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The name of Zbigniew Herbert probably appeared for the first time in the Anglophone world in 1958 in an anthology entitled *The Broken Mirror: A Collection of Writings from Contemporary Poland* (Karcz 191). The collection included Herbert's drama "Jaskinia filozofów." It was Czesław Miłosz who wrote to Herbert to inform him about this publication and who later became the first translator and promoter of Herbert's poetry in the United States. As Miłosz said in an interview, "Ja, w pewnym sensie, jestem odpowiedzialny za istnienie Herberta w poezji anglosaskiej i częściowo za jego bardzo wysoką pozycję w Ameryce. Całe środowisko wie, kim jest Herbert"[1] (qtd. in Karcz 192).

The first book of Herbert's poems translated into English by Miłosz and Peter Dale Scott was published by Penguin Books in 1968. The first collection translated by Bogdana and John Carpenter (Zbigniew Herbert, *Selected Poems*, Oxford University Press) appeared in 1977. Until 2007 (when Alissa Valles's translations were published), Herbert's poetry was associated mainly with the Carpenters' interpretations. Herbert was lucky to have his poetry translated and promoted by such great authors and translators as Czesław Miłosz and the Carpenters, who created the image of Herbert abroad.

[1] "In a certain sense I am responsible for Herbert's existence in the Anglo-Saxon poetry and also partially—for his very high position in America. The whole community knows who Herbert is." (Translation mine)

This brief account of the reception of Herbert's poetry shows that the works of the Polish poet definitely did not go unnoticed in the United States or the United Kingdom. Ted Hughes—the British poet laureate appointed by Queen Elizabeth II—was also familiar with Herbert's poetry. For twenty years, Hughes worked together with another English poet Daniel Weissbort on the magazine *Modern Poetry in Translation*, which they founded in 1965. One of their principal ambitions was to get poetry out from behind the Iron Curtain ("About MPT"). In the first, unsigned, editorial we read: "This poetry is more universal than ours. It deals with issues universally comprehensible. It does not fight shy of philosophy. It does not hide behind perverse imagery. As compared with our poetry, it comes out into the open" (qtd. in Gifford 88). In the fifth issue (1969), we read that "There is a tendency for the Western poet to become isolated and turn inwards, whereas the poet of East is in tune with the rhythm of his people in a much more direct and dynamic way" (ibid.). As Weissbort explains, these editorials, though written jointly, largely express Hughes's views and intentions (ibid.). Weissbort also edited an anthology of Central and Eastern European poetry entitled *The Poetry of Survival* (1991)—with Herbert as its main contributor (Jarniewicz, 2010: 16). Furthermore, Hughes was one of the editors of "Penguin Modern European Poets"—a series of translations of authors as Tadeusz Różewicz, Vasko Popa, Miroslav Holub, and, of course, Herbert (Jarniewicz, 2001: 146). In the preface to the *Collected Poems* of the Yugoslavian author Vasco Popa (originally published in 1969 and later reprinted in the collection of Hughes's essays *Winter Pollen. Occasional Prose*, 1995), Hughes mentions Zbigniew Herbert as one of the generation of Central European poets who "were caught in mid-adolescence by war" (1995: 220). Hughes does not refer to Herbert's poetry directly; however, he remarks that what is common for this group of poets (he mentions also Holub of Czechoslovakia and Yehuda Amichai of Germany/Israel) is a shared experience of totalitarianism. He underlines the fact that these poets—with Herbert among them—sought to "record man's awareness of what is being done to him by history and by his own institutions" (Hughes, 1995: 221). What Hughes especially admires about the Central European poets is the fact that they were capable of adopting a role of participants and depicting the cruel reality without retreating into the absurd. As Hughes writes:

> It [the poetry of Herbert and other authors] seems closer to the common reality, in which we have to live if we are to survive, than to those other realities in which we can holiday, or into which we decay when our bodily survival is comfortably taken care of . . . Their poetic themes revolve around the living suffering spirit, capable of happiness, much deluded, too frail, with doubtful provisional senses, so undefinable as to be almost silly, but palpably existing, and wanting to go on existing . . . Their poetry is a strategy of making audible meanings without disturbing the silence, an art of homing in tentatively on vital scarcely perceptible signals, making no mistakes, but with no hope of finality, continuing to explore. In the end, with delicate maneuvering, they precipitate out of a world of malicious negatives a happy positive. And they have created a small ironic space, a work of lyrical art, in which their humanity can respect itself. ("Vasco Popa" 220-221, 223)

Czesław Miłosz, who introduces Herbert to English-language readers in his *History of Polish Literature* (first edition was published in 1969), presents him as a poet of civilization, who does not retreat into nihilistic or catastrophic tones:

> Herbert's treatment of the basic theme of Polish postwar poetry—the tension between an artist's concern with form and his compassion for human suffering—places him at the opposite pole from Różewicz. In his outlook, he is a poet of civilization, not a rebel decrying the "nothing in Prospero's cloak." His good training in humanities has made him somewhat wary of the longing for a state of perfect innocence. The tragedies of our century pervade his crystalline, intellectual, and ironic poetry, but they are counterbalanced by his reflections on historical situations from other ages, and are rather alluded to than approached directly. (Miłosz 470)

The two short extracts quoted above—published exactly in the same year—may perfectly reflect how Herbert was perceived abroad at the end of the 1960s. Hughes's admiration for Central European authors may also result from the fact that English poetry of that time was indifferent to historical and political events. Jerzy Jarniewicz claims that Herbert's poetry appeared in England as a strong contrast to English poetry that was not interested in changes that had occurred after the Second World War. Herbert was perceived as a role model and his poetry was distinguished by "developed historical consciousness" (Jarniewicz, 2010: 16). The Polish poet was admired for his attitude of resistance. Jarniewicz writes: "Herbert był formatowany na przekór poezji angielskiej, by

tę poezję, znajdującą się w chronicznym kryzysie, odświeżyć i przekierunkować"[2]; 2010: 16-17). The author of *Mr Cogito*, in contrast to English poets, was not afraid to bring up the so called "great subjects" (Jarniewicz, 2001: 146). However, Hughes was one of the first English poets in the second half of the twentieth century to make a fundamental attempt to reorient English poetry by undermining "the discourses of English civility and decorum in which the Movement had its being, in the interests of a response to the historical realities of post-war Europe" (Corcoran 114).

I cannot claim with certainty that Herbert knew the poetry of Hughes (though the Polish author read in English). Acquaintance with Hughes's poetry in Poland is rather limited. The selected poems of the British poet (from the collections *Hawk in the Rain, Lupercal, Wodwo* and *Crow*) were translated by Teresa Truszkowska and Jan Rostworowski and published in 1975 by Wydawnictwo Literackie in Kraków. In 1995 the publishing house Zysk i S-ka issued *Pieśni czterech pór roku* (*Season Songs*), translated by Marek Obarski. Finally, a small selection of Hughes's poems was also published in 2001 in the series "Liryki najpiękniejsze" (translated by Truszkowska and Rostworowski). Hughes may be better known to the Polish reader as the author of stories for children: *Pogromca Snów i inne opowieści o stworzeniu świata* (*The Dreamfighter and other creation tales*), 2006, translated by Magda Heydel, or *Żelazny olbrzym* (*The Iron Man*), 2002, translated by Małgorzata Grabowska.

However, Hughes not only knew Herbert's work, but the Polish poet, as Jerzy Jarniewicz remarks (referring in turn to Terry Gifford's and Neil Roberts's *Ted Hughes: A Critical Study*)—might have influenced his poetry. Gifford and Roberts draw an analogy between the poetic imagery of Hughes's *Crow* and the conversion of pathos and wit that can be found in Herbert's poetry—especially in the poem "At the Gate of the Valley" ("U wrót doliny") coming from the volume *Hermes, Dog and the Star*. According to Gifford and Roberts, the poem is an expression of revived pagan religion, a pagan cult, which is supposedly suggested by the attachment of the lumberjack to his axe (*nawet drwal / którego trudno posądzić o takie rzeczy / stare zgarbione chłopisko / przyciska siekierę do*

[2] "Herbert was profiled against the grain of English poetry, which was in a state of permanent crisis, so as to refresh and reorient it." (Translation mine)

piersi / – całe życie była moja / teraz też będzie moja[3]; SP, 16). This kind of fetishism is supposed to indicate an intense love for the material world. Jarniewicz regards this interpretation as a curiosity (Jarniewicz, 2001: 248). Interestingly, Miłosz also refers to this poem in his study on Polish literature. However, what Gifford and Roberts understand as a revival of a pagan cult is read by Miłosz as an ironic gesture: "Some of Herbert's poems, it is true, pervert the great images of Christian civilization by irony: 'At the Gate of the Valley' suggests that the angels dividing the damned from the saved behave like guards in a concentration camp" (Miłosz 470).

In my analysis I will also refer to the subject of (Christian) civilization in Hughes's and Herbert's poetry. I would like to show that Hughes's and Herbert's attitudes towards the question of civilization are different—despite Hughes's appreciation of Herbert's poetry and stand. I will focus on Hughes's *Crow* (1970) and Herbert's *Pan Cogito* (1974). These two volumes were published at the beginning of the 1970s by authors of a similar age (Herbert was six years older, though both poets died in 1998). Both volumes are regarded among the most important collections of poetry in the respective literary histories of England and Poland (and thus of European literature). Both authors were assigned the role of national poets—Hughes in a literal sense as a Poet Laureate, while Herbert "po wydaniu Pana Cogito stał się poetą narodowym, wypowiadającym przeżycie narodowe"[4] (Śliwiński 6). Thus, both volumes can be considered as representative of Polish and English—and in a wider sense—of European poetry at that time. Finally, both volumes present a particular perspective on paroxysms of twentieth-century history. Accordingly, my analysis will present a juxtaposition between poetry as chaotic prophesy of catastrophe, written in "super-ugly language" and depicting the destruction of Western values and civilization (here I mean the poetry of Hughes), and poetry containing a strong moral message, seeking to preserve humanistic values and to praise order and

[3] "Even a lumberjack / whom one would never suspect of such things / an old bowed fellow / catches to his breast an axe / – all my life she was mine / she will be mine here too," trans. Czesław Miłosz (SP, 17). Except this one, all poems by Zbigniew Herbert quoted in this article were translated by Bogdana and John Carpenters.

[4] "after publishing Mr Cogito, became a national poet expressing the national experience." (Translation mine)

meaning (here I refer of course to Herbert's poetry). In other words, I will present a juxtaposition between the poetry of "barbarism" and the poetry of "civilization."

Herbert and Hughes created characters that have become symbolic figures in Polish and English poetry. Both poets depict the journeys of protagonists who struggle with the shallowness and wretchedness of the contemporary world. Both poets refer to the subjects of loneliness, the sacred, and humanity. However Mr Cogito is someone who can be related to civilization—with his faith in tradition, humanism, the search for harmony, and his attachment to the achievements of Mediterranean culture. Crow—on the other hand—is not even a human being, but rather someone in between. He is a spokesman for amorality, chaos and destruction—a cheeky Trickster from "barbaric" shamanic mythology.

Therefore, I will organize my analysis around the following themes: 1) two grotesque protagonists: trickster vs. contemporary intellectual; 2) the "in-between"; 3) two envoys. In this way, I will attempt to discover how "civilization" is perceived through the lenses of two contemporary poets—one from the West and the other from the East.

Two grotesque protagonists: trickster vs. contemporary intellectual

According to Neil Roberts Ted Hughes's *Crow*—a mixture of "desolation and sometimes raucous humor, and of exquisite poetic skill and deliberate crudity"—shocks, provokes and outrages (75). Paul Bentley also remarks that the book's language and imagery "have proved hard to swallow for some critics." Indeed, one of them refers to Hughes's book as violent, sadistic and anti-human; another calls Hughes a total nihilist (39). Hughes himself refers to his poems as "songs with no music whatsoever, in a super-simple and a super-ugly language" (1970: 107).

Hughes's *Crow* encompasses not only the different symbolic meanings associated with the figure of this black bird in general (death, bad luck, supernatural forces etc.), but most of all the symbolism of the trickster figure. One critic remarks that Hughes "creates an extensive folk-mythology of his own, complete with a fallible God, and with a questing hero" (Skea, "Ted Hughes

and Crow"). Many critics underline the fact that Hughes constructs his Crow-Trickster protagonist in reference to the mythology of Native Americans. In Paul Radin's study on Native American culture we read that the Trickster is:

> at one and the same time creator and destroyer, giver and negator, he who dupes others and is always duped himself. He wills nothing consciously. At all times he is constrained to behave as he does from impulses over which he has no control. He knows neither good nor evil yet he is responsible for both. He possesses no values, moral or social, is at the mercy of his passions and appetites, yet through his actions all values come into being . . . Laughter, humour and irony permeate everything Trickster does . . . he is primarily an inchoate being of undetermined proportions, a figure foreshadowing the shape of man (qtd. in Skea, "Ted Hughes and Crow").

The most important link between Hughes's Crow and the Trickster of Native Americans is the fact that both figures are struggling to become human—but they never quite manage to get there (Bentley 40).

Hughes mentions that *Crow* was originally inspired by Leonard Baskin's drawings of crows. Baskin's picture of an anthropomorphized crow with very strong legs, massive body, feather-muscles and human male genitals made the cover of early editions of the book so that readers would probably associate Hughes's crow with this image (Roberts 81). Because of its in-between position, the ontological status of Crow is not clear. He is not merely a bird and definitely not a human being. Crow is a hybrid of both. Hughes constantly collides the animalistic with the humane. In the poem "The Black Beast" (C, 18), Crow "like an owl, swivelled his head," "flailed immensely through the vacuum" and "screeched." Such descriptions connect Crow with the animal world. On the other hand, when Crow "hid in its bed" and "sat in its chair, telling loud lies," we recognize connections with the human world. However, the boundaries between these two worlds are fluid, as a man can also "screech" or "flail." Moreover, Crow occupies not only the earthly space of humans and animals, but can also detach from it and became something more—something or someone god-like: "Crow roasted the earth into a clinker, he charged into space . . . he screeched after the disappearing stars." Thus, the identity of Crow is never definite. In "Crow Communes" (C, 20), we read: "Crow, the hierophant, humped, impenetrable."

The undefined position of Crow and his tricky nature makes him a grotesque character. Stanisław Barańczak remarks that Mr Cogito is a self-representation of Zbigniew Herbert, but also "twór z lekka groteskowy"—"a slightly grotesque creature" (qtd. in Kornhauser 61). As Julian Kornhauser claims: "bez wątpienia poeta na własnym przykładzie ukazuje tragiczne rozdracie współczesnego intelektualisty, pochodzącego z naszej części Europy, ale odgórnie wydziedziczonego z tradycji śródziemnomorskiej"[5] (61). Thus, the "grotesqueness" of Mr Cogito is rather the result of this schizophrenic state than a specific feature of Mr Cogito himself. Nevertheless, in the poem "O dwu nogach Pana Cogito," ("About Mr. Cogito's Two Legs") we can find some aspects of the grotesque representation of the body*: tak oto / na obu nogach / lewej którą przyrównać można do Sancho Pansa / i prawej / przypominającej błędnego rycerza / idzie / Pan Cogito / przez świat / zataczając się lekko*.[6] The deformed body of Mr Cogito serves here to depict the duality of his state—the in-between position that Kornhauser describes as follows: "Pan Cogito zawieszony jest między dwiema skrajnościami: pospolitością życia a wysoką kulturą, świadomością bylejakości a siłą dziedzictwa, wątpliwościami a wiernością wobec przeszłości"[7] (61). But—in contrast with Crow—Mr Cogito cannot become someone god-like: his dilemmas are strictly of a human nature. In the poem "Pan Cogito obserwuje w lustrze swoją twarz" ("Mr Cogito Looks at his Face in the Mirror"; SP, 55) Herbert depicts a man of flesh who cannot escape the restrictions of his body (*spadek po praszczurze*, "a legacy from an ancestor"), but who struggles to defeat them by resorting to Mozart or "the fragrance of old books." The grotesqueness of Crow is brutal, animalistic and supernatural, whereas if Mr Cogito seems to be grotesque, it is a result of Herbert's juxtaposing the imperfections of the body and primitivism of thoughts (*kobiety złoto ziemia nie dać się strącić z konia*, "women gold

[5] "Undoubtedly the poet shows on his own example the tragic dilemma of a contemporary intellectual who comes from our part of Europe but who was disinherited from the Mediterranean tradition." (Translation mine)

[6] "in this way / on two legs / the left which can be compared to Sancho Panza / and the right / recalling the wandering knight / Mr Cogito / goes / through the world / staggering slightly." (Transl. B. and J. Carpenter)

[7] "Mr Cogito exists between two extremes: the commonness of life and high culture; the consciousness of mediocrity and the power of heritage; doubts and faithfulness to the past." (Translation mine)

earth don't let yourself be knocked from the horse") with noble values and the enduring nature "marble greenness of Veronese." Crow is definitely not caught in this dilemma. Thus, if Mr Cogito struggles to release himself from primitive reflexes and barbaric habits, Crow succumbs to them completely.

One of the most characteristic features of the trickster is—of course—the fact that he plays tricks. In "A Childish Prank" (C, 8), Hughes depicts a scene with God, the Worm ("God's only son"), man and woman, and the *spiritus movens* of the action—Crow. The "action" takes place in Eden shortly after God's creation of Man and Woman. In the first part of the poem, we are confronted with sleeping God and the lifeless bodies of man and woman. This calm motionless atmosphere is shattered by a trick—"a childish prank"—played by Crow. At first sight, Crow's prank seems to be perfidious, macabre and gruesome. However, paradoxically, Crow's deed introduces a sparkle of vitality into the unbearably motionless Eden. Still, this vitality is caused by destruction and pain. The Worm, cut in half by Crow, tries to bring his two parts together. Since the first half was put by Crow into the woman's body and the second into the man's, he drags the bodies across the grass. Neither the man nor the woman holds any decisive power. They are both passive and unresisting. We encounter here another paradox: the Worm displays more emotion than the humans and God himself. Hughes also reverses here the cycle of life—the man and woman created by God are actually dead (as they are without souls) and only the Worm in their intestines is able to wake them. This is a world turned upside-down—the antithesis of Eden. Indeed, it represents the deconstruction of Christian myth.

In contrast to Crow, Mr Cogito seeks to reestablish order and bring back sense and meaning to life in difficult times. As a contrast to the scene depicted by Hughes in "A Childish Prank," we may examine Herbert's description of the temptation of Spinoza ("Pan Cogito opowiada o kuszeniu Spinozy" 'Mr Cogito Tells About the Temptation of Spinoza'; SP, 74), where God is also presented in a very un-godlike fashion. God "cracks his knuckles," "clears his throat," but—unlike Crow—Mr Cogito does not cross the boundary between blasphemy and irony. In other words, his irony is not blasphemous. Although the dialogue between Spinoza and God ends with the image of God retreating the stairs, the gesture depicted by Herbert does not negate Christian values.

The sudden lack of God—the darkness, the emptiness—becomes a dissonance and evokes feelings of incompleteness. By contrast, the final lines of Hughes's poem read: "God went on sleeping. / Crow went on laughing." The diabolical laugh of Crow-Trickster fills the space of Eden and devaluates the sacred.

In-between: West, East, Far West

As many critics have observed (for instance, Kornhauser 78), Herbert's poetry places a strong emphasis on a tradition that is juxtaposed with the devaluation of contemporary culture (see "Pan Cogito a pop" 'Mr Cogito and Pop'). Nevertheless as Kornhauser remarks, "powrót do kultury i tradycji śródziemnomorskiej nie jest oczywiście ani łatwy, ani pozbawiony wątpliwości"[8] (78). Stanisław Barańczak in his *Uciekinier z Utopii* underlines that a typical trait of Herbert's poetry is the tension between heritage (the Mediterranean tradition) and disinheritance (as experienced by a citizen of contemporary Eastern Europe). Both of these elements co-exist simultaneously, and the latter does not prevail over the former (or vice versa) (Barańczak 73). It can be claimed that Hughes's poetry is also torn between heritage and disinheritance. However, the English poet refers to different geo-cultural areas. What is understood as "civilization" by Hughes is the heritage of Christian values that are no longer valid or justified in the post-war world. Therefore, Hughes's Crow serves as a symbol of disinheritance that seeks to free itself from Western traditions and the values imposed by Christianity. The Poet Laureate reestablishes the idea of heritage by resorting to the legacy of West—of the Far West, to be more precise—that is to the "primitive" mythology of Native Americans. However, this turn to "primitivism" does not bring an appreciation of a raw human nature but rather releases the cascade of untamed brutality.

As Dennis Walder observes: "In a post-Christian age, or at least one in which the whole structure of beliefs associated with Christianity is disintegrating, other myths must be created, or rediscovered (60). In many *Crow* poems (for instance, "Crow Blacker than Ever," "Apple Tragedy," or "Crow's Song of

[8] "The return to the Mediterranean culture and tradition is of course not easy or free from doubts." (Translation mine)

Himself"), Hughes reconstructs the myths of creation, the myth of fall, or the myth of redemption. In Crow's world, there is no place for faith (in its broad sense), since faith is naïve, childish and incapable of giving any consolation in a world torn by wars, deadly instincts, excessive consumption and mechanistic gestures. From Hughes's "Notes for a Little Play" (C, 80)—one of the last poems in the cycle—we learn that "demolition is total" and the world lies in eternal darkness, "without guest or God."

Therefore, the retreat into barbaric gestures—for instance, as depicted in "That Moment" (C, 11)—may be the only way to survive in the contemporary world. In "That Moment," Hughes collides the metaphysical and the sublime with the material and the trivial. The whole drama and seriousness of the death scene depicted in the poem are undermined by the final sentence: "Crow had to start searching for something to eat." Jarold Ramsey remarks that "The implications of this detail are at once macabre and eminently practical—the essence of Crow" (121).

In contrast with Crow, Mr Cogito does not give up trying to uproot barbaric impulses, for instance, "the instinct of self-preservation" that characterizes the citizens of the ancient city of Utica. In the poem "Pan Cogito o postawie wyprostowanej" ("Mr Cogito on Upright Attitudes"; SP, 89) we can observe the slow degradation of moral values: *obywatele / nie chcą się bronić / uczęszczają na przyspieszone kursy / padania na kolana* ("the citizens / don't want to defend themselves / they are attending accelerated courses / on falling to the knees"). The line *poza tym jak zwykle / handel i kopulacja* ("aside from that as usual / commerce and copulation") could also describe the world of Hughes's *Crow*. However, Hughes's protagonist serves as an accelerator of such attitudes, whereas Mr Cogito finds himself unwillingly involved in a situation that becomes a test of his humanity. All he can do is to choose the position in which he wants to die, a gesture and a last word. The latter seems to be especially important. Language can serve a salutory function: a word can preserve or restore humanistic values. In *Crow*—on the contrary—a word destroys. The poem "A Disaster" (C, 23) begins with the following lines: "There came news of a word. / Crow saw it killing men. He ate well. / He saw it bulldozing / Whole cities to rubble." The "word" depicted by Hughes is power-hungry—it devours men, sucks them like a gigantic lamprey. Hughes personifies the "word" and deprives it of its

linguistic functions. It does not bear any specific meaning, it does not stand for anything, its content has evaporated. The meaningless, "earless, eyeless" word that is only able to kill becomes a weapon of mass destruction.

Mr Cogito is a citizen of Eastern Europe who seeks refuge in the heritage of Western culture in order to define his humanity. Crow is a spokesman of Western dehumanization presented by the means of a reconstructed Trickster mythology. Both authors establish a similar diagnosis: the contemporary world has reached the end of its previous existence. Western values are slowly evaporating. However, they propose different solutions: Mr Cogito tries to find meanings that might rescue some of the values, while Crow rejects them completely.

Two envoys

"Przesłanie Pana Cogito" ("The Envoy of Mr Cogito"; SP, 94) is Herbert's most famous poems. However, according to Piotr Śliwiński, today it is the poem that arouses the strongest resistance. It is too uncompromising and does not allow for any conflict or tension. The lines *Idź dokąd poszli tamci do ciemnego kresu / po złote runo nicości twoją ostatnią nagrodę* ("Go where those others went to the dark boundary / for the golden fleece of nothingness your last prize") provoke more irritation than approval (Śliwiński 9). Here Mr Cogito clearly formulates a code of conduct of the civilized man: *idź wyprostowany* ("go upright among those who are on their knees"), *bądź odważny* ("be courageous"), *strzeż się dumy niepotrzebnej* ("beware of unnecessary pride"), *powtarzaj stare zaklęcia ludzkości bajki i legendy* ("repeat old incantations of humanity fables and legends"), *Bądź wierny Idź* ("Be faithful Go"). If we compare this very strong poetic statement of an ethical code with Crow's "envoy"—the last poem of Hughes's book, entitled "Littleblood" (C, 89)—it becomes clear that Cogito and Crow are as different from each other as night and day. "The Envoy of Mr Cogito" is the affirmation of humanism and moral beliefs, while "Littleblood" praises animalism, primitivism, and carnality:

> O littleblood, drumming in a cow's skull
> Dancing with a gnat's feet
> With an elephant's nose with a crocodile's tail.

Grown so wise grown so terrible
Sucking death's mouldy tits.

Sit on my finger, sing in my ear, O littleblood.
(*Crow*, 89)

Littleblood is very active indeed, and this liveliness resembles a kind of activity that might be associated with Dionysus. The song of Littleblood embraces the whole world. It becomes a metonymy of the universe as Littleblood is omnipresent—it is a flowing force, "eternally self-creating, eternally self-destroying" (Nietzsche 117). The boneless and skinless "body" of Littleblood allows it to transform itself and transgress all boundaries—its constant Dionysian flow announces revival and the manifestation of regenerating chaos. Thus, if we associate Hughes's poem with Dionysus, the attitude of Mr Cogito can be referred to the figure of Apollo. Mr Cogito's voice is the voice of reason, while Crow's is the voice of lust and primal instincts. Cogito seeks to restore civilized man; Crow wishes to liberate him(self) from the tight corset of "great words."

In the end—I paraphrase here Hughes's words about the Central European poets quoted above—Herbert creates a small ironic space in which humanity can respect itself. Hughes—on the other hand—releases the beast: the wild, sexual and violent energy that devours civilized man. The British Poet Laureate "sees his age as an age of crisis, of irreversible decay in the ethical-metaphysical system of enlightened, Western European culture" (Walder 60). Nevertheless, the nihilistic attitude does not prevail in Hughes's poetry. *Crow* is a record of a particular stage of Hughes's work—and probably also life. The book is dedicated to the memory of Hughes's lover Assia, who (like Sylvia Plath) gassed herself and their daughter Shura. Hughes as an "animal poet"—as he is often characterized—describes in his works various embodiments and anthropomorphic expressions of the wild forces of nature. But he is also capable of presenting positive images of the natural world and its close relation with man (for instance in *Season Songs* [1976], *Moortown* [1979], *River* [1983]).

In contrast with the figure of Crow, Mr Cogito accompanies Herbert for most of his career (until his final book of poetry, *Epilog burzy* [*Epilogue of the Storm*, 1998]). Cogito's multi-dimensional existence is not contained in a single poetic book, but is constantly reintroduced and recreated again and again in

other poems and books. For instance, in *Raport z oblężonego miasta* (*Report from the Besieged City and Other Poems*, 1983), Herbert depicts Mr Cogito, who "has made up his mind and return / to the stony bosom / of his homeland" ("Mr Cogito—The Return", SP, 103). In later collections, Mr Cogito becomes more and more autobiographical: "Pan Cogito nabiera cech autora, pierwsza osoba występuje częściej, egzystencjalny konkret, detal, epizod dostają więcej miejsca, horyzont się ścieśnia, alegoria zanika, personifikacja ustępuje personalizacji"[9] (Śliwiński 8). Crow is only an allegorical figure. He embodies collective impulses, representing a wild expression of the timeless and universal *Id*. Crow is somehow detached from reality, from the "here and now." The existence of Mr Cogito—on the other hand—is more mundane and temporal. He changes with time. In the poem "Pan Cogito a długowieczność" ("Mr Cogito and Longevity"), we read:

teraz znajduje się
między ostatecznym czasem
węgorza
i ostatecznym czasem
słonia

tu
szczerze mówiąc
wygasają ambicje
Pana Cogito

wspólna trumna ze słoniem
wcale go nie przeraża

nie łaknie być długowieczny
jak papuga
lub *Hippoglossus vulgaris*

.....

[9] "Mr Cogito gains more attributes of the author, the first person becomes more common. Existential specificities, details, episodes from life gain more space. The horizon becomes narrower, allegory disappears, personification is replaced with personalization." (Translation mine)

Pan Cogito
chciałby do końca
śpiewać urodę przemijania

.....

z troską dobrego ogrodnika
hoduje zmarszczki na twarzy[10]

(from: *Raport z oblężonego miasta*, SP, 116)

If we compare this poem with Hughes's "Littlebood," we can notice some similarities. Both poems reflect transience of nature. Mr Cogito consents to his place on earth among other species and accepts the laws of nature. He sings "the beauty of the passage of time." Littleblood also sings a song—but, in contrast with Mr Cogito's, it is a song of decomposition, fragmentation, dismemberment. There is no central subject to organize this chaotic universe filled with bits and pieces of different creatures—a subject that might civilize this space and assign meaning to it (as Mr Cogito clearly does).

Both poets share the heritage of European culture. However, Herbert looks for continuity and consistency of Europe's civilizational legacy through the character of Mr Cogito, while Hughes breaks with this heritage and creates his own mythology on the canvas of "barbaric" shamanic stories in order to describe the post-Holocaust and post-nuclear world.

[10] "now he finds himself / between the final moment / of an eel / and the final moment / of an elephant / here / to speak more truthfully / the ambition of Mr Cogito / come to an end / a coffin shared with an elephant / does not frighten him at all / he doesn't hunger for longevity / like the parrot / or Hippoglossus vulgaris / . . . / to the end / Mr Cogito would like to sing / the beauty of the passage of time / . . . / with the care of a good gardener / he cultivates the wrinkles on his face." (from: *Report from the Besieged City*, trans. B. and J. Carpenter, SP, 117)

A dated poet

Anna Nasiłowska remarks that after the political transformation in Poland Herbert became "niemodny i nie z tej epoki" ("old-fashioned and not of this era"; 40). Piotr Śliwiński also claims that:

> Ranga nadana Herbertowi w latach siedemdziesiątych i osiemdziesiątych, przesądziła o pewnej jego degradacji po roku 1989. Z chwili na chwilę uwierzyliśmy, że Utopia nam już nie zagraża . . . Odrzuciliśmy wielkie pojęcia i związane z nimi egzaltacje. Herbert z jego rygoryzmem moralnym stał się kimś obcym. Tym bardziej, że poeta zamiast sprzysiąc się z nowym, odczarowanym, odessanym z grozy światem, upierał się przy swoich imperatywach, wzniecając wokół siebie zamęt ideologicznych sporów.[11] (Śliwiński 6-7)

The major criticism of Herbert's poetry probably came from the authors associated with *brulion*. In the tenth issue of *brulion*, published in 1989, we find a text with the significant title "Kamienny posąg komandora" ("The Stone Statue of Commander"), which records a discussion between Robert Tekieli, Krzysztof Koehler (who use the pseudonyms X and Y), Marian Stala and Tadeusz Komendant. The disputants wonder if the poetry of Herbert was overestimated due to the historical circumstances. For Komendant, Herbert is an exaggerated moralist. He claims that the ethical values of Herbert's poetry are too persistently emphasized (121). Komendant was also the initiator of the "League for the Defense of Polish Poetry Against Herbert" ("Liga Obrony Poezji Polskiej przed Herbertem"), which opposed the treatment of Herbert as a national bard. Marcin Świetlicki in his poem "Wiersz dla Zbigniewa Herberta (dedykowany Wisławie Szymborskiej)" ("A Poem for Zbigniew Herbert" [Dedicated to Wisława Szymborska]") also ironically refers to the "statuesque" image of Herbert that was created "in the times when Adam Michnik knew

[11] "The authority attributed to Herbert in the seventies and eighties determined his decline after 1989. Suddenly we believed that Utopia was no longer a threat to us . . . We rejected the big concepts and associated exaltations. Herbert with his moral rigor became a stranger. And the poet himself insisted on his own imperatives instead of concurring with the new disenchanted world from which all horror had been sucked out. This attitude provoked confused ideological disputes." (Translation mine)

a lot about poetry" (*żyliśmy w czasach / w których Adam Michnik / wybornie znał się na poezji*; *Pieśni profana*, 15).

Herbert's poetry was certainly regarded as old-fashioned by the "barbarians" who came after him. They rejected the poetic pathos of classicist idealism and were irritated by the "official" image of Herbert as a national bard. But in Poland of the 1970s, such a figure as Hughes's Crow probably could not have been created.[12] The English poetry of the same period needed a shock to wake it from its lethargy—Hughes's *Crow* to some extent delivered this shock. Hughes was the first English poet of "post-war European catastrophe" (Corcoran 115). Mr Cogito provoked in a different way—he did not retreat into barbaric gestures, he did not prophesy the ultimate destruction of civilization. Instead, he sought salvation in the heritage of European civilization. And to some—his poetry represented just such a salvation.

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[12] However, one of the readers of the unpublished version of my text drew my attention to the fact that in 1972 Krzysztof Karasek, a Polish poet, published the poem "Drozd" ("Trush"), that can be regarded as a faint reflection of Hughes's Crow.

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Summary

Zbigniew Herbert (1924-1998) and Ted Hughes (1930-1998) are not often compared in critical studies, though—as Terry Gifford claims—Herbert was one of several Eastern European poets who influenced Hughes's work. In this paper, I refer to Hughes's remarks on Eastern European poetry and present the possible reasons for Hughes's admiration of Herbert at the end of 1960s. I wish to present Herbert's and Hughes's poetry as introducing certain new qualities into post-war European poetry. However, the main aim of my work is to juxtapose the protagonists of Herbert's and Hughes's collections, *Mr Cogito* (*Pan Cogito*, 1974) and *Crow* (1970), thus initiating a kind of dialogue between the "civilized" figure of Herbert's Mr Cogito and the "barbaric" figure of Hughes's Crow. I examine how "civilization" (especially Christian civilization) is perceived through the lenses of two contemporary poets – one from the West and the other from the East.

Key words: comparative literature, Polish poetry, English poetry, "barbarians" and "civilized," Zbigniew Herbert, Ted Hughes

Pan Cogito opowiada Krukowi o Spinozie, ale Kruk wybucha śmiechem. „Cywilizacja" i „barbarzyństwo" w *Panu Cogito* Zbigniewa Herberta i *Kruku Teda* Hughes'a

Streszczenie

Zbigniew Herbert (1924-1998) i Ted Hughes (1930-1998) nie są często zestawiani w badaniach literaturoznawczych, pomimo że, jak zauważa Terry Gifford, niektórzy poeci Europy Wschodniej – a wśród nich także Zbigniew Herbert – oddziaływali na twórczość angielskiego poety. W swoim tekście odnoszę się m.in. do spostrzeżeń Hughes'a dotyczących poezji wschodnioeuropejskiej i przedstawiam możliwe przyczyny fascynacji Hughes'a poezją Herberta. Moim zamiarem jest także przedstawienie poezji Herberta i Hughes'a jako wprowadzających nowe jakości do powojennej poezji europejskiej. Skupiam się jednak przede wszystkim na porównaniu głównych postaci najważniejszych cyklów poetyckich obu poetów: *Pana Cogito* (1974) oraz *Kruka* (*Crow*, 1970), w celu zainicjowania rodzaju „dialogu" pomiędzy „barbarzyńskim" Krukiem a „ucywilizowanym" Panem Cogito, a także przedstawienia, w jaki sposób „cywilizacja" (zwłaszcza chrześcijańska) postrzegana jest przez dwóch współczesnych sobie poetów – jednego ze Wschodu, drugiego z Zachodu.

Słowa kluczowe: komparatystyka, poezja polska, poezja angielska, „barbarzyńcy" i „cywilizowani", Zbigniew Herbert, Ted Hughes