.

fact that during the first years of World War II, finding himself in Soviet-occupied Vilnius, he worked for the local *Prawda Komsomolska*, where he penned a weekly column and wrote about sport.[416] Born into a Jewish family, he survived the Holocaust by pretending to be a Christian of partly Scandinavian ancestry. More curious is that Tyrmand kept up the act once the war was done. According to his some-time friend Tadeusz Konwicki, he liked to wear a cross on his chest and ostentatiously proclaimed his Catholicism, boasting of a past that was purely Christian and reactionary.[417] And finally, despite Tyrmand's stated opposition to the entire world of official literature, he was a longtime member of the Party-sponsored Polish Writer's Union. Although the obligatory meetings were a terrible bore, he wrote that they were worth it, since membership in the Union opened the doors to exclusive dance halls and cinemas, as well offering access to the "cheapest dinners in town" at the Union cafeteria.[418]

All of this is not to accuse Tyrmand of hypocrisy, but simply to point out that in the tumultuous world of mid-century Eastern Europe, a certain degree of flexibility was necessary for survival. Indeed, the frequent changes of regime that characterized the region's history made strategies of camouflage and disguise second nature to many of its inhabitants. Ketman was merely one method among many for steering a path between the frying pan of historical necessity and the fire of personal ambition.

Andrzej Walicki

In Leopold Tyrmand, we have an example of someone who knew about Ketman (albeit by hearsay), considered its use, and ultimately rejected it as morally compromising – all while simultaneously pursuing very similar strategies of personal disguise and ideological compromise. In Andrzej Walicki, by contrast, we have someone who knew nothing about Ketman, but who admitted (with the benefit of hindsight) to embracing it fully as a way of surviving the darkest days of high Stalinism.

Walicki, who would go on to be a renowned historian of Russian philosophical and political thought, was ten years younger than Tyrmand, having been born in 1930 to Tyrmand's 1920. Accordingly, Walicki was a teenager during the war, full of patriotic enthusiasm for the Warsaw Uprising but unable to participate, and was finishing high school just as the Stalinization of higher education was reaching its fullest swing. This, coupled with Walicki's social background, immediately exposed him to pressures which Tyrmand (or for that matter, Miłosz) never experienced.

Walicki's parents belonged to the noble (*szlachta*) intelligentsia. His father, Michał, was an art historian and curator at the National Gallery in Warsaw. During the War, Michał served in the Home Army (AK). Between 1948 to 1953, he was jailed for his work in the Propaganda Bureau of AK's Central Command.[419] This left Andrzej in a precarious position. He was forced to live with his mother's family, and found that he would most likely not be able to enter a university as the son of a "class enemy." To overcome this hurdle, in his final year of high school,[420] Andrzej

[416] Paulina Potasińska, *Kult, mit, i kompleks*, p. 9.
[417] Paulina Potasińska, *Kult, mit, i kompleks*, p. 62.
[418] Paulina Potasińska, *Kult, mit, i kompleks*, p. 45.
[419] Andrzej Walicki, "Marksistowska filozofia w PRL w świetle osobistych wspomnień," *Przegląd Filozoficzny — Nowa Seria,* (2007), 3 (63), p. 252.
[420] Andrzej Walicki, *Spotkania z Miłoszem*, p. 20.

joined the ZMP, or Union of Polish Youth, a Communist youth organization then undergoing a period of exceptional growth.

Walicki considered this decision an act of opportunism, but only in part. In an "intellectual biography" written thirty years after the fact, Walicki recalled that he was motivated in the first place, by his desire to get into a university, but also by a sense that his world, and the world of his parents, was passing into oblivion. He felt that to preserve some of its values, he needed to find some way of fitting into the new world, and possibly even "shape it from within."[421] Walicki writes that in this sense, at a young age, he was already "practicing Ketman."

In the event, he was only partially successful. Walicki was admitted into Warsaw University, but was not permitted to pursue his preferred direction of study – philosophy – and had to join the Russian department instead. The Russian department sorely lacked students. It was also one of the most heavily politicized departments in the whole university. Walicki felt the force of this almost immediately. Before the start of the school year, he presented a seminar paper on Gogol, which was harshly criticized for using a formalist – rather than a Marxist – interpretive lens. ZMP 'production meetings,' subjected Walicki to further scrutiny. In his memoirs, *Spotkania z* Miłoszem, written in Australia in 1985 in the wake of Miłosz's 1980 Nobel Prize victory and the Solidarity Movement's rise and subsequent suppression, Walicki's recalled that his fellow students accused him of "individualism," and of "separating himself from the collective."[422] One called Walicki's father an "enemy of the people" for which Andrzej should be "isolated and criticized."[423] For the crime of not tutoring weaker students, Walicki was expected to deliver a public self-criticism – which he did, only to find it judged insufficient.

These various pressures affected Walicki's private life as well as his academic career. In 1951, he married Krystyna, a student of Polish literature he had met two years before in Łódż. At the time, she was a practicing Catholic, but under Walicki's influence she left the faith and joined the ZMP. Krystyna embraced her new worldview with much more enthusiasm than Walicki. After they married, she was even carrying a portrait of Stalin in her purse.[424] This difference of viewpoints soon led to quarrels between the two. Krystyna's fellow ZMP members urged her to divorce Walicki because of his ideological 'softness.' Ultimately, the stress of this became too much for Walicki, and he suffered a nervous collapse. He spent three months in a sanatorium, being treated with insulin shocks and electro-convulsive therapy.

Despite the suffering it had caused him, Walicki was not ready to turn his back on the present order of things. In letters to Krystyna written in the sanatorium, Walicki complained of the philistinism of the other patients who "didn't appreciate the deeper meaning of the present transformation and longed for the return of pre-war times."[425] He lamented that in the present age, "fighting one evil" required one to commit to another one. He even spoke of wanting to escape to the United States – but only so he could fight for social justice and against the crimes of the Korean War. Meanwhile, Walicki's fellow ZMP members of the university were accusing

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[421] Andrzej Walicki, *Spotkania z Miłoszem*, p. 21.
[422] Although Walicki's stated intention in the memoir is to recall his youthful friendship with Miłosz before he became Poland's first Nobel laureate in a half-century, the book is also an *apologia pro vita sua* for an academic career lived, so to speak, in the belly of the beast. Andrzej Walicki, *Spotkania z Miłoszem*, p. 29.
[423] Andrzej Walicki, *Spotkania z Miłoszem*, p. 30.
[424] Andrzej Walicki, *Spotkania z Miłoszem*, p. 31.
[425] Andrzej Walicki, *Spotkania z Miłoszem*, p. 31.

him of faking his illness and thereby secured his demotion to a worse-paying teaching position.[426] When he returned to school, Krystyna left him for a more "ideologically engaged" poet. During the Sejm elections of 1952, the ZMP further punished Walicki by forbidding him from canvassing workers. He successfully petitioned to have the punishment revoked, and spent several weeks in the worst Warsaw slums, campaigning on behalf of the government.

This action should not be interpreted as simple acquiesence. In general, Walicki's position from 1950 to 1953 was one of painful ambivalence. Walicki felt opposition to many values of the Communist government, but he also felt an intense desire to overcome his own exclusion to join his fellow students' in their activities. A longtime student of philosophy, his thinking was suffused with concepts borrowed from Hegel and Belinsky. He understood his predicament as a lived experience of historical necessity, and believed that he "had to suffer, because he was sentenced to do so by his TIME."[427] In letters, Walicki described the painful transition from the "kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom," and wrote of wanting to experience a "genuine reconciliation with reality" ("understood, of course, in a strictly Hegelian sense"). Gradually, he became persuaded that there was space for him to work actively within the current system. Within a narrow sphere, Walicki would dedicate himself to promoting a "maximum of truth and a minimum of falsehood"[428] (doing without falsehood altogether seemed completely quixotic). According to his later recollections, for Walicki, this moment when he began to believe that his oppressors were sanctioned by the "logic of the age"[429] represented the moment he passed from mere Ketman to being a fully "captive mind."

His hesitations and compromises, elaborately justified through his understanding of historical necessity, are of course in no way representative of social processes in the country at large. However, they are also not entirely unique. In 1952, shortly after his divorce from Krystyna, Walicki met Janka Derks, whom he would marry a year later. Janka came from a family that had suffered the brunt of the dual Soviet-German occupation. Her brother had died in the Battle of Kock; during the September 1939 invasion Janka's father, an engineer, had been imprisoned by the Soviets in Pinsk, where he was shot in 1941 for participating in a "fascist-nationalist" organization.[430]The rest of the family (Janka's mother and two sisters) were subsequently deported to the Altai Krai in southern Siberia. They would not return to Poland until 1946.

Like Walicki, Janka Derks found herself alienated by the political realities of postwar Poland. As a high school student, she was accused – falsely – of belonging to a "conspiratorial [anti-communist] circle."[431] When she applied to college, she was forbidden from studying Polish literature because she was the daughter of an "enemy of the people" (*wróg ludu*).[432] Janka was thus not inclined to support the current government. Nonetheless, she shared some of Walicki's "characteristic schizophrenia." This consisted on one hand of "wanting to defend one's 'inner

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[426] Andrzej Walicki, *Spotkania z Miłoszem*, p. 34.
[427] Andrzej Walicki, *Spotkania z Miłoszem*, p. 33.
[428] Andrzej Walicki, *Spotkania z Miłoszem*, p. 25.
[429] Andrzej Walicki, *Spotkania z Miłoszem*, p. 24.
[430] Andrzej de Lazari, "Jak dzięki Jance i Andrzejowi Walickim zostawiłem bałałajkę i zająłem się ideami," *Przegląd Filozoficzny – Nowa Seria* 30, No. 2 (2021), p. 42.
[431] Andrzej Walicki, *Spotkania z Miłoszem*, p. 34.
[432] Andrzej de Lazari, "Jak dzięki Jance i Andrzejowi Walickim zostawiłem bałałajkę i zająłem się ideami," *Przegląd Filozoficzny – Nowa Seria* 30, No. 2 (2021), p. 43.

being" [*wewnętrzny ośrodek*], and on the other of "admitting the possibility that 'maybe they are right – if not morally, then at least, 'historically.'"

When Walicki initially described his reconciliation with the "logic of his age" in a personal self-accounting conducted in 1957, a few years after the start of the Thaw in 1954/55, he had not yet read *The Captive Mind*, although he had heard of it, and felt that it must be describing something similar.[433] (Walicki had also been reading Miłosz's poetry, circulating in type-written samizdat, since at least 1949).[434] Walicki first read the actual book in 1961, when he and Janka were given a copy by Jerzy Giedroyc, the editor-in-chief of *Kultura*, himself. Giedroyc and his editorial collaborator Zygmunt Hertz wanted to know if Miłosz's "analyses of the "New Faith," weren't too 'made up,' (*wydumane*), and whether he could testify to their veracity. Walicki and Janka immediately read the book, and replied that it was a "deep, superb analysis of matters well known to both of us, well understood, lived through personally – although, of course, in different surroundings, under much more brutal pressure, in unevenly worse external circumstances." Hearing this confirmation, "Giedroyc was visibly pleased, and seemed to breathe a sigh of relief."[435]

Wider Horizons

The Walickis' testimony reassured the *Kultura* editors about the existence of Ketman in People's Poland. Four years later, they received further proof of its relevance as an ongoing phenomenon in the form of an anonymous letter. Published as "A Voice from the Country" ("Głos z Kraju") in the October 1965 issue, the letter described the current cultural, social and political realities in the PRL from the perspective of an educated young person who claimed to have never lived abroad, and yet was familiar with some of the émigré press (including *Kultura*).

Mid-way through the letter, the anonymous correspondent confessed that Miłosz's article made a great impression on them, and that it continued to be relevant fourteen years after it was written: "Ketman is still practiced in Poland, and Miłosz described its various forms brilliantly."[436] Their main objection to the piece was Miłosz's claim that Ketman could be a source of "pride and satisfaction." In their experience, it was more likely to inspire "cynicism and a loss of belief in all forms of value, in connection with a feeling of contempt for oneself." Ketman was also usually not worth the trouble. Pursuing it in the long run was too difficult, and exposed one to too many risks of being unmasked, either in front of one's superiors or before one's own social milieu.

The anonymous letter writer also suggested that in the fourteen years since Miłosz had left Poland, Poles had developed an extremely keen sense of the degrees and nuances of Ketman. In public pronouncements, some of these were permissible, and some were not. Listening to a speech, audiences would note whether the speaker "had to say it," in which case no one would take it amiss. If, by contrast, he or she "wanted to sound zealous (*gorliwy*) " or simply "wanted

[433] Andrzej Walicki, *Spotkania z Miłoszem*, p. 35.
[434] Andrzej Walicki, *Spotkania z Miłoszem*, p. 7.
[435] Andrzej Walicki, *Spotkania z Miłoszem*, p. 14.
[436] anonymous, "Głos z Kraju," *Kultura Paryska* 10, No. 216 (October, 1965), p. 74.

to suck-up," the person, though they might eventually "gain the recognition of the powerful (*władzy*), but would immediately lose "the sympathy of their peers (*otoczenia*)."[437]

Ketman was not only a finely-honed instrument in the hands of its practitioners and receivers. It was also a double-sided one, aimed both at those above and below. One form is directed above, towards the powerful, "those who are in charge of distributing all social goods." A quite different, almost inverse, form of Ketman had to be employed among one's colleagues and peers. In order to win their sympathy and establish some kind of intimate contact, that is, to be taken as "one of ours" (*za swojego*), it was necessary to first prove that you are not one of 'them.' To fit in, "many pretend to be critical and unsatisfied, not as any kind of provocation, but simply to win the sympathy of one's surroundings." A certain amount of posing in relation to the regime was thus required on encountering any new or unfamiliar social environment:

> When one finds oneself in some new, unknown milieu, for instance a new job or arriving on vacation, there is at first an obligatory period of caution and suspicion. After a few days, people 'begin to talk' [*zaczynają gadać*]. And then one wonders, where exactly are the supporters of the system? Is it all only and exclusively Ketman?

The anonymous letter writer poses a good question for the contemporary historian – how widespread was Ketman really? Certainly it was not a mass phenomenon. During his stays at various sanatoria in the early 1950s, Walicki wrote that each time he encountered the "common people" he was surprised anew by their reflexive "reactionary-ness," and their "total impenetrability" in the face of "ideological persuasion."[438] They tended to hate the current "Muscovite arrangements," and spoke fondly of the West and the pre-war years, and generally thought that only women were worth living for. Even a fellow ZMP member told Walicki that ZMP lectures bored him, that there were no "real values," and that the world was divided into naïve idiots and liars. And he was being put forward for Party membership!

Here, then, is one possibility for the ideological make-up of Poland under Stalinism: on one hand, a vast mass of either apolitical our outright hostile 'common folk,' and on the other, a narrow elite of convinced Communists, most of whom are either in the Party or in certain, highly politicized university departments and institutes. Sandwiched between these two sits an ever-so-tiny layer of professional or aspiring intellectuals, whose works compelled them to undertake the complex rationalizations and self-justifications which go into the practice of Ketman.

Self-Taught Writers: Ketman in the Countryside?

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[437] anonymous, "Głos z Kraju," *Kultura Paryska*, 10, No. 216 (October, 1965), p. 75 .

[438] Andrzej Walicki, *Spotkania z Miłoszem*, p. 40. One time, though, Walicki shared a ward with recuperating North Korean soldiers. Speaking to them in Russian, he found one of them to be a totally cynical advocate of total war, and the other a cautious, would-be student of philosophy who was living for the "next generation" and seemed to share some of Walicki's own ideological "schizophrenia." (Walicki, *Spotkania*, p. 37)

This is a hard thesis to test. Dissimulation, by its very nature, does not tend to leave abundant documentation. Contemporary diaries, journals and letters[439] could provide a counterpoint to the experiences recorded by Tyrmand and Walicki– although, always bearing in mind that such ego documents can come with their own scrim of suppression and concealment.[440] Art, in the form of poetry and short stories, can provide another point of comparison for how ideology is received and reinterpreted in the moment. These can be especially useful when they are produced by a broad cross section of society, and not merely a fragment of the intelligentsia. A 1948 survey of "self-taught" writers, preserved in the archives of the Ministry of Culture and Art under the title '*Referat Talentów Samorodnych*,' offers such a look at the whole of Polish society in a moment of political and social transformation.[441]

This Survey, conducted under the auspices of the Polish Writer's Union (*Związek Zawodowy Literatów Polskich*, henceforth 'ZZLP') at the end of 1947 and beginning of 1948, was one of a number of attempts undertaken by government agencies and publishing houses to study and ascertain the state of readership and literary production in a Poland still reeling from the effects of the war. Much depended on these studies: they were expected to form the basis for publishing plans, book lists and educational reforms.[442] Between 1945 and 1947, the Czytelnik ('Reader') Publishing House, which had its own in-house research institute, surveyed nearly forty-thousand high school students about their reading habits, favorite authors and preferences in poetry and prose.[443] Even authors got in on the act. In 1948, members of the ZZLP, including such leading lights as Maria Dąbrowska and Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, fanned out across the Polish countryside to meet rural readers where they lived. (Dąbrowska was characteristically tart about the usefulness of such work: "In areas where the settlements resemble the native villages I saw in Algiers …. it's idiotic to organize lectures about literature... all you can do there is send for the prophet Jeremiah and the Bible."[444])

Unlike the giant Czytelnik survey, the *Referat* was not intended to shape publishing or educational policy in a major way. Sponsored by the Ministry of Culture in coordination with the Society for Peasant Self-Help (ZSCh), it was instead part of a parallel push to promote "home-

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[439] For a survey of epistolary materials, see Piotr Budzyński, "Korespondencja pracowników naukowych jako źródło do badań nad stalinizacją środowiska akademickiego w Polsce," in *Epistolografia w Polsce Ludowej (1945-1989)*, (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2021).

[440] In the Soviet context, historians drawing on similar materials have come to contradicting stances considering the prevalence of dissimulation under communism. In *Revolution On My Mind: Writing a Diary in Stalin*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), Jochen Hellbeck uses diaries from the 1930s to demonstrate that Soviet ideology, in the form of collective goals and ideals of the 'New Man,' were a pervasive and structuring presence in the mental lives of ordinary Soviet citizens. Working on a later era, Alexei Yurchak has used a variety of materials – especially letters – to question the existence of split selves or a contradiction between private and public in the Soviet 1970s. Alexei Yurchak. *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). In this work, Yurchak is responding to earlier work by Oleg Kharkhordin, who described dissimulation a central aspect of Soviet social life. See: Oleg Kharkhordin. *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study in Practices*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 270-79.

[441] Archiwum Akt Nowych, 366/516.

[442] However, by 1950, the concept of relying on reader surveys had come under sustained attack for encouraging philistinism and being part of the "ideology of a dying class." From then on, publishing plans were expected to conform to the needs of the Communist Party, not the desires of consumers. See, W. Bieńkowski, „O pseudo-nauce bibliologii i najpilniejszych zadaniach bibliografii," cited in Kondek, *Papierowa Rewolucja*.

[443] For the results, see Stanisław Tazbir, *Badania czytelnictwa: materiały i studia*, (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1948).

[444] Maria Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki Powojenne*, Vol. 1, (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1997), p. 181.

grown" literary talent and foster a new generation of politically-conscious writers from across the countryside. This was, in short, an effort to give the proletarians of literature – the ignored, apprentice and aspiring authors whose work crowds the 'slush piles' and rejection heaps of journals the world over – a chance at appearing in print, developing their talents, and perhaps, in the process, shaping the culture of the country as it developed along its new, revolutionary path.

The *Referat* surveyed far fewer people than Czytelnik. Only about a hundred responses survive in the archives. However, these materials are surprisingly rich on an individual basis.[445] The ZZLP survey inquired into aspiring writers' reading habits, the books they owned and the works that most influenced their development as writers. It also asked about their social background, wartime experiences, education, political life, intellectual formation and current material conditions. Most intriguingly, the survey forms encouraged aspiring writers to supply their own additional personal commentary and biographical information. Many of the respondents, no doubt flattered by the attention of the official writers' union, took full advantage of this space to speak their minds at length, making the survey a uniquely rich source for evaluating the degree to which ideological messaging, particularly in matters of culture and taste, penetrated the Polish population at large.

It is not entirely clear how the "self-taught" authors were selected. Several expressed surprise at their inclusion, though it seems that their names were largely drawn from lists of past participants in literary contests run by the ZZLP and from clients of the "literary clinics" run under its auspices. Taken together, the respondents form a broad cross-section of Poland as a whole. Geographically, they came from all over Poland. Many were born in the eastern borderlands, and a few came from even farther afield: Latvia, Siberia and Michigan. A number had migrated since the war to cities in the Reclaimed Lands. Only a third remained in the place of their birth, testifying to the amount of internal migration after the war.

The class breakdown of the respondents closely matches divisions in Poland as a whole: 47% of those surveyed identify themselves as peasants, 19% as workers, and 30% as coming from the intelligentsia and bourgeoisie (the equivalent numbers for the population at large are 53%, 27%, and 16%, respectively).[446] The greatest imbalance in the sample is one of gender. The respondents included eighty-four men against only sixteen women. Rural areas are also somewhat over-represented (probably as a result of the survey's association with the Peasant Self-Help movement), as are students, though the sample as a whole includes both teenagers and adults of all ages.

Many of the survey respondents wrote of suffering war-time traumas. A majority of the men reported having worked in the German Baudienst. Some suffered imprisonment in concentration camps (including Auschwitz and Ravensbrück), or had their homes burnt down by "Ukrainian bandits."[447] Several served in the Home Army (AK), while others fought in the West, at Narvik and at Monte Cassino. A number of the self-taught authors began their careers as authors under the influence of these experiences. Stefan Skarzyński began writing after he saw German soldiers

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[445] They also have been barely touched by contemporary researchers. For one partial exception, see Jerzy Jasztrzębski, "Pisarstwo 'Samorodne' czy Twórczość Amatorska?' in *Czas Relaksu*, (Wrocław Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich), 1982.
[446] Data for social breakdown of Polish Population from Janusz Żarnowski, *Społeczeństwo Drugiej Rzeczpospolitej: 1918-1939*, (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1973).
[447] AAN 366/513, Franciszka Gałczyńska.

execute thousands of civilians in the woods behind his village.[448] Michał Świtalski took up his pen in order to protest the “Gehenna” of Jewish life in the Krakow Ghetto.[449] Zofia Ostroróg wrote about working on the black market and saving several Jews from capture, all while attempting to become a cabaret singer and enduring abuse from a series of husbands.[450]

The most commonly cited reason for beginning to write, however, was of a ‘gradual awakening to the reality of social injustice.’[451] Sometimes, this awakenings took place very early in life, as with Władysława Milezarek, who claimed to have been pondering the question of inequality, “Why do some people live well, and others poorly?,” since the age of five, when she worked in her parent’s fields as a cowherd. For others, it they come about through a decades-long process, as for Teodor Rosicki, who wrote out of a desire to show the “injustice and injury visited on workers and the homeless.” And sometimes, enlightenment was the direct result of propaganda: Antoni Czarnecki began writing socialist poetry in order to “contribute to the cultural enlightenment of the working classes,” immediately after hearing the call put out by Polish Workers’ Party during the Unification Congress in 1947.

Young Enthusiasts vs. the ‘Left Behind’

For every self-taught writer who ‘heard the call’ of the Party, there were many more who seemed barely aware of its existence. A great divide ran through the respondents to the ZZLP survey. On one side, were the writers who seemed attuned to the political and aesthetic line promoted by the ZZLP (now broadly under Communist Party control, and headed by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz). These respondents tended to be young, (16 to 22 years old on average), actively enrolled in an educational institution (usually high school or a worker’s universities) and engaged in the ZMP or some other youth or worker’s organization.

Collectively, these writers belong to the group which the sociologist Hanna Świda-Ziemba named the “ZMP votaries” (“*ZMP-owcy wyznawcy ideologii*”).[452] According to her, this was a generation of young people, born between 1926 and 1930 (and so, between 18 and 22 at the time of the survey), who possessed a “radical worldview,” “believed in socialism,” and expected the swift introduction of a newer, better world. These were people who were engaged socially, belonged to organizations, maintained a strict inner discipline and who were genuinely concerned with “eliminating the ‘class threat.’” They also correspond to a literary type identified by the critic Michał Boni in his studies of Polish socialist realist fiction of the late 1940s and early 1950s, the “young enthusiast,” who was characterized by “loyalty to the collective and the organization, vigilance in the class struggle, and enthusiasm for culture.”[453]

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[448] AAN 366/516, Stefan Skarzyński.
[449] AAN 366/516, Michał Świtalski.
[450] AAN 366/516, Zofia Ostroróg.
[451] This trajectory, of achieving social awakening through the writing of one’s life story, is a familiar one to students of Soviet autobiography. For an exceptionally rich exploration of this tradition, see Irina Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience: Memoirs, Diaries, Dreams* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).
[452] Hanna Świda-Ziemba, *Młodzież PRL. Portrety pokoleń w kontekście historii*, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2010), chapter 2.
[453] Michał Boni, “Stereotyp robotnika w kulturze polskiej na przełomie lat 40/50-tych,” cited in Padraic Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 289.

Within the survey responses, these “young enthusiasts” show their commitment to culture and progress through the books they read and the journals they subscribe to. They know, for instance, that Stefan Żeromski was a model to follow in fiction, as Julian Przyboś was in poetry, and that Sienkiewicz and the Romantics should generally be avoided (or at least read with caution). Up to date on literary fashion, they also knew how to present their own biographies in the most favorable light. Enmeshed in various youth organizations, they had a keen awareness of how to communicate to those with power over their educational and artistic prospects. Chiefly, this meant learning to “speak Bolshevik,”[454] to borrow Stephen Kotkin’s phrase: presenting themselves as victims of class oppression, angered by social oppression, and eager to make use of the opportunities provided by the ‘historic change’ taking place in Poland.

These highly socially-conscious readers contrasted strongly with older respondents to the questionnaire, who lacked an awareness of current style, either in literature or self-presentation. These writers’ worldview tended to remain firmly fixed in the pre-war or wartime years. They wrote poems about white eagles, jazz, the seasons and first communions, and openly admitted to serving in the AK when this was already becoming dangerous. Many were apolitical, or pursued their own pet causes, such as Slavophilism, Esperanto or the Temperance Movement. Other were devoted regionalists, like one poet, Franciszek Beciński, who devoted sonnet after sonnet to praising the countryside of Kujawa.[455]

A village smith and seasonal sugar mill worker, Beciński was far removed from the centers of Polish culture. The same was true of many of the *Referat* talents. They worked as foresters, market watchmen, road builders and maids. Although they occasionally possessed large personal libraries and often evinced unexpected intellectual interests (astronomy, ethnography), they tended not to be up-to-date on what to read or how to shape their life stories. Heavy on the so-called ‘light classics’ (Kraszewski, Oreszkowa), their preferences are nonetheless often eccentric, and and their reading abounds in unexpected combinations. In their lists of favorite books, Marx sits next to Balzac, and Darwin next to the Bible, a trend best captured by one tailor from the village of Bochotnica Koscielna in Puława, who reported that the two books which were central to his intellectual development were Sienkiewicz’s *Krzyżacy*, and the selected works of Lenin.[456]

Material circumstances greatly affected these writers’ ability to ‘receive’ the government message. Many found themselves utterly at sea in the new reality. They complained of being cut off from libraries and bookstores, stuck in provincial towns or “vegetating” in the countryside. For these writers, simply getting their hands on books or paper was a struggle. Sergiusz Tichaniuk, a farmer from village along the Belarusian border, who had completed only four years of primary school, wrote in his personal dossier that “no one can even imagine how much I thirst for knowledge,” and that his lack of education “greatly impeded the development of his poetic talent.”[457]

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[454] Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).
[455] AAN 366/516, Franciszek Beciński.
[456] AAN 366/516, Ignacy Góral.
[457] AAN 366/516, Sergiusz Tichaniuk.

These feelings of being left behind were not just a question of having a lack of schooling or the wrong political orientation. Even those with an impeccable left-wing pedigree could find themselves lost. Leonard Wojszcz, a fifty-four year old mail-carrier from Warsaw, belonged to the Polish Communist Party from childhood (his father belonged to the First Proletariat, as well as the PPS-Left and KPP). Between the Wars, he helped to organize a Young Workers' Club and Worker's Theater in Praga, and wrote dozens of satires and poems on social themes. He didn't publish any of these, however, since he thought they "would never be accepted by the bourgeois press."[458] Sadly, he lost all his manuscripts in the course of the Warsaw Uprising. Wojszcz wanted to do something new, but found navigating the new world of journals, contests and presses impossible, and felt that his moment had passed him by.

Contrast this attitude with Władysław Dańda, a twenty-three year old army clerk from Czarnochowice by Kraków, who edited the gazette in his village's House of the People (*Dom Ludu*) and contributed articles on village life and the Reclaimed Lands in *Flame* (Płomień) and Polish Farmer (*Rolnik Polski*). It would be hard to think of someone more politically engaged: Dańda organized his local branch of the ZMP, and was also a member of its rural equivalent, the Association of Village Youth (*Związek Młodzieży Wiejskiej*, or ZMW). He belonged to the "Friends of Czytelnik," reader's circle, kept abreast of the latest literary trends (he particularly liked Mieczysław Jastrun and Pasternak), and generally believed that his work was going to assist in the "rebuilding of People's Poland."

In answering the survey's questions, Dańda knew how to shape his personal statement to the needs of the ZZLP. He wrote of being the son of a railroad worker, and of not owning his own shoes until he bought a pair of wooden clogs as a teenager. He also lamented the lack of culture in his childhood, and the years of education he lost, first to the German Occupation and then to his army service. Dańda was thus able to perfectly adapt his biography to the new norms of People's Poland. Within the brief space of a questionnaire, he told a story which included working class origins, wartime suffering, progressive politics, and a hunger for education.

In this skillful self-presentation, Dańda closely resembled another writer, Zbigniew Buolny, who out of all the survey respondents might come closest to producing a model biography of a politically conscious youth. A first year law and economics student at Poznań University in 1948, Buolny came from a peasant-worker background. His father was a smallholder. After finishing seven years of primary school, Zbigniew became a carpenter's apprentice, a trade he was able to put into practice as a forced laborer in a German table factory during the War.

At some point during his service, Buolny escaped back to the General Government, but was quickly apprehended and sent to work on a Baudienst, building fortifications. While there, he experienced a political awakening. He began preaching the values of "social justice" to Polish prisoners and German workers alike. He also taught illiterate Poles to read, and learned German through a close study of Romantic poetry. In 1946, he joined the PPR, and became a local organizer in its youth wing, the *Związek Walki Młodych*. Buolny's engagement with Party life also had an aesthetic dimension, as it led him to discover the works of Żeromski, Victor Hugo, and Rabindranath Tagore. In the ensuing years, Buolny gave up his youthful habit of composing poetry full of "passion and pretension,"[459] and began writing short stories on social themes

[458] AAN 366/516, Leonard Wojszcz.
[459] AAN 366/516, Zbigniew Buolny.

instead. According to him, one of these stories concerned the relations between Poles and Germans during the war, and another was about the fight against "petit-bourgeois snobbery" in a small provincial town.

Many poems sent for evaluation to a "literary clinic" (*poradnia literacka)* run by the ZZLP in conjunction with the writer's survey, similarly mimicked models and themes put forth by the Communist press. The Clinic was started in the final months of 1947 by Stanisław Czernik and Stanisław Piętak, two writers with deep ties to the Agrarian Movement and a longstanding interest in peasant writing. Advertising on the radio and in large-circulation journals like *Rolnik Polski*, the Clinic announced that it would accept poetry from all comers, evaluate its literary merits and advise authors on improving their craft, all free of charge.

The poetry sent to the Clinic ranged widely in terms of ability, ambition, and approach. A number of authors submitted work written in broad imitation of Communist propaganda. Tadeusz Gołgle sent in a poem entitled "The Music of Tractors," while Borys Połocki sent in a poem against the Marshall Plan and another, "Young Democrats," in praise of the Revolution in Prague, both in doggerel. One sixteen-year old girl, perhaps confusing the survey issued by the Clinic with a solicitation for a song contest likewise sponsored by the ZZLP, sent in a composition in praise of President Bierut.

These aspiring poets knew how to follow the literary templates set by the Communist Press. They also knew how to demonstrate Party loyalty. Maria Puterla was the author of "556 poems," among which were works praising the Polish Workers' Party and the Red Army and condemning capitalism and fascism. Twenty-six years old and working "in very difficult conditions" on her family's farm outside Rzeszów, Puterla made sure to inform the *Referat* that she had already joined the PPR the year before, "in order to swell the ranks of those who were going to work lifting the Fatherland from the rubble and to create a strong, people's Poland."[460]

Not everyone was equally complaisant, or as pleased with the feedback they received from the *Poradnia*. Zbigniew Worożek, a third-year student in gymnasium in Bochnia, perhaps wounded by accusations that his poetry was "overly erotic," bristled at the suggestion that he should model his work on modern Polish authors. These included most prominently Władysław Broniewski, the leading Polish bard of revolution, Julian Tuwim, the country's most verbally playful writer of light verse (and a fellow leftist), and finally, Julian Przyboś, the dean of the Party-approved avant garde and greatest contemporary arbiter of what could – and should – be done in contemporary Polish poetry. Worożek replied on the survey that he despised Przyboś' "pseudo-poetry," as well as Modernism in general. He felt that "in era of popular rule, poems should be as simple as the people in charge, and as exalted as their hearts."[461] Despite his aesthetic views, Worożek felt some affinity for Broniewski's poems, and was eager to travel to USSR on an academic exchange.

Feliks Zaworonow, another survey respondent, had the perfect biography for a 'young enthusiast.' Before the war, he had worked illegally as a baggage porter and was intermittently homeless. In the years since, he had risen to become the supervising technician at a steel mill. In his survey answers, he stated that he was first inspired to write by the "same thing that motivated

[460] AAN 366/516, Maria Puterla.
[461] AAN 366/516, Zbigniew Worożek.

Gorky to write *The Lower Depths* and Marx to write *Das Kapital*: 'the pain of reality.'"[462] He submitted several manuscripts to Łódź and where they garnered praised – but the manuscripts were never printed, or returned. The experience left Zaworonow dejected, and bitter. Hearing a writer on the radio say that he had rejected the offer of an editorship and 30,000 zlotys a month so that he could devote himself to writing made him furious. So did the Minister of Culture's announcement of cash prizes for 17 stories written by high school students. Henryk Frydman, similarly upset at the literary elite he felt was stymying his literary success, sent the Clinic a poem "I hate you." A furious attack against the Polish intelligentsia, it begins with the verse, "I hate you, dirty intellectuals/clean of body but filthy of mind," and goes on to imagine their vengeful response to his own provocation.[463]

This group of amateur poets surely belongs to the category of disappointed lovers that Miłosz included among his four profiles of Polish writers in the orbit of Communism in *The Captive Mind*. The four profiles bore the subtitles "the Moralist," the "Disappointed Lover," the "Slave of History," and the Troubadour." Other participants in the Clinic and survey, this first group's more orthodox peers, were happy to write poems about fighting hunger, imperialism and the first of May. They might be slotted in amongst the moralists and the troubadours. Whether any of them rose (or fell) to become slaves of history is impossible to tell from our archive. Clearly, however, the issues Miłosz and Walicki desribe as crucially important to their respective micro-generations of Polish intellectuals were relevant to a wider section of society as well.

Between 1948 and 1954, anyone pursuing higher education in Poland, or any sort of career in the arts, however minor, had to contend with questions of belief, outer performance, and inner adherence. They had to decide not just what to think, but to what extent they wanted their outer selves to conform to their inner thoughts. Ideological pressure was real. Within a certain age cohort, it was widely felt, and affected almost every area of self-presentation, from one's favorite authors to the way one described one's parents. All these choices had to be made in reference to an authoritative 'line,' whose tenets could be absorbed through one of the many youth organizations or academies sponsored by the Communist Party, or gleaned from its many new publications, tailor-made for that purpose.

But if Miłosz was right in arguing that the official language and aesthetic policy of the PRL were deeply felt (or as he might say, 'lived-through'), by Poland's intelligentsia, Walicki and Dąbrowska were also right to observe that these new ideas did not extend very deep into society. Beyond the group of "young enthusiasts" identified by Hanna Świda-Ziemba, whose presence makes itself felt all throughout the *Referat* files, there was a wider, and woolier Poland, most of which was as yet unaware of the new teachings. These readers and writers did not belong to the new faith, nor did they worry about wearing masks. If their past beliefs clashed with present political realities, most were happy to live with the contradiction. Or, like the tailor who read only Sienkiewicz and Lenin, to ignore it completely.

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[462] AAN 366/516, Feliks Zaworonow.
[463] AAN 366/516, Henryk Frydman.

Chapter 6: Global Echoes – Ketman in the World

Later in his life, Czesław Miłosz liked to tell and retell the story of an incident which made him aware of the truly global reach of *The Captive Mind*. The year was 1975. Miłosz was attending a poetry festival in Rotterdam when an Indonesian poet, famous in his own country, approached him to tell him that he was "one of our national heroes."[464]

Taken aback, Miłosz asked, "'What do you mean?'"

"'It's because we translated your book *The Captive Mind* and distributed it. It's our main weapon in the struggle with the current regime," the Indonesian poet replied.'"

"'But your government is rightist,'" objected Miłosz.

"'That's right, but what difference does that make? It's totalitarian all the same. Your book is against absolutism. Your book is a gospel for our intellectuals who are opposed to the government."

According to Miłosz, a "host of Indonesians," also present at the poet's reading, confirmed his judgment. Amazed, Miłosz reflected on the many strange twists his path had taken him on: "What adventures I've had in my life – a national hero in Indonesia!"

This anecdote is difficult to verify. Miłosz's novel *The Seizure of Power* was translated into Indonesian in 1959,[465] but *The Captive Mind* did not appear (at least in an official version), until 1986.[466] That edition came with a foreword by the Sumatran Batak journalist and novelist Mochtar Lubis, a longtime activist for press freedom who served time in prison in due to his criticism of the Sukarno regime. Being entirely a prose writer, Lubis does not appear to be the poet Miłosz met in Rotterdam, whom he described as "very revolutionary" and reminiscent of "Mayakovsky or Voznesensky" in his style of recitation. In fact, none of the Festival Poets at the 6th Poetry International Miłosz participated in were Indonesian. However, the 1973 Poetry International Festival featured Goenawan Mohamad of Java as one of its honored guests.

Mohamad (whose first name is also spelled Gunawan) was a prolific poet, translator and essayist, as well as an editor and a journalist. For twenty-three years, beginning in the early 1970s, he served as the editor-in-chief of the Jakarta-based magazine *Tempo*, each issue of which featured his weekly column "Catatan Pinggir" or 'Sidelines.' Over the years, Mohamad devoted several of these columns to Miłosz in general and Ketman in particular, beginning with the essay "Milosz and Ketman" from November 15, 1980. The most recent mention of both topics dates to 2012, where in the midst of a retrospective look at the career of Vaclav Havel, Mohamad provides a cogent summary of Ketman:

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[464] Ewa Czarnecka and Aleksander Fiut, *Conversations with Czeslaw Milosz*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), p. 145.

[465] The translator was H. Partoho, who based his version on Celina Wieniewska's English translation. The catalog of the Indonesian National Library erroneously lists the original author as "Gzeslaw Milosz." See, Gzeslaw Milosz, *Kekoeasaan jang dibekoekan*, (Jakarta: Imajarity, 1959).

[466] Czeslaw Milosz, *Yang terpasung / Czeslaw Milosz; kata pengantar, Mochtar Lubis*, (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 1986).

> The Nobel laureate Polish writer Czeslaw Milosz, feeling suffocated by his country's Marxist-Leninist doctrine, introduced the term "Ketman." This word is taken from the history of Islamic rule in the Middle East: "Ketman" is the verbal strategy of people who are afraid. With 'friends' one simply expresses thoughts formed by the official language – and in the case of Poland, by phrases composed in horror of violating the Party's creed. With "Ketman," people censor themselves and put on a mask of words. Not infrequently, in a long process of fear, the mask merges with the face, and the face changes [in turn].[467]

In the decades following the publication of *The Captive Mind*, Czesław Miłosz's work reached a global audience. As in the Indonesian case, it over proved to be extraordinarily influential, but not always for the same reasons. Nor was his work always received in ways that he was aware of, or would have approved of. In *A Year of the Hunter*, Miłosz claimed that *The Captive Mind* had become "the bible of Yugoslav intellectuals."[468] In fact, *The Captive Mind* was only published in Yugoslavia in 1985, long after works by Orwell, Koestler, and Solzhenitsyn. Nonetheless, this edition, which came equipped with a preface by Nikola Milosevic on the "Social Psychology of Stalinism" proved to be a "genuine event" according to a comprehensive study of Miłosz's reception in Yugoslavia by Ljubica Rosić.[469]

In China, meanwhile, since the 1980s, Miłosz has emerged as "most important foreign authors and literary authorities for Chinese poets."[470] However, as Joanna Krenz points out in a penetrating study, Chinese readers have tended to view Miłosz as a fairly abstract moral authority for poetry as an act witness, while paying little attention to the Polish poet's particular politics or their evolution. Indeed, when Miłosz's poetry first appeared on the Chinese scene, shortly after his 1980 Nobel Prize, his victory was interpreted as a "triumph for socialist literature."[471] Fifteen years later, the publication of *A Year of the Hunter* in translation in 1995 confronted readers with a writer whose central preoccupations seemed to be, in the words of one Chinese critic, "nationalism and patriotism."[472]

This confusion about Miłosz's ideological stance was conditioned in part by the fact that *The Captive Mind* was never an important text for Chinese readers. This makes China an exception on the world stage. There, Miłosz was percieved primarily as a poet, while in the rest of the world he was received first and foremost as a polemicist and the author of *The Captive Mind*. As the book appeared in ever more translations, its influence grew, and the idea of Ketman in particular took on a life of its own. While its initial reception among the Polish émigré

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[467] Gunawan Mohamad, *Catatan pinggir*, *vol. 10*, Grafiti Pers, 1982. [This date comes from Google Books, but must be wrong, as the text dates January 1, 2012.

[468] Czesław Miłosz, *A Year of the Hunter*, (New York: 1994), p. 17.

[469] Ljubica Rosić, "Ketman jugosłowiański," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, June 29, 2001. Rosić comments that while Ketman was widely practiced in the Yugoslav academy – especially its literary branch – it is questionable whether Miłosz's work was as well understood by its members as he seemed to believe. Ketman remains a common term in Serbia, though its source is usually unknown to its users. See Ljubica Rosić, "Metafizyka jako fundament i treść pisarza moralisty," in eds. Aleksander Fiut, Artur Grabowski and Łukasz Tischner, *Miłosz i Miłosz* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2013), p. 252.

[470] Joanna Krenz, "Przybrany ojciec. Czesław Miłosz w Chinach," *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne:Seria Literacka* vol. 40 no. 60 (2011), p. 96.

[471] Joanna Krenz, "Przybrany ojciec. Czesław Miłosz w Chinach," p. 59.

[472] Joanna Krenz, "Przybrany ojciec. Czesław Miłosz w Chinach," p. 56.

community was distinctly hostile to the concept, many people in Poland itself found that it precisely described their own situation, giving a name to the habits of circumspection, camouflage and ideological disguise they employed in their everyday lives.

More than that, Miłosz's version of Ketman, with its expansive, almost metaphysical, notion of public censure giving rise to a kind of dual belief or philosophical schizophrenia, seemed, at mid-century, to apply to a whole host of regimes and social situations. As seen in the Indonesian example, not all of these examples fit categories delimited by the politics of Left and Right. These covered a wide gamut: from the experience of Soviet writers during the post-Stalin thaw, to the situation of Blacks in post-Reconstruction America, to the condition of the mental patient in the totalizing environment of the residential asylum.

While some of these resonant situations belonged to the wider 'totalitarian' or 'post-totalitarian' umbrella, others were to be found within the so-called 'Free World' itself. Ketman should thus be seen not as an isolated description of Stalinism in Eastern Europe, but as part of a wider pattern of social critique, While some of its strands explicitly name Ketman as a touchstone, others merely resemble it. All, however, share a certain feature: that of seeing a divided world through the prism of equally divided selves.

The Tertz Affair

Why was there never a Soviet equivalent of *The Captive Mind* ?

In 1961, Jerzy Giedroyc wanted to commission a Russian translation of the book (possibly from Andrzej Walicki), but nothing came of the project. Giedroyc later told Walicki that he became convinced that the book would be "incomprehensible" to a Russian reader, and that an analogous *Captive Mind* for the Soviet audience would have to be written by a Russian intellectual.[473]

Giedroyc's decision not to translate *The Captive Mind* into Russian is ironic, since at the very moment Giedroyc decided to call it off, he was engaged in an ambitious program of translating underground Russian literature *into* Polish. Indeed, in the first years of the Thaw, *Kultura* and its book publishing arm, the *Instytut Literacki*, became one of the main venues by which banned works smuggled out of the Soviet Union appeared in the West. Notably, they were among the first to issue *Doctor Zhivago* by Boris Pasternak and *The Gulag Archipelago* by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.[474] But in both of these endeavors, *Kultura* acted as one publisher among many. The real coup for the imprint came from a different, and wholly unexpected source.

Towards the end of 1958 (or possibly the beginning of 1959), Giedroyc received two manuscripts from the Soviet Union at his office in the headquarters of *Kultura* in Maisons-Laffitte outside Paris.[475] They arrived by diplomatic pouch. The courier was a woman named Hélène Zamoyska, née Peltier, a professor of Russian at the University of Toulouse whose father had served as a naval attaché to the French embassy in Moscow.

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[473] Andrzej Walicki, *Spotkania z Miłoszem*, p. 14.
[474] For a full account of Kultura's role in promoting Russian literature abroad, see ed. Piotr Mitzner, *Literatura rosyjska w kręgu "Kultury." W poszukiwaniu zatraconej solidarności*, (Warsaw: Instytut Książki: 2016).
[475] Czesław Miłosz tells the story of the Tertz Affair and his later friendship with Tertz/Sinyavsky in one of his last feuilletons, "Sprawa Terca," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, September 28, 2003.

The person who gave Peltier-Zamoyska the manuscripts made it a condition of their publication that they should only appear in venues "which did not attack the Soviet Union."[476] Because of this, Hélène passed one of the texts (*On Socialist Realism*) to the French literary journal *Esprit*. At the same time, she gave both to *Kultura*. Hélène knew its editor Jerzy Giedroyc (and his close friend and collaborator, Józef Czapski) through her husband, the Polish sculptor Count August Zamoyski. Giedroyc and Czapski impressed her with their sincere fondness for Russia and for Russian culture, an enthusiasm which they maintained despite suffering much at the hands of the Soviet Union (Czapski in particular narrowly avoided execution at Katyń, and then spent years imprisoned in various labor camps, an experience he described in his book *Inhuman Land*, which Zamoyska admired).[477]

Of the two manuscripts Giedroyc received, one a long essay on the nature of Soviet literary dogma entitled *On Socialist Realism*, was unsigned. The other manuscript, a satirical novella of contemporary Soviet life, told from multiple points of view and titled *The Trial Begins* (*Sud idet)*, bore the signature of one Abram Tertz (Terc in Polish). This was an obvious pseudonym, given that this is the name of one of the heroes of Odessan criminal songs (*blatnye pesni*).

Both texts were surprisingly frank for work by a young (according to Zamoyska) writer who had never left the Soviet Union. *On Socialist Realism* pointedly criticized the Stalin cult, attacked official Soviet aesthetics, and questioned the moral foundations of Communism itself, which it equated to a substitute religion, whose Bible was Stalin's *Short Course of the History of Communist Party of the Soviet Union*.[478] *The Trial Begins*, meanwhile, contained a scathing description of life in Moscow at the close of the Stalin years. Set during the time of the anti-Semitic Doctor's Plot, it portrayed an atmosphere of universal corruption and fear. It replaced the "positive characters" required by socialist realism with a variety of hypocrites, brutes, and vainglorious strivers, while its most idealistic characters – young people who genuinely believe in the promise of revolution – fall victim to the secret police. At the end of the book, one of them, a student named Seryozha, ends up in the Kolyma camps, along with a Jewish abortionist and the narrator/author himself.[479]

Giedroyc swiftly realized that if these two texts were truly written in the Soviet Union, he was sitting on a potential publishing sensation. He immediately went to work commissioning Polish translations for both from Józef Łobodowski. These appeared in 1959, in a special issue of *Kultura*.[480] Giedroyc then issued both works together in book form, with an introduction by Gustaw Herling-Grudziński. In this foreword, Herling-Grudziński places Tertz's work in a genealogy of political dystopias beginning with Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* and continuing through George Orwell's *1984*.[481] He also expressed surprise at how well the themes of the novella matched the thesis of the essay, whose main thrust was that all of Soviet culture and society had succumbed to a mania of teleology, sacrificing the present in pursuit of a glorious future, which it could never fully realize (at this point it was still not clear that they were by the same author).

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[476] *Sąd Idzie: Stenogram z Procesu A. Siniawskiego i J. Danila (A. Terca i M. Arżaka). Moskwa, Luty 1966.* (Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1966). Foreword by Hélène Zamoyska, p. 7.
[477] Hélène Zamoyska, "Foreward," p. 8.
[478] Abram Tertz, *The Trial Begins and On Socialist Realism*, (New York, Pantheon: 1960), pp. 154-59.
[479] Abram Tertz, *The Trial Begins and On Socialist Realism*, pp. 120-26.
[480] *Kultura* 46 (1959), "Sąd idzie" and "Co to jest realizm socjalistyczny?"
[481] Abram Terc, *Sąd Idzie. Co to jest Realizm Socjalistyczny,* (Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1959), p. 7.

The push behind Tertz/anonymous did not end there. In 1960, Giedroyc also devoted a special issue of *Kultura* – the first in its kind – to a Russian-language edition of *The Trial Begins*.

That same year, *On Socialist Realism* appeared in English translation with a foreword by Miłosz. In it, Miłosz blamed socialist realism for the "deaths of millions of men and women,"[482] and defended Tertz against the accusation that he was really a Western plant, using his pseudonym as cover to criticize the Soviet Union from outside. When *The Trial Begins* appeared in English in 1960, Pantheon gave the sensational subtitle, "a secret novel from young Russia." Over the course of the following year, Tertz's works appeared in twenty more languages.[483]

As interest in the Soviet writer grew, so did questions about his identity. Some of the suppositions made about Tertz were rather outlandish. Some said he was actually a White Army officer or a Polish Jew.[484] In 1961, Miłosz heard from Martin Malia, a Berkeley professor of Russian history, a rumor, (apparently started by Yevgeny Yevtushenko), that Abram Tertz was really a Russian émigré working at Oxford named Alexander Dolberg. This news briefly moved Miłosz to panic. "If Tertz is Dolberg, we've made clowns of ourselves,"[485] he wrote to Giedroyc. Further on in the same letter, Miłosz castigated Giedroyc for attaching too much hope to Russian reforms and recommended that *Kultura* should withdraw once and for all from interfering in internal Russian politics. But Giedroyc stuck to his guns. In an April 16, 1962 letter, the editor replied that he had already heard all the rumors, and that the only "iron proof" he could give Miłosz was Tertz's real name. He would not do this however, since doing so would expose the real Tertz to far worse harm than would be the case if he or she was in Poland.[486]

Giedroyc stuck by his author too. In a letter to the former Polish ambassador to Turkey, canvassing for Turkish-language publishers who would be interested in publishing Tertz's books, Giedroyc explained why his work was so significant: [Tertz] was "even more gripping politically than Pasternak, because he was in his thirties, and therefore 'fully Soviet.'"[487] Giedroyc withheld Tertz's work from Radio Liberty because he worried that featuring it on such an explicitly anti-Soviet medium might upset the writer and interrupt the flow of new work.[488]

And indeed, new work kept arriving. In 1961, *Kultura*'s Literary Institute published a collection of Tertz's short stories in Polish and Russian under the title *Fantastic Tales*.[489] These came

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[482] "Socialist realism is directly responsible for the deaths of millions of men and women, for it is based on the glorification of the state by the writer and artist, whose task it is to portray the power of the state as the greatest good, and to scorn the sufferings of the individual." Abram Tertz, *The Trial Begins and On Socialist Realism*, p. 134.

[483] Paweł Bem, "Jerzy Giedroyc – czytelnik i wydawca literatury rosyjskiej," in *Literatura rosyjska w kręgu "Kultury." W poszukiwaniu zatraconej solidarności* (Warsaw: Instytut Książki, 2016), p. 25.

[484] This last rumor was apparently started by Sinyavsky and his wife, Marija Rozanova, as a way of throwing the Soviet authorities off their scent. See Olga Matich, "Spokojnoj Noči: Andrei Sinjavskij's Rebirth as Abram Terc," *The Slavonic and East European Journal*, Vol. 33 (Spring, 1989), p. 59.

[485] Jerzy Giedroyc and Czesław Miłosz, *Listy 1952-1963,* ed. Marek Kornat, (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2008), pp. 619-20. Cited it Krzysztof Masłoń, "Ma się rozumieć: Edycja listów Jerzego Giedroycia i Czesława Miłosza," *Rzeczpospolita*, August 1, 2008.

[486] "W Zw[iązku] Sowieckim jest inaczej niż w Polsce i tam się więcej ryzykuje niż niedostaniem paszportu na wyjazd za granicę." Jerzy Giedroyc and Czesław Miłosz. *Listy 1952-1963*, p. 622.

[487] Paweł Bem, "Jerzy Giedroyc – czytelnik i wydawca literatury rosyjskiej," p. 25.

[488] Paweł Bem, "Jerzy Giedroyc – czytelnik i wydawca literatury rosyjskiej," p. 24.

[489] In Polish: *Opowieści fantastyczne*, Bibiloteka "Kultury," vol. 68, 1961. In Russian: *Fantasticzeskije powiestii*, Biblioteka Kultury, vol. 70, 1961.

equipped with a weighty, 70-page introductory essay by Aleksander Wat, a leading Futurist author and editor of literary journals of the interwar years who largely gave up writing after the introduction of Stalinism to Poland. This introduction, bearing the deceptively humble title of "Reading Tertz" ("Czytając Terca") was an important juncture in Wat's career. In the words of Wat's biographer, Tomas Venclova, it furnished Wat, then receiving treatment for a neurological disorder in the south of France, with an "opportunity to expound, for the first time, his long-incubated thoughts on the singular qualities of Stalinist doctrine and the character of Soviet art."[490]

In writing for a foreign journal,"Reading Tertz" also marked the first time Wat would be writing without a censor looking over his shoulder, a form of interference he was familiar from even before World War II, when he edited the Communist-sympathizing literary journal *Miesięcznik Literacki*. This new-found freedom of expression exhilarated him. In his notebooks, Wat wrote that he would at last be writing "without an internal or external censor," and with "his visor raised."[491] In a letter to Jerzy Giedroyc, reporting on his progress with the essay, Wat wrote that he was writing "drastically, honestly, scathingly, without a censor." In a similarly celebratory letter to Herling-Grudziński, Wat wrote that he had finally rid himself of his *cenzorka,* that "nucleus of servitude and fear, of looking all around and watching behind, unconscious and frozen."[492]

And yet, Wat was still afraid. According to Herling-Grudziński, he wrote "Reading Tertz" while "dying of fright."[493] The public manifestation of this fear was Wat's insistence on using a pseudonym for the essay, in this case that of Stefan Bergholz. But in this case – and quite unlike Tertz – the secrecy involved was short-lived. Immediately after the publication of "Reading Tertz," Wat sent out a "mass of letters" to his friends asking what they thought about the sudden appearance of this "new star of Polish-essay writing by the name of Stefan Bergholz."[494] (There was a humorous side to Wat's disguise as well. In another letter to Herling-Grudziński, Wat informs him that, to the best of his knowledge, Bergholz "recently lost his job as an actuary at a Montpellier insurance company," was on "his third or fourth marriage," but, in spite of it all, still "enjoyed playing dominoes."[495])

Despite his own insistence on remaining masked, Wat opens his introduction to the *Fantastic Tales* by asking "Who is Abram Tertz?"[496] Wat then proceeds to weigh various factors in favor or against his being Jewish. On one hand, the most "elementary demands of conspiracy" demand that an Abram Abramovich should really be an Ivan Ivanonovich. On the other hand, he writes, there exists an even higher level of conspiracy, of the kind suggested by G.K. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday*, according to which the best disguise is precisely the *least* disguise. After all, who would believe, in a country "as anti-Semitic as the Soviet Union," that Abram was really an Abram?

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[490] Tomas Venclova, *Aleksander Wat: Life and Art of an Iconoclast,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 246.
[491] "Z podniesioną przyłbicą." Piotr Bogalecki, "Usługi bezimienne." Figura marana w twórczości Aleksandra Wata," *Pamiętnik Literacki* 4, (2019), p. 84.
[492] Piotr Bogalecki, "Usługi bezimienne," p. 84.
[493] Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, "Dziennik Pisany Nocą," *Kultura*, 1994, n. 5, p. 32.
[494] Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, "Dziennik Pisany Nocą," p. 32.
[495] Piotr Bogalecki, "Usługi bezimienne," p. 84.
[496] Aleksander Wat, *Świat na haku i pod kluczem*, (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1991), p. 82.

Proceeding to an analysis of the stories themselves, Wat/Bergholz perceives in them a mélange of characteristically Jewish and Russian elements: “Jewish mutterwitz as well as truly Muscovite sarcasm, and Jewish hysteria side by side with muzhik coarseness.” This consideration leads Wat to consider possible Jewish parallels in Tertz’s texts, and to follow him in proposing a series of Biblical equivalents for Soviet figures, such as Stalin as the “incarnation of Moses” and the “Soviet Noah,” and the socialist dream of world peace as the “lion lying down next to the lamb.”

From there, Wat moves on to Tertz’s “identification of the Inquisition with Catholicism,” behind which he sees the example of Dostoevsky Grand Inquisitor from *The Brothers Karamazov*. The Inquisition becomes a distillation of the condition of life under communism. For Wat, the “totality” of this experience has a one public side, consisting of a historically unique perversion of speech, an “enormous enterprise of denaturing language,”[497] and a second, private one, in which a miniature Inquisitor installs himself in the mind of every writer, forcing them into self-censorship. The only escape for the writer then becomes a practice of “continuous camouflage.” This could be done by “writing with the left hand”[498] or by using “winking words,” with one meaning for the man on the street and another “esoteric” one for the “initiated.”[499] Alluding to the work of religious heretics, Wat points out that such things are “well known in Judeo-Hellenic tradition and from Christian theology.”

Moreover, in Wat’s opinion, practice in this kind of concealment was a necessary precondition for creating a genuine work of art about the Stalin years. At the outset of “Reading Tertz,” he relates the judgment of a Polish writer who had spent years “writing for the shelf” during the Bierut years, who was now convinced that only those writers who had paid their dues in the system, and “experienced, in their own practice, the mechanisms of captivity, self-abnegation, alienation, *doublethink*, and Ketman” had a chance of creating “revelatory literature.”[500]

Wat’s own ‘camouflage’ came to an end shortly after the publication of “Reading Tertz.” In July 1962, Wat presented a paper at an Oxford conference on Soviet literature which developed many of the ideas present in his introductory essay to the *Fantastic Tales*. Titled “Some Notes on the Relations between Literature and Soviet Reality, a few months later it appeared (in shortened form), in an issue of *Dialogue*, a publication of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Paris. This decision brought Wat to a major crossroads. In Venclova’s words, “contributing to this strictly anti-Communist venture was virtually synonymous with breaking with the regime."[501] In 1963, while still in France, Wat and his wife Ola applied for, and received, refugee status. One of their first destinations was Berkeley, California, to which they had been invited by Gleb Struve, who had been impressed by Wat’s presentation in Oxford the year before. Wat spent the next year and half in Berkeley as a guest of the Slavic department. This was the time when Miłosz recorded the reminiscences which would become Wat’s final masterpiece, the memoir *My Century*.

Sinyavsky/Tertz’s performance as a split subject seems to have rubbed off on Wat, or at least confirmed him in his prior convictions. For instance, while narrating his time working for the newspaper *Red Standard* in Soviet-occupied Lwów in 1939-1940, Wat describes a moment when

[497] Aleksander Wat, *Świat na haku i pod kluczem*, p. 49.
[498] Aleksander Wat, *Świat na haku i pod kluczem*, p. 86.
[499] Aleksander Wat, *Świat na haku i pod kluczem*, p. 37.
[500] He felt that they had wasted this chance however. Aleksander Wat, *Świat na haku i pod kluczem*, p. 80.
[501] Tomas Venclova, *Aleksander Wat: Life and Art of an Iconoclast,* p. 246.

Party “inquisitors” came to question the paper’s staff about their political backgrounds. Wat was terrified. There had already been one purge of the editorial staff, and if he were deported, his wife Ola and infant son would be left on their own. He decided that the only remedy was to perform an act of self-criticism (the “only one” in his life). To Wat, it felt like “splitting myself in two.”

> You’re there, it’s your turn in five minutes, and during those five minutes you have to split yourself into two distinct entities. Like a guillotine. You have to sever one part from the other. And you have to feel that split within yourself because otherwise it doesn’t work and you foul up. The inquisitors have excellent eyes and sharp ears. I remember glancing at my watch and saying to myself: I’m going to have to talk in five minutes. And during those five minutes I had to perform inner surgery. I really could feel something tearing inside me. The actor, Aleksander Wat, was there, and I was also there in the wings, an eye that watched the actor move, speak – his gestures, intonations, everything.[502]

At the same moment as Wat was dictating his life story, Abram Tertz was himself on the cusp of being unmasked. Tertz’s real name was Andrei Sinyavsky. He was born in 1925, to a peasant mother and a noble father, who had been heavily involved in the Left Socialist-Revolutionary Party during the Revolution and Civil War. He was not Jewish, or a gangster. Trained as a philologist, with a specialization in the literature of the Silver Age and 1920s, Andrei was an employee of the Gorky Institute of World Literature in Moscow and was one of the Soviet Union’s leading literary critics, although he frequently had trouble getting his academic work published. This was particularly true when the subject was of one of Sinyavsky’s great passions – the work of Boris Pasternak. A major essay of his on Pasternak’s poetry, written in 1957, a year before the *Zhivago* scandal, had to wait until 1965 to before it could appear in print.[503]

By that time, Sinyavsky’s disguise as Tertz was wearing dangerously thin. He had spent the years since he had first sent his manuscripts abroad in 1956 waiting to be arrested. And indeed it was the case that the KGB had been looking for him ever since his first texts appeared in *Kultura* and *Esprit* in 1959. In 1960, they even sent someone to the Gorky Institute to canvas the scholars of the Soviet literature section about the authors’ possible identity. Sinyavsky sat in the audience while this expert read aloud from his (or Tertz’s) work, which she had translated back into Russian from French.

After the talk, one of Sinyavsky’s co-workers at the Institute told him confidently that the supposedly ‘dissident’ work had to be fake:

> “I’ve got it Andrei! I figured it out from the style. In reality there’s no such person as Tertz. He’s a fiction! A forgery! Fabricated by some clever Western journalist. The quotes gave him away. Who could imagine a writer living in the Soviet Union, who knows our country, history and psychology, all of a sudden portraying Stalin with a “mystical mustache?” The mentality is all wrong! Exactly the kind of lapse a foreigner would make![504]

[502] Aleksander Wat, *My Century*, p. 103.
[503] Olga Matich, “Spokojnoj Noči: Andrei Sinjavskij’s Rebirth as Abram Terc,” p. 59.
[504] Abram Tertz (Andrei Sinyavsky), *Goodnight!*, (New York: Viking, 1989), p. 96.

Another of Sinyavsky's colleagues, somewhat more discerningly, countered that this was all rubbish, and that "Tertz is clearly from here," reasoning that "they wouldn't be making all that fuss if he weren't." He thought the authorities were merely "sending out a signal" and that Tertz would be "arrested soon enough."[505]

In actual fact, Sinvavsky/Tertz wasn't arrested until September of 1965, when he was apprehended along with his friend Yuli Daniel, (pseudonym Nikolai Arzhak), another writer who smuggled his work abroad to be published in *Kultura* and other Western venues. The ensuing trial of the two writers was a pivotal event of the 1960s. Neither Daniel nor Sinyavsky pleaded guilty. By openly confronting the court, they defied the conventions of Soviet political trials. In the process, they also brought the hidden world of the intelligentsia out into the open. The universe of the 'internal émigré' – a whole world of private friendships, secret conversations and manuscripts written for the drawer – stood suddenly exposed in the light of day. In Olga Matich's words, this "marked a revolutionary change in Soviet dissident discourse."[506] For many, this seemed to signal the end of the Thaw as a whole, and inaugurate a new phase of cultural repression associated with the Brezhnev era.

It also proved to be enormously costly for Sinyavsky himself. Charged with producing anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda, he received a sentence of seven years of hard labor. It was the first time in Soviet history that a writer was convicted solely on the basis of their published work. Sinyavsky ultimately served five and a half years in the Dubravlag camp in Mordovia, an experience which became the basis for his polyphonic memoir, *A Voice from the Chorus* (1973). The years spent in the camp also gave ample time for Sinyavsky to reflect on the complex nature of his dual identity as Tertz *and* Sinyavsky, the writer and the scholar, the law-abiding citizen and the secret dissident.[507]When Sinyavsky was released – a year and a half early – he found that freedom came hard to him. He wished he still possessed his "cap of invisibility, my good old Abram Tertz mask."[508] He could not put it on, however, since while Sinyavsky was free, Tertz was still in jail.

However, in his later career as an émigré writer, Sinyavsky did not abandon his alter ego. Tertz eventually escaped imprisonment, and rejoined his partner in the West. Like Gogol's Nose or Dostoevsky's Double, Tertz continued to live and breathe independently of his creator/parent. Many (though not all) of the works Sinyavsky wrote while living in France were penned by Tertz. This included all of his (their) fiction, and the most provocative of his critical works, such as *Strolls with Pushkin*, which he began in the Dubrovalag, and which drew comparisons to Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* when it first appeared in print in the Soviet Union in 1989.[509]

Tertz was a different kind of writer than Sinyavsky: more imaginative, more fantastical, and much, much more polemical. He was also different physically and morally. Sinyavsky was short, modest, bearded, quiet and boring; the very picture of a self-effacing, spectacles-wearing scholar.

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[505] Abram Tertz (Andrei Sinyavsky), *Goodnight!*, p. 97.
[506] Olga Matich, "Spokojnoj Noči: Andrei Sinjavskij's Rebirth as Abram Terc," p. 59.
[507] Although, as Catharine Theimer Nepomnyashchy points out, the split was never quite so even. Especially after his release, Sinyavsky signed both critical works as both Sinyavsky and Tertz. However, only Tertz wrote fiction. See "Sinyavsky/Tertz: The Evolution of the Writer in Exile," in *Humanities in Society* 7, No. 3–4 (Summer–Fall 1984), p. 125.
[508] Abram Tertz (Andrei Sinyavsky), *Goodnight!*, p. 23.
[509] Andrei Sinyavsky, *Strolls with Pushkin*, (New York: Columbia University Press: 2016), p. vii.

Tertz, by contrast, was tall and slim, had a rakish mustache and all the self-assurance of a born thief. In his autobiographical novel *Goodnight!*, Sinyavsky described Tertz as follows:

> I can see him as if it were just yesterday – a crook, a cardshark, a real son of a bitch, his hands in his pants pockets, his mustache stringy, his cap snapped down over his eyes, walking with a light step, shuffling his feet a little, tender obscenities on his chapped lips, his body honed by years of polemics and stylistic contradictions. A trim man, gruff, he pulls his knife out at the drop of a hat. He'll steal, but he'll croak before he'll squeal. All business. A good man with a pen – and, my dear children, in underworld slang "pen" means "knife." That's right, "knife."[510]

Although he was a literary creation, Tertz's existence was not confined to the page. According to his friend and translator Catherine Theimer Nepomnyashchy, Sinyavsky could summon his double at will by "slouching his shoulders, letting his perennial cigarette droop from his lips at a rakish angle, shoving his hands into his pockets, and scuffing his feet."[511] "The transformation," which normally took place after a glass or two of wine, "was as striking and comical as it was instantaneous." The figure of the kindly, stooped, white-bearded Professor Sinyavsky disappeared, replaced by the Jewish gangster with a mischievous glint in his eyes.

In *Goodnight!*, Sinyavsky writes that if it had not been for their sudden exposure by the secret police, he and Tertz could have kept their secret indefinitely. They would have "cohabited peacefully," with each man practicing his own profession as "inveterate thief and outlaw" and "honest intellectual," without disturbing one another or anyone else in their quiet "Soviet oblivion."[512] But if Tertz didn't ever need to surface, why did Andrei Sinyavsky adopt his "split personality" in the first place?

During his trial, Sinyavsky struggled to explain the thinking behind his choice of pseudonym. He told the prosecutor that it was just a name he liked, and that it was impossible for him to "explain it rationally."[513] Hélène Zamoyska (née Peltier), who helped Sinyavsky smuggle his manuscripts to the West, thought Tertz was a product of the Thaw. She recalled that in 1956, "manuscripts were circulating everywhere" in the Soviet Union, as the country was "seized with a desire to talk about years full of 'tears, blood and fear.'"[514] She saw the double as something of a crutch, an aid to help Sinyavsky be "himself in front of other people." According to her, Sinyavsky "needed Tertz not to deny himself, but to fulfill himself." Writing in 1966, she expected that Tertz "would have to die"[515] after the trial, and that Sinyavsky even wished for this to happen, and was relieved to have been exposed for this very reason.

Although subsequent events would prove Zamoyska wrong about Sinyavsky's willingness to part with his alter ego, it's worth pausing here to examine her recollections of the writer as a

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[510] Abram Tertz (Andrei Sinyavsky), *Goodnight!*, p. 9.
[511] Catharine Theimer Nepomnyashchy, "Andrei Donatovich Sinyavsky (1925-1997)," *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Autumn, 1998), p. 367.
[512] Abram Tertz (Andrei Sinyavsky), *Goodnight!*, p. 9.
[513] *Sąd Idzie: Stenogram z Procesu A. Siniawskiego i J. Danila (A. Terca i M. Arżaka). Moskwa, Luty 1966.* (Paris: Instytut Literacki), p. 55.
[514] Hélène Zamoyska, "Foreward," p. 12.
[515] Hélène Zamoyska, "Foreward," p. 13.

young man. Hélène met Sinyavsky in 1947, when they were both nineteen and students of literature at Moscow State University. She was in the Soviet Union only temporarily, as the daughter of the French naval attache, and experienced the country as an exotic departure from her everyday life in France. Sinyavsky, by contrast, had been molded by Soviet ideals from birth. His father, a nobleman from Syrzan who married a peasant woman out of his political convictions as a member of Left Socialist Revolutionaries, imparted on Andrei a deep (if sometimes, eccentrically expressed) reverence for the achievements of the Russian Revolution.

Peltier-Zamoyska remembered the teenaged Sinyavsky as an ardent patriot and a fully-believing Komsomol member. He believed in the values of the revolution with an "almost religious faith."[516] The very word 'revolution' stirred a deep emotional response in Sinyavsky; he associated it with the beginning of a more just, more humane world. Revolution was necessary to "renew the cosmos." Moreover, Sinyavsky believed that historical progress on such a scale "demanded human victims." Hélène remembered that one of their first discussions at the Moscow University literature faculty concerned Ivan's questions from the *Brothers Karamazov*: "was it permissible to build a crystal palace on a child's corpse?"[517] Sinyavsky's answer was yes. As he wrote in *Goodnight*, he possessed a "highly elevated revolutionary morality," which was ready, if need be, to "sacrifice man temporarily for the sake of his future, universal resurrection."[518]

However, even in 1947, some doubts were starting to appear in the mind of the convinced *Komsomolets*. One source of this doubt was aesthetic. Sinyavsky felt himself overwhelmingly drawn to the paintings of Picasso and Van Gogh, to which he had been introduced, in the form of photo-reproductions, by his friend, a thrillingly precocious poet and fellow Moscow University student named Sergei Grigor'evich Khmel'nitskii. The contrast between their daring modernism and the prevailing conservatism of the Zhdanov era introduced opened a "split in his values." Sinyavsky's friendship with Hélène likewise disturbed his previously secure worldview. Her openly professed Catholicism, which to Sinyavsky seemed as "remote as the word 'catacomb'" and conjured exotic associations to Jesuits and the Inquisition, was a particular challenge to his convictions. Sinyavsky's friendship with Hélène Peltier would soon have much more drastic consequences for his life as a Soviet citizen. In 1948, he was recruited by the Soviet security police to spy on Hélène (who was, after all, the daughter of the French naval attaché). He was also pressured to begin a romance with her, with the hopes of using it to blackmail her in the future. So began Sinyavsky's long night of the soul. After much anguished deliberation, he resolved to tell Hélène everything. He managed to do this, while under surveillance, in the course of a rendezvous in a Moscow. park. Fortunately for Sinyavsky, Hélène immediately believed his story, and allowed him to perform a lover's quarrel, staged in order to convince his handlers that they were no longer having a relationship.

The ruse worked – at least temporarily. However, in 1952, Sinyavsky was again made to collaborate with the MVD in their pursuit of Peltier-Zamoyska. By this time, Hélène was no longer in the Soviet Union. Sinyavsky was flown out to Prague and then escorted by train to Vienna where he was to meet with Hélène. As before, Sinyavsky managed to alert her to the danger under the eyes of the waiting agents. The story of the clandestine trip forms the end of the

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[516] Hélène Zamoyska, "Foreward," p. 9.
[517] Hélène Zamoyska, "Foreward," p. 10.
[518] Abram Tertz (Andrei Sinyavsky), *Goodnight!*, p. 322.

final chapter of *Goodnight!* The memoir includes information he didn't possess in the moment – most crucially, that the whole time Sinyavsky was pretending to work for the MVD, his close childhood friend Khmel'nitskii, who had first introduced him to masterpieces of modern art and become, in the process, "a kind of guru for him,"[519] was working for them in earnest.

Khmel'nitskii was by this time a practiced informer. He spied on Hélène as well as on many of their mutual friends at the University. In autumn of 1949, their fellow MGU students Vladimir Kabo and Yuri Bregel were arrested and sentenced to ten years in prison camp for anti-Soviet activities on the basis of Khmel'nitskii's fabricated evidence. [520] In addition to inventing crimes, Khmel'nitskii's also acted as a provocateur. He had a habit of saying outrageously anti-Soviet things, and daring his friends to match him. His provocations also had an artistic dimension: Yuli Daniel got the idea for his most provocative story, "*Govorit Moskva*," in which Radio Moscow announces a "public murder day," from Khmel'nitskii, as both men declared during Daniel's trial. (Khmel'nitskii also seems to have played a role in Daniel and Sinyavsky's exposure in 1965, though the precise nature of his involvement remains unclear).[521]

In *Goodnight!*, Khmel'nitskii (under the name Serezha or 'S.') appears as a Faustian figure, possessed of an extraordinary talent and vision and no moral center whatsoever. In Olga Matich's phrase, he is the novel's "Dostoevskian villain,"[522] part evil genius and part demonic tempter. With his dark, 'Assyrian' (read: Jewish) looks, we might also view him as a sinister mirror image of the imaginary Abram Tertz. Within the fabric of the novel, Serezha is the infernal counterpart to the angelic Hélène. Together, they wage a battle over Sinyavsky's soul, which concludes with him converting from revolutionary positivism to "a new Christian artistic truth."

But if Khmel'nitskii's betrayal and the plot against Hélène marked the beginning of Sinyavsky's break with Soviet ideology, his emergence as a writer has its roots in a different event. In 1951, Sinyavsky's father Donat was arrested in connection with his Socialist-Revolutionary past. Donat was away from home at the time, but Andrei was present for the police search of the apartment. During the search, one of the policemen took a particular interest in Andrei's homework, and needled him in a threatening way about the "official definition" of socialist realism he had written down in his notes: "So that means in your opinion, there is also an unofficial definition of socialist realism? … Well?!..."[523] Sinyavsky credits this moment with planting the seed which would later blossom into Tertz's "scandalous essay" on socialist realism.

In *Goodnight!*, Sinyavsky presents the night of the search as the crucial moment in his life as a writer: "The doorbell rings. Surname? Christian name? Date of birth? This is when you begin to

[519] Christopher Harwood, "Rereading Andrei Sinyavsky's *Goodnight*," *Ulbandus Review* 18 (2016), p. 9.
[520] Kevin Windle, "The Belly of the Whale Revisited," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 76:1 (1998), p. 7. Kabo and Bregel exposed Khmel'nitskii's actions as an informer when they returned from prison in 1954 following the 1953 amnesty for political prisoners. Sinyavsky and Daniel continued to associate with him however.
[521] The Khmel'nitskii story has a complicated coda. While an émigré in Paris in the 1970s, Sinyavsky was widely suspected of having worked (and possibly still working) as a spy for the KGB. Meanwhile, after many years of self-imposed exile in Central Asia, Khmel'nitskii himself resurfaced in Berlin in the 1980s, claiming that he never willingly denounced anyone, and only ever spied on duress (including threats on his life). The ensuing controversy, which included statements from Bregel and Kabo, is ably dissected by Kevin Windle in "The Belly of the Whale Revisited," (op. cit.).
[522] Olga Matich, "Spokojnoj Noči: Andrei Sinjavskij's Rebirth as Abram Terc," p. 51.
[523] Abram Tertz (Andrei Sinyavsky), *Goodnight!*, p. 195.

write."[524] When Sinyavsky's father emerged from prison several months later, he was profoundly disturbed. Something during his internment (possibly electroconvulsive treatments?) left him convinced that the KGB had developed a device which could listen in on his thoughts. This machine appears in *The Trial Begins* as the "psychoscope,"[525] the hopeful dream of two secret police officers who want to detect in advance every "ideologically negative thought," even among people who "don't put down their thoughts in writing."

At this moment, for Sinyavsky father and son, the private sphere had collapsed into nothing. Secret policemen had read through his coursework, exploited his friendships, and arrested his father. Now, at least in his father's mind, they had penetrated their very thoughts. Sinyavsky later identified himself as a "writer connected with a definite period," in his case, the late 1940s and start of the 1950s, or "the epoch of mature, late-flowering Stalinism."[526] And indeed, we can now see that it was this crucible of Late Stalinism which gave rise to his dual persona, a form of split personality which externalized the "spiritual schizophrenia" and made it manifest in two separate authorial personalities. Abram Tertz, that authorial Golem, was born of that era's mix of harassment, surveillance, and manipulation, coupled with the galvanizing emotion of a faith betrayed.

Asylums

When the work of the first wave of Soviet dissidents made itself known in the West in the late 1950s, it joined an already-existing literature which tried to make sense of local institutions and beliefs through the prism of a totalitarian other. Many of these works took a genealogical approach, and most were penned by refugees from the Weimar Republic. Often, these projects centered around themes of duplicity, deception, and social isolation.

Already in the early 1930s, Leo Strauss, then in France, at the start of his exile from Germany, which would continue with stops in New York and Chicago, had begun his project of re-writing the history of philosophy as a story of persecution and concealment, in which virtually all the 'true philosophers' throughout history hid their genuine, 'esoteric' wisdom behind a scrim of 'exoteric' teachings.[527] At about the same time, Norbert Elias, also in exile, first in Paris then London, was setting down the first draft of what was to become *The Court Society*.[528] In this book, Elias located the rise of modern selfhood in the acute self-consciousness generated by life at Versailles and its mirror courts; the constant interplay of surveillance and artifice, simulation and dissimulation experienced by the courtier was for him the crucible of the modern, plastic self.

A decade later, but writing about events closer to her own present, Hanna Arendt found the origins of totalitarianism itself in a long process of social atomization, resulting, on one hand, in a disaggregated citizenry, unable to coordinate action or thought, and on the other, in a populace

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[524] Abram Tertz (Andrei Sinyavsky), *Goodnight!*, p. xi.
[525] Abram Tertz (Andrei Sinyavsky), *The Trial Begins*, p. 95. In his Polish-language preface to the novella, Gustaw Herling-Grudziński seized on this detail as being typical of the "classical totalitarian utopias" found in in Orwell and Zamyatin.
[526]Abram Tertz (Andrei Sinyavsky), *Goodnight!*, p. 266
[527] Leo Strauss, "Persecution and the Art of Writing," in Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1980), pp. 22-37.
[528] Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).

that was desperate for meaning, and eager to embrace mass movements as a way of satisfying this craving.[529] Arendt completed *The Origins of Totalitarianism* before Miłosz finished *The Captive Mind*, yet she quickly became aware of its arguments after it appeared in English. In 1955, she assigned it as one of the required readings for a course on "Contemporary Issues" taught through the UC Berkeley Political Science department. She also included the following question on the final exam: ""Explain why intellectuals can be attracted to a totalitarian ideology" (use Miłosz)."[530]

Although all these books were epoch-making in their way, all were also historical and backwards-facing in their approach. None attempted to fuse insights drawn from the study of totalitarianism with an empirical look at the present life of American society (though this was something Arendt would later pursue in works such as *The Human Condition*). This was something the Canadian-born sociologist Erving Goffman excelled at however. His 1961 book *Asylums Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates* was a milestone for considering Western institutions in light of what was then known about life beyond the Iron Curtain. In particular, it drew inspiration from the ideas on the relation between self and situation contained in *The Captive Mind*.

Goffman based *Asylums* on a year's fieldwork conducted between 1955 and 1956 at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington D.C., a major institution housing over 7000 patients, drawn from the District of Columbia.[531] He started out at the hospital in the role of "assistant to the athletic director," but he did not spend much time with other members of the staff. Throughout his stay, the focus of Goffman's fieldwork was on the situation of the patients: their struggles, their inner lives, and their sources of social meaning. In doing so, Goffman wanted to understand what he called "total institutions."

Goffman defined total institutions as "a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life."[532] A total institution thus is one that fully envelops its subjects, keeping them confined in space and regulated over the entire course of their days. Prisons are a paradigmatic example of a total institution, but hardly the only one. Goffman lists merchant ships, tuberculosis sanitaria, concentration camps, military academies, monasteries, and mental hospitals as kindred types of "segregated establishments." Goffman built up his portrait of total institutions from a dizzying range of printed sources, among them George Orwell's description of his boarding school days, Herman Melville's time on board a whaler, and an American psychiatrist's report on the experiences of prisoners in Chinese "thought reform" or "brainwashing" camps.[533]

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[529] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* , (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1951).
[530] Hannah Arendt, "Contemporary Issues, undergraduate seminar," *Hannah Arendt Papers: Subject File, 1949-1975; Courses; University of California, Berkeley, Calif.; "Contemporary Issues," undergraduate seminar, 1955*. https://www.loc.gov/resource/mss11056dig.040540/?sp=7&st=image
[531] Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates*, (Anchor Books: 1961), p. ix.
[532] Erving Goffman, *Asylums*, p. xiii.
[533] There's an interesting story here. See R. Lifton, "Thought Reform of Western Civilians in Chinese Communist Prisons," *Psychiatry*, 16 (1956), pp. 173-195.

The backbone of *Asylums*, however, comes from his own experiences as a visitor and observer inside St. Elizabeth's. His interest in what he saw there was primarily with the way in which the mental hospital (and by extension, the total institution as a category) acted on the selves of the patients interred there. In his words, mental hospitals, like all total institutions, act as "forcing houses for changing persons," making them "a natural experiment on what can be done to the self."[534]

Within the hospital, patients first had to cope with the loss of their status as self-possessed adults, and of the loss of all the capacities, such "self-determination, autonomy [or] freedom of action," which went with it. They subsequently learned to treat their selves as infinitely plastic and mutable. Each inmate learns "that a defensible picture of self can be seen as something outside oneself that can be constructed, lost, and rebuilt, all with great speed and some equanimity."[535] Repeated cycles of degradation and reconstruction leads them to practice the "amoral arts of shamelessness." In Goffman's generous vision, even these petty responses can act as a crucible for new social formations.

While at St. Elizabeth's, Goffman paid particular attention to how the treatment of the patients by their physicians, psychiatrists, wardens and other staff members shaped their self-perception. He was equally interested in the ways in which the patients acted *against* the pervasive atmosphere of judgment and disciplining, or the entire "enveloping tissue of constraint," they found themselves trapped inside of. In Goffman's analysis, both processes – of adaptation and reaction – powerfully shaped the patients' inner lives.

It was this second process, of subtle subversion and inner distancing which he describes by the catch-all term of "secondary adjustments", which especially captured Goffman's interest. While these kinds of responses are especially visible within the confines of a mental hospital, they can be found "in more benign and less totalistic institutions as well. Indeed, for Goffman, every institution which tries to imprint itself on people creates, in the process, an "underlife," or negative image of itself. Business associations produce rackets. Dry counties generate speakeasies. Marital vows produce infidelity: "where enthusiasm is expected, there will be apathy; where loyalty, there will be disaffection; where attendance, absenteeism; where robustness, some kind of illness; where deeds are to be done, varieties of inactivity."[536]

Drawing on his observations from the mental hospital, and abstracting them to the world at large, Goffman paints a complex picture of the self as at once adaptive and reactive. He criticizes the sociological profession for focusing too much on the group, for while belonging to a group or organization gives people a sense of their place in the world, but "reserving something of oneself from the clutch of an institution"[537] likewise contributes to one's sense of self. "Secondary adjustments" are thus not just defense mechanisms, but "essential constituents of the self." It is precisely in withholding, creating distance, and building "defenses against his social bondedness" that a person creates their subjecthood. As Goffman puts it in a poetic final

[534] Erving Goffman, *Asylums*, p. 12.
[535] Erving Goffman, *Asylums*, p. 165.
[536] Erving Goffman, *Asylums*, p. 305.
[537] Erving Goffman, *Asylums*, p. 319.

sentence, “Our status is backed by the the solid buildings of the world, while our sense of personal identity often resides in the cracks.”[538]

In drawing this picture of the self as caught between identification and opposition, Goffman leans heavily on *The Captive Mind*. Arguing that it is “*against something* [italics in original] that the self can emerge,” he quotes the crucial passage in the chapter on Ketman which explains it in precisely these terms:

> In short, Ketman means self-realization *against* something. He who practices Ketman suffers because of the obstacles he meets; but if these obstacles were suddenly to be removed, he would find himself in a void which might perhaps prove much more painful. Internal revolt is sometimes essential to spiritual health, and can create a particular form of happiness. What can be said openly is often much less interesting that the emotional magic of defending one’s private sanctuary.[539]

Goffman then comments that he has spent the book arguing that the same is true of total institutions, that the lives of the mental patient, merchant seaman, nun, army cadet and prisoner are all governed by an interplay between outward compliance and inner revolt – a type of rebellion which means much more to the person practicing it than to the surrounding institution. Goffman then asks whether, if this is the case in regard to total institutions, “may this not be the situation, however, in free society, too?”

Here the chain of likenesses comes to its logical end: If mental hospitals resemble Stalinist Poland, might not the whole world resemble a mental hospital?

Kołakowski and the Heretics

In the early 1960s, the Polish philosopher and historian of philosophy Leszek Kołakowski took up another strand of Cantimori’s work, and likewise used the historical circumstances of Christian heretics in the past to make an oblique comment on his own status as an intellectual in an ideologically-charged regime. Having begun his career with a master’s thesis on Spinoza, Kołakowski followed this up with an examination of various lesser-known but equally heterodox figures from the later 17th century, among whom were Madame Guyon, Jean-Joseph Surin, Antoinette Bourignon, Jean de Labadie, and Angelus Silesius. Mostly French (though often popular in the Netherlands), and often, initially Jesuits, these figures were mystics and pietists who strayed outside of the bounds of Catholicism or Lutheranism and found themselves, for various reasons, either on opposite sides of the Protestant-Catholic split or without a church at all. If the Nicodemism of the 16th century opened the way to a spiritualist religion which was indifferent to creed, these were some of the men and women who walked through that door. They, in turn, paved the way for the turn towards libertinage and outright atheism of the following century. This movement-without-a-name was thus a missing link in the history of secularization and the development of the Enlightenment.

Kołakowski published his vast study of these mostly forgotten figures in Poland in 1965 as *Świadomość religijna i więź kościelna: studia nad chreścijańhstwem bezwyznaniowym*

[538] Erving Goffman, *Asylums*, p. 320.
[539] Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, p. 76, cited in Erving Goffman, *Asylums*, p. 320.

siedemnastego wieku, [Religious Consciousness and Church Ties: Studies on Non-denominational Christianity of the 17th Century].[540] When it was published in French translation in 1970, it received more resonant title of *Chrétiens sans Église*. In those intervening five years, Kołakowski had been fired from his professorship at the University of Warsaw in connection with the March events of 1968. Because of this, early reviewers of the book in France were not sure how to read it.

Henry Mottu, writing in the *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie*, confidently proclaimed that it was a "work with a key, which must be read between the lines."[541] Despite being largely devoted to 17th century Catholic mystics, he took it as self-evident that the real subject of the book was the quest for a heterodox or non-institutional Marxism. Written at a time when "almost all Marxists and Christians live, under different auspices certainly, a sort of exile outside the institutions which formed them," according to Mottu the book bore a secret subtitle: *Marxists without a party*.

Writing in the *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, Jean-Robert Armogathe took the exact opposite tack.[542] He began his review by worrying that the book was "a work of compensation" by the recently exiled professor. Should it be read "*en filigrane*," with the story of "the struggle for the freedom of intellectuals in a communist country," standing behind the quarrels of the mystics with church? Armogathe answered his own question with a resounding "no:" Kołakowski's work was an estimable study of the Second Reformation, and especially valuable on religious currents within the Dutch Republic, which "fortunately" had nothing to say about the present.

This lack of clarity about Kołakowski's purpose in writing *Chrétiens sans Église* has lasted up to the present. Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, perhaps today's leading scholar of early-modern religious dissimulation, feels confident that the work deserves a "Straussian-type reading between the lines."[543]Along these lines, he asks whether or not it should be viewed as "a sort of masked archeology of the Christian roots of communism, both in its initial revolutionary form and in its state institutionalization through the imposition of the single party."Cavaillé goes so far as to wonder whether or not the Kołakowski of *Chrétiens sans Église* should be read as an "*homme double*," in the tradition of "K*etman*, analyzed in Czesław Miłosz's *Captive Mind*."

In keeping with the idea of Ketman, Kołakowski never quite admitted whether his history of non-denominational Christianity was meant as a veiled account of contemporary struggles for the 'soul' of Marxism. But he did hint at it. In a 2012 interview, his student Krzysztof Pomian described *Chrétiens sans Église* as a "book with keys."[544] According to Pomian, it was received as such in Polish academia during the 1960s. He even began a review of it, entitled "The apparatus and the intellectuals." He showed a draft to Kołakowski, who responded, laughingly,

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[540] Leszek Kołakowski, *Świadomość religijna i więź kościelna : studia nad chreścijańskim bezwyznaniowym siedemnastego wieku,* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1965).
[541] Henry Mottu, "Chrétiens sans Église' de Kolakowski, *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie*, Troisième série, Vol. 23, No. 4 (1973), p. 308.
[542] Jean-Robert Armogathe, "Chrétiens sans Église. La conscience religieuse et le lien confessionnel au XVII e siècle," *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, Vol. 68 (1970), p. 264.
[543] Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, "Leszek Kołakowski, *Chrétiens sans Église*: Histoire paradoxale de la déconfessionnalisation et instabilités méthodologiques," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 166: 2014
[544] Frederique Matonti, "Kołakowski le Polonais, au miroir français. Dialogue avec Krysztof Pomian," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 59, No. 166 (2014), pp. 17–34.

““very well, here you are denouncing me.” Pomian ultimately did not publish the review because he could not touch on the book’s contemporary relevance. Here then is a little case study of the workings of publishing ketman: the implicit meaning of a book, obvious to its readers, can not be made explicit, even in a review, lest it rebound back on the official status of the original work.

Live Not By Lies

In December of 1973 Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s *The Gulag Archipelago* appeared in France. Its publication (in Russian) signaled the beginning of a profound change in the relationship between writers, readers and the regime in the Soviet Union and across the Eastern Bloc. The world sketched out by Miłosz, and later by Sinyavsky/Tertz was coming to an end. The literature of protest was beginning to take a sharp turn. Through the 1960s, problems of the regime were largely discussed through allegory. These allegories could either be science fictional or fantastical, as in the cases of a Tertz, Stanisław Lem or the Strugatsky brothers, or historical, as with writers from Andrzej Szczypiorski in Poland, Danilo Kiš in Yugoslavia, and Jaan Kross in Estonia.[545]

By the 1970s, these oblique strategies now started to feel dated. At a time when the great ideological struggles of mid-century seemed ever less relevant, the era of the Aesopian novelist, who used indirection and imagination to address present ills was coming to an end. The decade of the dissident, who attacked them head on, had begun.

The publication of *The Gulag Archipelago* was a turning point in other ways as well. Solzhenitsyn was expelled from the Soviet Union almost immediately after the book’s appearance. Just before leaving the country, he published “Live Not By Lies,” a short essay which has since become famous as a model text of anti-Communist dissidence.[546] It puts forward a program of passive resistance through non-compliance, the essence of which is contained in the admonition “let us refuse to say what we do not think.”

Solzhenitsyn urges his Soviet readers to gain liberation through “personal non-participation in lies.” To achieve this, he instructs them in a series of refusals: do not sign things you do not believe, say things they do not think, depict, broadcast or cite ideas which distort the truth, or attend demonstrations you don’t desire to participate in. He further asks his readers to walk out of meetings where falsehoods are being said, and to stop subscribing to magazines in which they are printed.

It is, by Solzhenitsyn’s own admission, a fairly modest program. Though he insists from the outset that things have gotten better in the Soviet Union since people can complain to one another and read articles in samizdat, where in the past they “dared not even whisper,” the environment was still too harsh to permit even the kind of “civil disobedience that Gandhi

[545] Historical allegory had a long history in Poland, going back to the era of High Stalinism. Examples include Witold Kula’s *Gusła* (1951), about Roman aristocrats confronting Christianity; Hanna Malewska’s *Przemija postać świata*, her 1954 epic of of the 6th century Ostrogothic Kingdom; and Jerzy Andrzejewski’s later works, such as *Ciemności kryją ziemię* (1957) about the Spanish Inquisition, and *Bramy raju*, (1960), his novella about a 13th century children’s crusade.
[546] Solzhenitsyn dated the text “Moscow, 12 February, 1974.”

advocated."[547] Any larger, coordinated, confrontation, such as a demonstration or a strike, was still too "horrifying." The only path that remained was one of personal withdrawal, which, if it did not lead to a change in power, might at least launch a person on the road towards "spiritual independence."

Power of the Powerless

In formulating his program of passive resistance, Solzhenitsyn called on the example of the "great European nation Czechoslovakia," which had shown in 1968 that even an "armor-less breast" could stand up to the "onslaught of tanks."[548] Four years later, Vaclav Havel returned the favor in his essay "The Power of the Powerless," where he cited Solzhenitsyn's expulsion as a signal moment in the development of the anti-Communist dissident movement. The Soviet state's reaction to the publication of *The Gulag Archipelago* demonstrated the threat truth posed to their entire edifice of post-Stalinist power. Throughout the essay Havel uses Solzhenitsyn's concept of "living a lie," and its antonym, "living in truth," as his governing metaphors for what a powerless citizenry can achieve against this edifice, which he termed the "post-totalitarian system."

Havel wrote "The Power of the Powerless" in October of 1978. Today it is best remembered for the parable of the greengrocer and his sign. In it, a fruit-and-vegetable seller everyday puts a sign in his shop window which says, "Workers of the world, unite!" He does so without giving any thought to the content of these words. The sign is merely a signal, which lets those in charge know that he is obedient and happy to stay silent. For Havel, this is an illustration of the way in which power operates in a post-totalitarian society. This is a system which is held together by an ideology which in its "elaborateness and completeness" is almost a "secularized religion."[549] However, it is also an ideology which has lost all claims to enthusiasm or belief. It has been reduced to a hollow system of signs, a binding agent between rulers and ruled which dictates the outer comportment of both but makes no claims on their inner lives. The driving force of this system thus becomes not any coherent message or body of ideas, but a blind impulse towards self-preservation. For Havel, this survival through inertia, or "automatism," is the defining feature of the post-totalitarian dictatorship. The world he describes is one in which ideology acts *through* people, but not *on* them. In other words, it compels actions, but not beliefs. It is in short, no more than a ritual script, whose content is immaterial; the very idea that it could be taken seriously seems ridiculous.

It is worth reflecting here on how far we have come from the world sketched out in *The Captive Mind*. Despite its nod towards Marxism-Leninism as a "secular religion," "The Power of the Powerless" omits everything else that went into the mid-century critique of Stalinism as practiced by Miłosz, Wat, Kołakowski, or Tertz. Gone is all their delicate anthropology of faith and doubt. Absent too, are their worries over the teleological or eschatological promises of Marxism, and their webs of learned allusions to the Roman Empire, the early Church, and the Reformation. This is a profound shift.

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[547] "We have not matured enough to march into the squares and shout the truth out loud." Alexander Solzhenitsyn, "Live Not By Lies," *Index on Censorship* 2, 2004, p. 204.
[548] "Live Not By Lies," p. 207.
[549] Vaclav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," p. 3. https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/wp-content/uploads/1979/01/the-power-of-the-powerless.pdf

Going back to at least the 1930s and the work of Cantimori and Croce in Italy, religion had been a dominant framework for writing about the experience of life under totalitarianism. The history of religion provided most of the operating metaphors for these critics. They described individual crises in terms of conversion and apostasy, and collective efforts at subversion or resistance as so many forms of heresy – hence the recurring presence of Ketman, Nicodemism and the Marranos. Resistance was thus a form of spiritual discipline, to be practiced tacitly, in the style of the Jesuit *reservatio mentalis*. Furthermore, it seemed self-evident to many of these writers that any challenge to the dominant system of belief would necessarily involve some sort of deception or concealment. It also seemed likely that practicing such concealment would bring about some kind of mental fissure, an internal double-ness or 'schizophrenia."

In their works of the mid-1970s, Havel and Solzhenitsyn threw all these assumptions away. Together, in these two essays, they replace a previous discourse of conviction with a new one centered on authenticity. The mid-century world of masks and masquerades, 'underlifes' and secondary adjustments, overlapping identities based on conflicting beliefs has at last been swept away. (Not for nothing did Gunawan Mohamad, Miłosz's Javanese reader, call Havel the "man free from Ketman."[550]) In their (much simpler) vision, there is simply power, with its various instruments of obfuscation, on one side, and the genuine human being, spontaneous and unpredictable, on the other. Or as Havel put it in "The Power of the Powerless,"

> Between the aims of the post-totalitarian system and the aims of life there is a yawning abyss: while life, in its essence, moves toward plurality, diversity, independent self-constitution, and self organization, in short, toward the fulfillment of its own freedom, the post-totalitarian system demands conformity, uniformity, and discipline. While life ever strives to create new and improbable structures, the post-totalitarian system contrives to force life into its most probable states.[551]

Havel's view has proven to be immensely influential, especially on students of the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe.

In his 1995 book *Private Truths, Public Lies*, the Turkish-American economist and political scientist Timur Kuran elaborates his idea of "preference falsification," or the tendency of people to misrepresent their private beliefs in line with what they believe to be socially acceptable or politically expedient. Despite the similarity of this idea to Miłosz's concept of Ketman, Kuran characterizes preference falsification exclusively in terms drawn from Havel. Comparing it to the related terms of 'insincerity' and 'hypocrisy' (but pointedly not 'self-censorship' or plain 'lying') Kuran writes that the phrase which "captures the meaning of preference falsification exactly" is in fact "'living a lie.'"[552] Later on in the book, Kuran writes of Warsaw Bloc dictatorships being supported by a "pervasive culture of mendacity" and of "mendacity" as the "wellspring of the communist system's stability."[553]

Agent Ketman

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[550] Gunawan Mohamad, *Catatan pinggir*, *vol. 10*, Grafiti Pers, 1982.
[551] Vaclav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," p. 8.
[552] Timur Kuran, *Private Truths, Public Lies: The Social Consequences of Preference Falsification*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 4.
[553] Timur Kuran, *Private Truths, Public Lies*, p. 123.

On November 13, 2001, an article titled “I was Ketman”[554] appeared in that day’s edition of the most popular Warsaw paper, the *Gazeta Wyborcza*. The piece was written by an editor for the Krakow edition of the paper named Lesław Maleszka. It was a first-person account of his long-term collaboration with the Polish secret police, or SB, (*Służba Bezpieczeństwa*), dating back to the mid-1970s. The title of the article came from his codename – Ketman – by which Maleszka was known to his SB handlers.[555]

Maleszka’s revelation was startling for a number of reasons, the chief one of which had to do with his past. Years before he worked as a relatively anonymous editorial assistant, Maleszka had been one of the unquestioned leaders of the democratic opposition in Krakow. He was known for skills as a political analyst, and for his ability to direct long-range campaigns of action, gifts which led Maleszka to be described as “Krakow’s Kuroń,” after the renowned leader of KOR (Committee for Social Self-Defense).

Maleszka’s prominence in dissident circles dated back to his days as a student of Polish literature at the Jagiellonian University (which he attended from 1972 to 1977). Soon after arriving at the school, Maleszka befriended two other students in his department, Stanisław Pyjas and Bronisław Wildstein. Together, the three friends founded a discussion club, which met regularly to argue over questions of politics and literature. Among the goals of the group were creating a library of underground and émigré publications and making contact with opposition circles in Warsaw. This brought them to the attention of the secret police.

In February of 1976, the SB started an operation to assess the degree of threat posed by the group around Wildstein, Pyjas and Maleszka. Its code name was “The Optimists.” A secret informer, alias ‘Igor,’ was sent to infiltrate the discussion circle. He reported that the three leaders were very close to each other. Other students referred to the as the “Holy Trinity.” Igor also reported that, in his opinion, they were ‘fanatics.’ “Each of them believes in his own philosophy. … Pyjas thinks that freedom means doing whatever one wants to do in the moment….Maleszka on the other hand, believes that freedom consists of the government respecting its own laws, and that every government that exceeds its laws thereby limits the freedom of its citizens, in which case those citizens are no longer obliged to respect those same laws.” [556]

It was this line of reasoning, along with their determination to read prohibited works of literature, which brought the secret police’s wrath down on the discussion circle. On April 12, 1976, the members of the Maleszka-Pyjas-Wildstein group were brought in for a series of “prophylactic conversations." In the course of these, many students delivered far-ranging confessions, and promised not to read or distribute literature on the Index of prohibited works. In the course of these ‘conversations’, Maleszka impressed his interrogators with his “more positive attitude.” This appears to be the beginning of his cooperation with the SB, and the start of his second identity as ‘Ketman.’

In his 2001 declaration, Maleszka described his work as an informant as the mistake of a naïve youth. He writes of being initially proud, after his first interrogation, that he had managed to not

[554] Lesław Maleszka, “Byłem Ketmanem,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, November 13, 2001.
[555] Maleszka also used the pseudonym “Return,” “Tomek,” and “Zbyszek.”
[556] Ewa Zając and Henryk Głębocki, eds., “Ketman” i “Monika” – Żywoty równoległe, (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2005), p. 105.

reveal any names and keep the discussion at the level of generalities. He only gave up the identities of his fellow discussants later, and by accident, after which he felt trapped.

Throughout the *Gazeta* article, Maleszka describes himself as a classic embodiment of Ketman as described by Miłosz. He writes of being a "person of two religions, who conceals his true views, feigning loyalty to the oppressive power," and remarks that he didn't realize that such a game of "Ketman" would inevitably plunge [him] into an internal lie, which in the end would penetrate his entire essence. That this was a road leading into a blind alley."[557] Maleszka does not point out here that the direction in which he would practice Ketman was the opposite of the usual one. Instead of shielding a private self from an oppressive government, he hid his actions from his compatriots in the opposition, while baring all to the secret police.

Further in the *Gazeta Wyborcza* article, Maleszka presents his years of continued cooperation with the SB as fairly limited, ending in the early 1980s, and done entirely under duress. A subsequent examination of relevant materials in the Polish Secret Police archives conducted by Ewa Zając and Henryk Głębocki of the Institute of National Memory (IPN) revealed these to be at best partial truths, if not outright lies.

Although some of the operational files connected to agent 'Ketman' were destroyed in 1989, enough survived to give a detailed picture of Maleszka's activities as a secret informant. For one thing, they demonstrated that his career was not limited in scope, but spanned the entire period from 1976 until the end of Communist Party rule at the end of the 1980s. These same files reveal Maleszka to have been an operative of rare perspicacity and cunning, someone who was perfectly suited to the demands of a double life. They also suggest (but do not conclusively *prove*) Maleszka's involvement in one of the darkest episodes in the history of the Polish student opposition – the suspected murder of his close friend Stanisław Pyjas.

Maleszka's earliest reports dealt largely with literature. In his first dispatches, dated to 1976, he explained the popularity of the "New Wave" in Polish poetry, and in particular, Adam Zagajewski's role as its leading exponent and moral leader.[558] Maleszka also kept tabs on his friends. He reported on Wildstein and especially Pyjas, who was ready to start a new student group, which he expected to grow swiftly given that, in his opinion, "no one believes anymore in the strength of the state against the people."[559]

Maleszka's testimony helped to put Pyjas in the SB's crosshairs. This would quickly have tragic consequences. On May 7, 1977, Pyjas' body was found in front of his home on 7 Szewska Street in Kraków's Old Town. Officially, the cause of death was said to be a drunken accident. However, Wildstein, who bribed his way into the Kraków coroner's office in order to see the body, was convinced that Pyjas had been beaten to death. The question of his murder by the Secret Police became a question of national interest, and the subject of numerous protests and independent investigations by the Polish opposition. Interest in the affair was further spurred by an incident a few weeks later, when another student, Stanisław Pietraszka, who had seen Pyjas with a mysterious stranger in his last hours, was also found dead. Pietraszka drowned during an

[557] Leszek Maleszka, "Byłem 'Ketmanen,'"*Gazeta Wyborcza*, November 13, 2001.
[558] Ewa Zając and Henryk Głębocki, eds., *"Ketman" i "Monika" – Żywoty równoległe*, pp. 151-155.
[559] Ewa Zając and Henryk Głębocki, eds., *"Ketman" i "Monika" – Żywoty równoległe*, p. 107.

outing to a nearby lake – this despite the fact that he was said to have been sober on the night in question, and generally averse to entering water on account of not being able to swim.

Maleszka's early reports from 1976/77 were used by the SB to prepare anonymous letters which they sent to members of the Krakow student group in the hopes of turning its members against each other. These may have tipped Pyjas off to the fact that Maleszka was an informant, and this in turn may have been the reason he was killed. All of this, however, depends on a chain of hypotheses for which – at this time – there is no definite proof.[560] What is known, however, is that, following these deaths, Maleszka continued his work for the SB. He reported in depth on the details of the independent investigation into Pyjas' death.

This was especially damaging because Maleszka was the cofounder – with Wildstein – of the protests group SKS (Studencki Komitet Solidarności, or the 'Student Solidarity Committee') which took a leading role in protesting the two deaths. At the same time that he was composing the Committee's founding manifesto (signed by over two thousand fellow UJ students) Maleszka was also informing on members of the Committee, and advising the SB on ways in which they could be neutralized. In a 1977 meeting, he suggested "compromising the biographies" of select SKS members in a "public forum."[561] He also stated that many of the new SKS members were "naïve" and "ideologically un-formed," which meant that they could easily be steered in other directions by counter propaganda. More damningly, Maleszka further advised the SB to create special infiltration units to disrupt SKS meetings, start quarrels and provoke fights – up to and including the use of physical force.[562]

Maleszka was well compensated for his work as Ketman. During the late 1970s and 1980s, he became one of Poland's best paid secret informers.[563] The SB also arranged the two most necessary ingredients of life in late socialist Poland – a job (as a librarian at Jagiellonian University) and an apartment (in Krakow's Azory neighborhood). Even so, he may have been underpaid, for Maleszka proved to be a masterful agent. He did not just report on the activities of friends. Instead, he acted as a guide to the entire student opposition, laying out its programs, strategies, and internal tensions.[564] For instance, in a lengthy report dated August 31, 1977, titled "A few reflections on the subject of the opposition in Poland with reference to SKS Krakow," Maleszka broke down the tensions between the two main strands of the Polish opposition as embodied in KOR and ROPCiO, analyzed each group's relationship to the SKS and the church, and finally made a list of recommendations over how the student movement might best be neutralized.

Similarly, in reporting on the makeup of opposition groups, Maleszka did not merely name their members; he gave acute psychological profiles of their interior motives. He also suggested how the SB could best disrupt their personal and professional lives. Sometimes, his advice was

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[560] In their article, Zając and Głębocki go further in asserting Maleszka's complicity than the evidence (as currently known) warrants. In this they were followed by the documentary *Trzech kumpli* ["Three Friends"], which made a great impression on many viewers when it aired on the Polish TV station TVN in 2008.
[561] Ewa Zając and Henryk Głębocki, eds., *"Ketman" i "Monika" – Żywoty równoległe*, p. 119.
[562] These units were called "*bojówki*," and were indeed put into practice by 1979 – though there is no indication that this was done because of Maleszka's suggestion.
[563] Ewa Zając and Henryk Głębocki, eds., *"Ketman" i "Monika" – Żywoty równoległe*, p. 120.
[564] "Kilka refleksji na temat opozycji w Polsce w odniesieniu do SKS Kraków." Ewa Zając and Henryk Głębocki, eds., *"Ketman" i "Monika" – Żywoty równoległe*, pp. 170-76.

particularly far-reaching and even wise, as when he commented that the problem with the Polish Security Services' handling of the opposition was that they treated it as a conspiratorial plot,[565] when they should be regarding it as a social movement. At other times, Maleszka's suggestions bordered on the cruel, as when he alerted his handlers to an underground printer's recent divorce, commenting that the man's ex-wife was "ready to believe anything"[566] and could probably be persuaded to reveal everything she knew about the location of illegal publications, presses and distribution networks.

Indeed, much of the information Maleszka passed on to the SB had to do with the operation of the underground press. The secret police was particularly interested in mastering (but not necessarily suppressing) the production of subversive literature by the opposition. Having detailed intelligence on means of production and dissemination was essential to the kind of nuanced control it hoped to exert on the opposition. Over the course of his years as an informant, Maleszka gave the SB much detailed information on the operation of the underground press. He was also permitted to travel abroad, where he made contact with Jerzy Giedroyc and *Kultura*, who hoped to find a publishing partner in the Polish underground. Maleszka also reported on which titles were being published at various times by the underground press. These works included Miłosz's *The Captive Mind* and *The Seizure of Power*, as well as Aleksander Wat's essays on Stalinism, which included his introduction to Tertz. Occasionally, Maleszka was also asked to identify the source of certain pieces of *samizdat* or *tamizdat*. On September 23, 1977, he was shown a typescript of Solzhenitsyn's "Live not by Lies" in Polish translation (misidentified as 'Life Without End') and was asked if he recognized the typewriter it was written on.[567] Maleszka had a guess, but wasn't sure – he promised to bring a sample of typewriting from the apartment of the woman he thought might be responsible.

We can see therefore that Maleszka had more than a passing acquaintance with the classic literature on Stalinism and dissimulation. What he made of it is another question entirely. Especially intriguing in this regard is Maleszka's choice of codename – Ketman. In choosing this cover (and it does appear that Maleszka chose it, and not the SB), did he mean to suggest that he was concealing his real identity as an informer from his friends in the opposition? Or was he only playing at being an informer, deceiving his handlers just enough to allow him to have a long and influential career as dissident and organizer? What was he realizing himself against? Which part of his life was authentic, and which was a disguise?

This is a difficult question to answer. Until 2001, Maleszka's friends knew nothing about his double life. Unlike Sinyavsky's treacherous friend Khmel'nitski, he managed to escape detection for decades, and did not have a Tertz to immortalize his betrayal in fiction. Ironically, in this case, it may be the secret police itself which had the best grasp on Maleszka's character. After all, they knew what he was in public, and what he was with them. An internal report of the SB from 1986 describes Maleszka as follows:

> "he is very clever, but very cautious and suspicious with regards to the realization of the assignments he is given, especially when these might put him in a situation threatening him with exposure (*dekonspiracja*). He is particularly sensitive on this

[565] Ewa Zając and Henryk Głębocki, eds., *"Ketman" i "Monika" – Żywoty równoległe*, p. 173.
[566] Ewa Zając and Henryk Głębocki, eds., *"Ketman" i "Monika" – Żywoty równoległe*, p. 311.
[567] Ewa Zając and Henryk Głębocki, eds., *"Ketman" i "Monika" – Żywoty równoległe*, p. 184.

> point, as when he is put in a position of making contact with people he doesn't know. Because of this, there have been some complaints against him, but he explained that this [caution] his a necessity for him – his own form of occupational health and safety (literally "*bhp*," *bezpieczeństwo i higiena pracy*).[568]

On both fronts – public and secret – Maleszka appeared to be cautious, secretive, resourceful and manipulative. Although he liked to show off his intelligence and perspicacity, Maleszka could be just as cagey with his handlers as he was with his friends. He was good at covering his tracks, and especially good at removing sources of threat (there are even indications that he got his first handler – who may have wanted to expose his identity to his university friends – dismissed from the SB).

In some ways, Maleszka was (or certainly thought himself to be) a better agent than the agents he was working for. This, in turn, testifies to what is so powerful about Ketman as an idea. Miłosz's great insight was that dissimulation is never just a costume, something to be picked up and set down. The line between the two sides of the self – inner and outer, hypocritical and sincere – are never as clear as the person performing Ketman would like them to be. In donning a mask, the person performing Ketman usually acquires a new face. Any performance that involves belief eventually ends up shaping the soul.

[568] Ewa Zając and Henryk Głębocki, eds., *Ketman" i "Monika" – Żywoty równoległe*, p. 107.

Conclusion

In November, 2003, a Federal jury indicted Ahmed Youssef Kourani on charges of "conspiracy to provide material support" to a designated terrorist organization. A Lebanese immigrant residing in Detroit, Kourani was alleged to have held fundraisers which funneled money to Hezbollah (Kourani claimed he thought the money was going to support orphans). Part of Kourani's indictment claimed that, while in the United States, Kourani had disguised his activities through the use of "taqiyah," "a Shia Muslim doctrine of concealment, pretense and fraud."[569] According to government prosecutors, taqiyah gave Kourani license to "keep his true beliefs secret while inside what he considered to be hostile territory – the United States of America." Kourani did this by, among other ways, shaving his beard, avoiding going to mosques, and skipping Shiite religious rituals – all while serving as an emissary of a Shia Islamist political party and militant group.

The presence of taqiyah in Kourani's indictment indicated that the prosecution "intended to rely on this concept during the trial."[570] However, Kourani pled guilty in March, 2005, thus sparing the US District Attorney from articulating its full views on Shiite religious teachings governing permissible lying. Their potential arguments can probably be intuited, for by this time, four years into the United States' "war on terror," taqiyah (or, variously taqiya, taqiyya) had become a rhetorical pillar of nationalist Islamophobia. Various authors, many of them associated with the U.S. military, used it to make exaggerated claims about the supposedly innate characteristics of their Muslim opponents. In particular, they used it to support claims of Muslim untrustworthiness and irrationality. A 2007 article in the US Army's *Military Review* stated that the "Muslim concept of Taqiyya" demonstrate Islamic cultures' "acceptance of cognitive dissonance," as opposed to Western notions of "rational thought."[571] In 2008, the "Tribal Analysis Center," a military think-tank which specialized in the analysis of Afghan society, used taqiyya to argue that Afghans could "lie freely to foreigners, especially those who are Christians."[572]

In these same years, far-reaching claims about taqiyya became a mainstay of counterterrorism trainings on Islam for American law enforcement agencies. The journalist Joshua Craze, who attended training sessions organized for members of the Transit Safety Agencies and local police departments, was told by one of their organizers that "taqiyya was a doctrine that meant all Muslims would lie in order to achieve world domination." [573] In ensuing years, similarly outlandish claims about this formerly obscure piece of Islamic jurisprudence would migrate to the world of American electoral politics. In 2015, Ben Carson, a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination (and later, Secretary of Housing in the Trump administration) said that

[569] *United States versus Mahmoud Youssef Kourani* (2003), US District Court, Southern Division.
[570] Yarden Mariuma, "Taqiyya as Polemic, Law and Knowledge: Following an Islamic Legal Term through the Worlds of Islamic Scholars, Ethnographers, Polemicists and Military Men," *The Muslim World* 104 (January/April 2014), p. 90.
[571] Yarden Mariuma, "Taqiyya as Polemic, Law and Knowledge," p. 102.
[572]Yarden Mariuma, "Taqiyya as Polemic, Law and Knowledge," p. 101.
[573] Joshua Craze, "Hidden Enemies: An American history of taqiyya," *Cabinet*, October 29, 2020.

he was against a Muslim becoming president because of taqiyya "a component of Sharia that allows, even encourages you to lie to achieve your goals."[574]

Carson was echoing an entire post-9/11 literature which insisted – using taqiyya as its main example – on the propensity of Muslims to lie, and the impossibility of taking Muslim politicians at their word. In one of the most frequently repeated attacks, Robert Spencer urges his reader to "Remember (taqiyya) next time you see a Muslim spokesman on television professing . . . his loyalty to the United States . . . he may be telling the truth . . . or he may just be lying."[575] This vision of compromised Muslim leaders soon broadened into one which saw America thoroughly penetrated by agents of global jihad, who used taqiyya to keep their actions and intentions hidden. In a 2011 issue of the journal *American Thinker*, Jed Gladstein warned that "In the United States today" runs one example, "certain factions of Islam are actively practicing Taqiyya. They are well funded, politically protected, and deeply embedded in the fabric of our society."[576] This sort of paranoid fantasy forms some of the background for the persistent accusations that key figures in American politics – among them Barack Obama to CIA director John Brennan – were in fact secret Muslims.

A hundred and fifty years after Gobineau effectively introduced them to the West, taqiyya, ketman and the rest of Islamic teaching on the permissibility of lying have returned very nearly to where they originated - that is, to the world of Orientalist fantasy and Islamophobic stereotype. It is now referenced most often in order to denigrate Islam as a religion and to cast Muslim immigrants in the role of subversive secret agents, bent on destroying their host societies.

But perhaps this was in part inevitable. Dissimulation has rarely enjoyed good press. Although both Islam and Christianity have both made allowances for doctrinal or 'ideological' lying in exceptional circumstances, it has rarely been viewed in a positive light. For most co-religionists, only persecution of the most extreme kind could justify it. Even then it was suspect. John Calvin coined the name 'Nicodemism' as a term of abuse for Protestants too timid to risk their lives and property through a public profession of faith. Later generations found concealing one's identity as a Protestant in a Catholic country or vice versa more understandable, but it still fell well short of the Christian ideal, which remained public confession and martyrdom. Meanwhile, the worst opprobrium was reserved for those who sought a 'third way' between denominations, such as Francesco Pucci, or worse still, who wavered between them, such as Meletij Smotryc'kyj or Marco Antonio de Dominis.

In the Muslim world, too, dissimulation has rarely been seen in a positive light. Attacks on taqiyya have long been a pillar of Sunni anti-Shia polemics. In recent years, they have also migrated to the world of secular Islamic politics. In Turkey, the Republican People's Party, the country's largest secular party, has often accused its Islamist opponents (among them Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party) of practicing taqiyya by hiding their real agenda of Islamizing the state from within. Some Islamic politicians in Turkey have echoed this same language. For instance, the prominent political cleric (currently living in exile in America) Fethullah Gülen has referred to his opponents within the world Turkish Islamic politics as

574 Joshua Craze, "Hidden Enemies: An American history of taqiyya," *Cabinet Magazine*, October 29, 2020.
575 Yarden Mariuma, "Taqiyya as Polemic, Law and Knowledge," p. 99.
576 Yarden Mariuma, "Taqiyya as Polemic, Law and Knowledge," p. 99.

practitioners of taqiyya, which, according to him, “means deception . . . you think one thing and say another.”[577]

Meanwhile, in Iran, the leading state power in the Shi’ite world, taqiyya has also gone into eclipse. After the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini declared that the era for strategic dissimulation was over. Taqiyya was now permissible only if martyrdom “would serve no purpose.”[578] Even then, it was broadly de-emphasized as a communal concept, and expressly forbidden for members of the Iranian leadership. In a country where Shi’ites were not only in the majority, but Shi’ite clerics actually controlled the government, taqiyya could be no more than a regrettable anachronism – a throwback to a time when being a religious Shi’ite implied weakness, rather than strength. In accordance with this view, some Shia political parties in other countries – notably Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Sistani Party in Iraq – have passed laws banning taqiyya among their members.[579]

Religious or ‘ideological’ dissimulation thus appears to be on the wane worldwide. Even in the Islamic world, it is seen most often in the form of an accusation, usually that a political opponent is following a secret program or otherwise acting in bad faith. Social dissimulation has also seen a decline since its heyday in the late Renaissance. For a period in the 16th and 17th centuries, dissimulation seemed, to many thinkers, to hold the key to all social relations. This was especially true in the retinues of Italian princes, where the pressures of royal despotism, the expectation of aristocratic display or *sprezzatura*, and the looming threat of the omnipresent Inquisition) combined to form a pressure cooker of competitive hypocrisy. Torquato Accetto gave voice to this world of feigning in his 1641 treatise *Della dissimulazione onesta* (“Of Honest Dissembling”). Following the track laid by Machiavelli, Castiglione and others, Accetto elevated dissimulation into the highest courtly virtue, the master key for behaving “astutely” in the presence of the powerful.

Accetto’s essay enjoyed some acclaim when it first appeared, only to be subsequently forgotten. The Enlightenment was not kind to dissimulation. In the late 18th century, Baroque cultural attitudes which prized cunning, adaptability and social plasticity were challenged by a thoroughgoing cult of sincerity, inaugurated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Dissimulation never recovered. In most subsequent epochs, it has been more associated with dishonesty rather than cleverness. When *Della dissimulazione onesta* resurfaced in 1928, in an edition supervised by the anti-fascist philosopher Benedetto Croce, it signified something quite at odds with its original meaning.

Croce used his publication to indicate that Italy under Fascist rule had returned to an era of intellectual and academic despotism, in which only dissimulation could protect the true philosopher. This was the beginning of a brief revival for dissimulation. It lasted roughly from the late 1920s to the early 1970s, with a sharp peak in the late 1930s and early 1950s. These were moments of intense ideological pressure, when intellectuals were called on to profess not just their allegiance to a regime, but to endorse its governing philosophy. This happened both on the

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[577] Yarden Mariuma, “Taqiyya as Polemic, Law and Knowledge,” p. 100.
[578] Yarden Mariuma, “Taqiyya as Polemic, Law and Knowledge,” p. 94.
[579] Captain Daniel Helmer, “Hezbollah’s Employment of Suicide Bombing During the 1980s: The Theological, Political, and Operational Development of a New Tactic,” *Military Review*, Vol. 86, No. 4 (July-August, 2006), pp. 71-82.

right and left of the political spectrum, in fascist Italy and in Stalinist Poland. In both places, intellectuals reached back to the past and particularly, to periods of theocratic rule, when religious dissidents had to conceal or disguise their opinions as a means of survival.

In the course of immersing himself in the world of the Nicodemites, Anti-Trinitarians and other Reformation-era nonconformists, Delio Cantimori found in them a figure for his own predicament as a Communist in fascist Italy, especially one who had formerly subscribed to fascist tenets, and had to maintain some illusion that he continued to do so for the duration of the war. In a parallel move, Czesław Miłosz looked to the Islamic world, and the Shi'ite practice of ketman, as refracted through the Orientalizing gaze of the Comte de Gobineau. Ketman, as Miłosz interpreted it, was a means of protecting oneself from suspicion by saying "things which were in complete contradiction with one's inner convictions."[580] Belief figures very strongly in this account, for to truly practice Ketman one must genuinely enter into a dominant belief system, whether it be Stalinism or Sunni Islam, while at the same time maintain one's belief in some essential principles which contradict it. It requires a person to believe, and simultaneously, to appear to believe something else – a task calling on far greater commitment and mental dexterity than mere obedience or lip-service to a regime's dictates. Indeed, ketman seen this way is an almost spiritual discipline, genuinely similar to the devotions of the mystic Twelver Shia who believed that in denouncing their blessed Imams they were doing the holy work of keeping their faith alive.

Following the publication of *The Captive Mind* in 1953, ketman gained sudden relevance to people across Poland and the West. Of the many concepts introduced by that book, it seemed the stickiest, or most 'viral.' For Poles, reading *The Captive Mind* in copies smuggled from abroad, it seemed to immediately and efficiently describe something that had been happening in themselves and their social surroundings since the imposition of Communist Party rule. The idea of ketman also circulated independently of the book itself, becoming a recognizable catchphrase among people, (like Leopold Tyrmand of Andrzej Walicki), who would not get to read Miłosz's book in full for many years. At the same time, ketman had an active career in the world at large. For some thinkers, like the sociologist Erving Goffman, it seemed a key concept for understanding how people behaved within coercive structures everywhere. Meanwhile, for Gunawan Mohammed and his readers in Indonesia, it named processes of conformity and collusion taking place in their own, quite distant, despotism.

In the process of gaining wide recognition among the Polish intelligentsia and a measure of global renown, ketman underwent a measure of semantic erosion. Miłosz's original essay on ketman in *The Captive Mind* is digressive and enigmatic. As taken up by his interlocutors, ketman lost much of the nuance and multi-polarity he initially endowed it with. As the Polish intellectual historian Bronisław Łagowski points out, it came to mean some combination of "'despot's delusion', opportunistic behavior, [or] disguise."[581] These definitions strip away the entire theological dimension of ketman, making it seem primarily like a question of rational calculation, part of a "cold game of survival." But as Łagowski argues, ketman only really makes sense seen against a backdrop of faith, either in an organized religion or a 'new faith' like communism.

[580] Czesław Miłosz, *Wielkie pokuszenie; Bieliński i jednorożec*.
[581] Bronisław Łagowski, "Walicki i Sarmackie Omamy," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, June 17, 2008.

Ketman is thus an artifact of an age of secular religions. It belonged to an era that believed in belief, and lost meaning in a later period that didn't. Shrouded in silence, from without, its practice seems little different from cynical acceptance, opportunistic collaboration or regular dishonesty. But this is merely a surface impression. Ketman, as Miłosz envisioned it, was a genuine form of resistance, if a wholly tacit one. The person who practices ketman obeys with their body, and possibly their words, but doubts in their thoughts. The difference between the two stances – wholehearted faith, and faith with reservations – made sense to jurists in the Middle Ages, both Muslim and Christian. It made sense to Miłosz and his cohort of writers, caught in the tide of a suddenly imposed, brand new orthodoxy. A generation later, when the ruling ideology seemed hollowed-out, such spiritual opposition started to seem hollow as well.

Miłosz was right when he said that ketman meant realization *against* something; it can only ever be as strong as its opponent. Today, dissimulation seems to have little immediate relevance to the current political climate. As systems of thought came to be regarded as either blatant manipulations on the parts of the powerful or self-evident truths in need of further reiteration, questions of conviction have been replaced with concerns over authenticity. But the history of dissimulation is one of cycles. As calls to believe increase, so will the imperative to doubt. One of the lasting legacies of *The Captive* Mind is giving those doubts a name.

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