

UDC 821.162.1

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32342/3041-217X-2025-2-30-9>

TETIANA SHEVCHENKO

*Doctor of Philology, Full Professor,
Odesa I.I. Mechnikov National University (Ukraine)*
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8118-9663>

LILIIA CHYKUR

*PhD in Philology, Associate Professor,
Odesa I.I. Mechnikov National University (Ukraine)*
<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-1517-1952>

NARRATIVE-MENTATIVE ORGANISATION OF COLLECTION *MILOSZ'S ABC'S* BY C. MILOSZ

Статтю присвячено дослідженню наративно-ментативної організації збірки спогадів і роздумів *Абетка (Abecadło, Milosz's ABC's)* лауреата Нобелівської премії Ч. Мілоша. Об'єктом дослідження стала збірка *Абетка*, що об'єднує близько 200 есеїв, різних за тематикою і оповідною структурою. Мета статті полягає у визначенні специфіки цих есеїв з погляду їх наративно-ментативної організації, чинників їх текстотворення в постмодерному дискурсі. Новизну наукового дослідження становить обрана перспектива аналізу наративно-ментативної природи есеїстичних текстів Ч. Мілоша, котрі ще не вивчалися в такому аспекті. Обраний ракурс передбачає застосування відповідної *методології* дослідження, яка ґрунтується на засадах наративного, біографічного і структуралістського методів. У результаті дослідження збірки *Абетка* Ч. Мілоша було 1) проаналізовано структуру книги, зокрема з позиції взаємодії оповідних і міркувальних компонентів; 2) запропоновано класифікацію текстів *Абетки* з погляду чинників текстотворення: наративні, наративно-ментативні, ментативні есеї, котрі уможливили самоідентифікацію автора як свідка й учасника культурного, історичного, соціального життя ХХ ст. і водночас його обсерватора крізь філософський, історичний, теологічний, літературний, топологічний, етнічний та особистісний дискурси; 3) досліджено репрезентативні зразки всіх варіантів текстів з метою демонстрації художніх (оповідних і рефлексивних) технік Ч. Мілоша як есеїста. Зроблено *висновки* про винятковість збірки *Абетка* Ч. Мілоша як постмодерного твору з погляду практик єднання рефлексії, фіксації і свідчення фактів і подій минулого, ідей відкритості власної культурної мапи, закоріненої на сполученні особистої історії і загальної пам'яті епохи, а також зображення часу і простору: у текстах час і простір нерозривно з'єднані і формують унікальний мемуарно-рефлексивний дискурс есеїстичної колекції; простір в есеях постає як фізичний (конкретне місце подій), так і психологічний (простір думок, спогадів, почуттів нарататора). Визначено, що збірка презентує біографію автора як деконструкцію його життя на тлі ХХ ст. в культурному, історичному, філософському регістрах. Сама біографія постає у розпорозаних фрагментах, у форматі приватної енциклопедії, а нарататор відтворюється як розчинене в багатьох образах, локаціях, часових зрізах, постатях «я», заґрунтоване на постійній множинності, змінності, сконструйованості залежно від описаних обставин. Це «я» презентоване в різних іпостасях – письменника, філософа, лектора, критика, есеїста, наративи яких нерідко переходять в ментативи, а то й подекуди демонструють винятково рефлексивний тип свідомості.

Перспективи дослідження відкривають нові можливості наративно-ментативного аналізу, котрий у подальшому може бути застосований у процесі вивчення его-текстів (листів, мемуарів, щоденників, збірок есеїстики, інтерв'ю) у європейських літературах.

Ключові слова: наратив, ментатив, збірка, есеї, композиція, організація, постмодерний твір.

For citation: Shevchenko, T., Chykur, L. (2025). Narrative-Mentative Organisation of Memoirs and Reflections Collection *Milosz's Abc's* by C. Milosz. *Alfred Nobel University Journal of Philology*, 2 (30), 167-182, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32342/3041-217X-2025-2-30-9>



Introduction

The works of Czesław Miłosz, the renowned Polish poet, prose writer, essayist and Nobel Prize laureate, has attracted and continues to attract the attention of many literary scholars. The legacy of Czesław Miłosz is distinguished by a profound fusion of philosophical, historical and cultural motifs that reflect the consciousness of a European individual in the second half of the twentieth century. A. Werner is correct in stating: “Miłosz’s legacy dazzles and overwhelms with its comprehensiveness, greedily solidifying in the forms of monumental monuments that can be comparatively easily tamed by ritual forms” [Werner, 1981, p. 269]. The work of Czesław Miłosz continually occupies the focus of scholarly interest and is frequently examined from the perspective of cultural dialogue. Thus, M. Khmialnitski [2020] investigated the principles of representing multiculturalism and borderlands in his works, specifically addressing the influences of interwar Vilnius and the Romantic tradition of A. Mickiewicz as a classic of Polish literature on the formation of his poetics. The scholar thoroughly analysed aspects of the influence of cultural and political events on Czesław Miłosz’s work, particularly during the period of his emigration and return to his homeland. The problematic of memory of the past in Czesław Miłosz’s work of the 1980s and 1990s became the object of investigation by Ukrainian scholar O. Keba [2020]. In his study, he analysed the factors of conceptualising the past and their influence on the artist’s contemporary worldview. His article also addresses the question of identity and historical consciousness and the techniques of employing devices of reconstruction and reinterpretation of collective and individual memory. The scholar is convinced that Miłosz’s “visions and reflections (...) provide keys for understanding vital humanitarian aspects of existence, national and universal human values, the global mission of literature and culture in the contemporary world” [Keba, 2020, pp. 72–73].

L. Oliader specially analyzes the humanistic views of C. Miłosz, as presented by him in the book *Historie ludzkie. Pierwodruki (1983–2006)*. Vaughn looks at Miłosz’s thoughts about what people have become in the 20th century under the pressure of tragic historical situations, paying respect to the communicative methods of integrating the reader’s perspective into writing and saying that “his philosophy, thought over the Bible, Christian values – this philosophy of knowledge, and other things like that, but directly concerning the thoroughness of people, their life and marriage, as well as national ones, and thus in hidden human boundaries” [Oliader, 2012, p. 125].

The philosophical and theological aspects of C. Miłosz’s poetry were examined in detail by J. Rzepa [2021]. In her work, the author investigated the influence of M. Zdanowski and S. Brzozowski on C. Miłosz’s worldview, whose works served as his guide regarding reflections on the role of religion in the contemporary world. The author concluded that the poet combined theological and properly poetic practices in his work, which resulted in a unique synthesis of religious and literary motifs.

The linguistic practices of C. Miłosz have also not escaped the attention of contemporary scholars of the Nobel laureate’s legacy. For instance, Y. Zych [2023] analysed his activity as a language teacher, emphasising the poet’s contribution to the popularisation of Polish culture amongst foreigners. The study discusses the practices through which C. Miłosz employed language as an instrument of intercultural communication and teaching, and his significance for the dissemination of Polish literature abroad.

Comparative analysis of C. Miłosz’s works and those of other authors constitutes a separate body of contemporary research on the artist’s work. Thus, K. Vypasnyak [2013] undertook a comparative analysis of the genre characteristics of *Miłosz’s ABC’s* by Czesław Miłosz and *Lexicon of Intimate Cities* by Yurii Andrukhovych. She drew attention to the similarities and differences in the approaches of both authors regarding the compositional organisation of texts, particularly in the alphabetical and encyclopaedic principles of unifying diverse works into a coherent whole, yet she left aside the very factors uniting the texts into an aggregate. The theme of dialogue between Polish and American poets was examined by P. Florczyk [2019]. He investigated the mutual influence and exchange of ideas between poets of both cultures, noting the exceptional role of C. Miłosz, an artist who lived in both America and Europe as a connecting link between the West and the East. The author analysed how these intercultural contacts enriched literary traditions and facilitated understanding amongst peoples [Florczyk, 2019].

The article by M. Jissov [2021] is devoted to the concept of the “captive mind” in the context of Eastern Europe as presented by C. Milosz in his work of the same title, *The Captive Mind*. The researcher examined how the man of letters employed the notions of colonialism and imperialism to describe the mental and political state of the region, emphasising the difficulties of identity and subjectivity in post-totalitarian society, and also outlined his perspective on these phenomena from the position of Orientalism. Equally noteworthy is the article by Z. Kazmierczyk [2021], in which the “cinematicity” of Czesław Miłosz’s poetic language is investigated and the ways in which cinematographic techniques and visual imagery influenced the reception of his poetry are analysed. This study opened new perspectives for understanding Czesław Miłosz’s poetics and its intentions of uniting various artistic practices. Also significant for contemporary interpretation of C. Miłosz’s work are the studies by A. Dyszak [2023], M. Antoniuk, A. Franaszek [Antoniuk, Franaszek, 2024], A. Baranov [2022], M. Bernacki, J.B. Hutchens [Bernacki, Hutchens, 2023], V. Horbatenko [2024], T. Mykhailova [2022] and others.

Despite the considerable volume of recent research devoted to C. Miłosz’s work, a number of aspects of his legacy remain outside the scope of scholarly attention. In particular, the question of the interaction between the writer’s personal experiences and his philosophical and theological views, as well as their influence on the formation of literary style, particularly in his essayistic work of the later period, remains unresolved. The narrative nature of the essayistic texts of this stage of C. Miłosz’s creative work has practically remained beyond the purview of contemporary scholarly inquiry, notably in the book *Milosz’s ABC’s*. Given this, there arises a necessity to study *Milosz’s ABC’s* as a work written in the final years of his life from the perspective of its narrative-mentative nature, bearing in mind that the book presents texts of various narrative and reflective forms that occurred in the author’s previous works. This will enable a reassessment of C. Miłosz’s work from the perspective of factors constituting text formation in postmodern discourse.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to determine the specificity of the structure of the essays in the collection *Milosz’s ABC’s* from the perspective of its narrative-mentative organisation and the factors constituting its text formation in postmodern discourse. Texts of varying narrative nature are grouped by the author according to an alphabetical principle into a coherent whole and thereby he offers the reader different approaches to understanding the past through the prism of the present. On the other hand, the writer presented a work of postmodern writing, characterised by eclecticism and fragmentariness, multi-layered organisation of texts grounded in ‘then’ and ‘now,’ genre and stylistic syncretism (essays dominated by various principles, the combination of verse and prose, texts or their fragments in different languages), directed towards readers’ co-creative participation, which formally rests on the principles of conventional unity of past and present. In order to provide a comprehensive elucidation of the characteristics of the factors of text formation in *Milosz’s ABC’s*, we propose to address two interrelated tasks: first, the analysis of the narrative and mentative nature of the texts themselves as separate units of the author’s corpus and the factors of text generation of essays with a reflective principle, which is only now gaining momentum in contemporary literary studies, yet has already demonstrated its productivity [Ganchenko, 2025; Zagoruyko, 2025; Maksimova, 2021, 2022; Shevchenko, 2019, 2020; Yakubovska, 2024], and second, to trace how the narrative or mentative nature of texts serves as the unifying principle of this author’s essayistic encyclopaedia as a postmodern work.

Accordingly, the research methodology is comprehensive: to specify the particularity of the narrative structure of texts, the narrative *method* has been applied, directed towards the structure, content and functioning of narrative in texts and the interpretation of narration, which initiates reflection in essays. Then, we also applied the biographical *method*, which enabled the coordination of processes of essayistic text formation with the biographical context of C. Miłosz and the intentions of individual authorial consciousness from the perspective of the twentieth century as represented by him. Finally, we used the structuralist *method*, oriented towards understanding the factors of authorial unification of dissimilar texts into an aggregate and the structure of narration itself.

The structure of *Milosz’s ABC’s* by C. Miłosz

Milosz’s ABC’s (*Abecadło Miłosza*, 1997) by C. Miłosz constitutes an authorial encyclopaedia that unites works varying in narrative nature, which collectively present the biography of the

author himself within broad cultural, historical and philosophical contexts of the twentieth century. Recounting his past from the distance of years, the author simultaneously proposes his own conception of memory and the past, his vision of humanity's place in the history of the twentieth century, its physical and spiritual attachment to particular territories, countries, communities and agglomerations. And all these theories, recollections, generalisations and reflections are presented in the format of an authorial dictionary, which the reader may master at their own discretion from any point, thereby accepting the author's reflections from the distance of years in measured doses. Essentially, the experienced author himself, whose shoulders bear nearly the entire twentieth century, presents his own life as something amenable to systematisation and generalisation, as a mosaic woven from separate elements, as personal experience that "loses its justification, solidifying in pseudo-existence" [Prokop, 1985, p. 230].

By naming the book *Milosz's ABC's*, the artist proposed a variant of a private encyclopaedia of the twentieth century and his own life as its organic constituent: before the reader emerges an authorial history of the twentieth century, delineated in names, locations, titles of works and various narratives, supplemented by reflections and generalisations. The twentieth century, according to the author's design, appears as a variation of postmodern chaos as the embodiment of "multiplicity, diversity and openness, where any attempts to impose a single interpretation of reality collapse" [Goncharenko, 2025, p. 39]. He assigns himself the role of its observer, who dared to undertake the ordering and organisation of this multi-directional experience through reflection. Thus, the alphabetically ordered presentation of his own life against the backdrop of the complex European and American history of the twentieth century attracts attention not primarily through the depiction of real figures and authentic events within a broad cultural field as part of reality, but above all through the very personality of the author himself, who recreates the world he has represented from the distance of years.

The texts of essays, endowed with characteristics of other genres and a high degree of coherence (stories, mini-biographies, sketches, memoirs, recollections, mini-travelogues), scattered throughout the book, ultimately form a conventional encyclopaedic unity (as evidenced by the alphabetically ordered principle of their arrangement). The connecting link uniting all the disparate texts is the author as narrator, thinker and philosopher. The texts of the book present him comprehensively, multi-aspectually and dynamically. The author, who lived a long life on several continents, emerges as a creative and wise person who accumulated considerable experience and seeks to systematise it, for which purpose he chooses the universal alphabetical principle. However, the writer himself nowhere names his own work a dictionary or encyclopaedia. He designates his text in postmodern traditions as "instead of a novel" [Milosz, 2001, p. 313], characterises it as a work "instead of an essay on the twentieth century," "instead of a memoir" [Milosz, 2001, p. 313], creates a work in the version of a new capacious, large form: "Milosz himself admitted that he had planned a novel, but the search for a large form led him to this particular compositional style" [Polishchuk, 2011, c. 205]. The large form is comprehensible only in the unification of a considerable number of texts, whose author seems to occupy a particular position of externality with regard to what he experienced, suffered and comprehended, and thus seeks to view his own life experience from the distance of time through the eyes of a wise person possessing knowledge valuable to others, and to give that experience a certain readable form. Therefore, for the artist it is important not merely to recall or narrate something: it is fundamentally important for him to generalise what is described, to observe it and to thematise mentally the writing.

In our view, a narrowly genre-based approach to defining the texts presented by the author in *Milosz's ABC's* is not particularly productive, since most texts approximate essays of various kinds, texts in which there occurs "a transformation of oneself into a laboratory for the investigation of one's own consciousness" [Prokhasko, 2024, c. 47] and "individuality steps out of itself and comes to itself" [Epstein, 1988, c. 336]. In other words, whatever the author narrates, he nevertheless resorts to reflections regarding what is described, albeit in a reduced form. It is far more important to understand the nature of the ground which the artist himself chooses for the observation of his own consciousness. Thus, figures from the past and present from various

spheres of science and art, different countries, cities, streets, particular locations, abstract ideas and concepts, languages, artistic works and philosophical concepts appear as certain angles of these very observations. As a result of these processes, heterogeneous works emerge as a new unity, created according to the principle of montage and rhizome, named by the author *Milosz's ABC's*, in which the physical and intellectual world are united into a mosaic of existence, which in the consciousness of the reader appears as a single variegated multicoloured canvas.

In this canvas, however, three types of works are clearly distinguished: narrative, narrative-mentative and mentative. We proceed from the understanding that narrative is “a class of doubly eventful discursive practices that unites in an unanalysed quality of utterance – the referential and communicative” [Shevchenko, 2020, c. 284], while mentative is a practice of utterance with developed receptive intention and creative construction, possessing an intention of interpretation, which “the fundamental difference between these is expressed from iterative or declarative is that they do not simply inform about the states or processes of being or thinking, but assume – as a consequence of a communicative event – some mental event (change in the picture of the world) in the mind of the addressee” [Tiupa, 2006, p. 40]. This concerns text with evident mental reference. The distinction between narrative and mentative is evident: while in narrative the event of the work and the event of narration about it appear as a unity, the “referential content of mentative utterances consists not of eventful life intrigue, but of procedural purposefulness of being that generates explicit interpretativity” [Tiupa, 2021].

It is also important to add that “mentative builds its vision over the narrator’s vision of the referential event.... It becomes therefore a meta-meta-communicative mental event” [Zaitseva, 2021, c. 178]. Given this, “mental mode implies first of all an orientation towards the addressee, a change in the picture of the world in his mind” [Zaitseva, 2021, c. 178]. Therefore, in mentative texts, the author’s thinking principle as process is specifically emphasised, as well as the important living character of thought, its personal interpretation. In narrative, reference to the “extension” of the chronotope prevails, in mentative – to the mental situation: to thinking as such in its linguistic form” [Kuznetsov, Maksimova, 2007, c. 56].

Thus, *narrative* essays describe certain stories, facts and phenomena of the past which the author experienced at the time and seeks to share these experiences with the reader. It is important to the writer to recount the biography of a person close to him, certain vicissitudes of various periods of his own life, in order, ultimately, to generalise the role of these facts and events in his own consciousness, to fit this or that story into the puzzle of his own fate from the position of a person and artist instructed by experience. Certainly, the reflective component of such works is minimised, yet it remains nonetheless: whether in the format of one or two sentences or in the variant of more elaborate meditations within the general fabric of the narrative. The authorial narration in such works provokes certain reflections directly connected with what is discussed prior to or during the account or description. The narrative part of the essay (story, mini-plot, events presented in cause-and-effect sequence) here prepares the reader for mentative reflections, which are usually not elaborate or detailed, yet concentrated and condensed.

In *narrative-mentative* essays, the narrative and reflective principles are balanced. In such texts, described events are intoned by a stream of thoughts. Described stories and facts of the past here only indirectly prepare the reference to the mental event: indices of the author’s being, as reflected by him in the text, are necessary only for the change in the mental picture of the world, in other words, for elaborate reflection. This part of the work thus becomes more valuable for understanding the artist’s worldview.

Mentative essays consist entirely of reflections and authorial considerations of this or that phenomenon or concept. In such works, reference becomes the ground for interpretative construction of reality, as a result of which through the stringing together of thoughts the flow of authorial consciousness acquires a certain structure, form and rational stability. These texts demonstrate the depth of self-observation, self-analysis and critical self-evaluation of the artist as philosopher and sage, burdened and simultaneously filled with the experience of what he has lived through. Structurally, these positions can be presented as follows:

Table 1

Essays in Czesław Miłosz's *ABC* in the Context of Their Textual Formation

Essay types	Content, motifs and factors of text formation	Examples of texts from the collection
Narrative	Works in which real events of the past, biographies of people, visited locations and attractions, books read and so forth are described, which are primary, while reflection regarding all of them is secondary.	<i>WROBLEWSKI, Andrzej; POLISH LANGUAGE; ZAN, Tomasz; BALZAC, Honore de; CAMUS, Albert; KOESTLER, Arthur; KISIELEWSKI, Stefan; FRENCH; AMERICAN VISA</i> , etc.
Narrative-mentative	Works in which described real events and phenomena of the past directly model subsequent reflection; here narrative and reflective principles are balanced and directly connected.	<i>FRANCE; ULRICH; DOSTOEVSKY, Fyodor; PRIMAVERA; KRIDL, Manfred; LOS ANGELES; NEMO, Captain; STUPIDITY of the West; BAUDELAIRE, Charles</i> , etc.
Mentative	Works in which authorial consciousness acquires rational structure through the stringing together of thoughts; devoted to questions of literature, culture, creativity, philosophical understanding of nature, religion, morality, psychology and so forth.	<i>TERROR; NATURE; TRUTH; MINDFULNESS; PREJUDICES; CENTER and periphery; CURIOSITY; TIME; HARTED; LOVE; CRUELTY</i> , etc.

Narrative essays: the discourse of reconstructing the past

Narrative essays primarily encompass facts of the past, reproduced with the aim of their subsequent evaluation from the distance of years. Real facts and events of the past in *Milosz's ABC's* are not interesting in themselves: they are important primarily from the perspective of interpretation, evaluation and the creation of a particular context for perceiving the past from the position of a thinker who resorts to the systematisation of his own recollections. Thus, according to B.H. Smith, "independent of the narrative in question there existed some particular determinate set of events in some particular determinate (untwisted) order or sequence" [Smith, 1981, p. 228]. This definition emphasises the process of narration as the transmission of information about events from one subject to another, hence the prevailing element of narrative is the account of what occurred, that which had its beginning, development and resolution. From the perspective of G. Prince, narrative may be perceived as the result, process, object, action or structure of one or a series of events. An important characteristic of narrative is the direction of the information contained within it towards the final recipient [Prince, 1994, p. 58]. Thus, narrative fragments in *Milosz's ABC's* not only constitute a collection of events or an account of them, they emphasise the narrator himself, who seeks to insert this or that figure or event of the past into the puzzle of his own life against the backdrop of the twentieth century, named by the artist as "his own."

Narrative essays in *Milosz's ABC's* we conditionally divide into four groups:

1) portrait essays or biographical essays: they are entirely devoted to figures of the past with whom the author was acquainted (for example, *AMALRIK, Andrei; ASZKENAZY, Janina; BOREJSZA, Jerzy*) or to those whom the artist did not know personally, yet these figures influenced his own worldview and the formation of his system of values: C. Milosz considers it necessary to recount in detail their life story at his own discretion, and, naturally, to emphasise their role and significance for his own life (for example, *REXROTH, Kenneth; WHITMAN, Walt; MILLER, Henry*);

2) travel essays or 'place'-essays: these talk about the author's journey to particular locations with detailed accounts of the circumstances of his own 'discovery' of this or that attraction and narratives about its characteristics. The element of intrigue, vicissitudes and circumstances of movement with its own separate plot plays no small role here. Naturally, all these 'mini-stories' are necessary to the author for his own reflections in one way or another on the role of certain topoi in human life. Here there are clearly defined locations (*BROCELIANDE, Foret de la; KRASNOGRUDA, or Krasnohruda; SIERRAVILLE; RUDNICKA WILDERNESS*), and there are general ones, materialised within the text by a concrete place, which subsequently becomes the subject of observations (*MANORS; CITY*). Meanwhile, spatial imagery in *Milosz's ABC's* ought to be perceived in clear subordination to temporal imagery: in the texts time and space are inextricably

united and form a unique memoir-reflective discourse of the essayistic collection. Space in these named essays appears both as physical (concrete location of events) and as psychological (space of thoughts, recollections and feelings of the narrator). Individual spatio-temporal markers (Vilnius of the 1930s, the White House of 1980) acquire profound symbolic significance as personal rubicons of the narrator, and consequently of the entire twentieth century in his interpretation;

3) narratives about artistic characters, which in the author's interpretation acquire a new variant of positioning in literary studies and philosophy (*BAAL; NEMO, Captain; ADAM AND EVE*): many of them demonstrate the scepticism characteristic of postmodernism, the rejection of universal truths and playful techniques of representation;

4) essays narrating institutions, organisations and associations which were important in the writer's life: in them generalisation regarding the importance or harmfulness of the writer's involvement with all these structures is preceded by an account of personal collaboration with them, and a historical note about the institution itself is possible, presented as a story with commentary (*ACADEMY of Arts and Letters, American; CONGRES pour la Liberte de la Culture*). In these and other essays the narrator, very close to the author, is each time different: he appears in the role of interpreter of events (*ACADEMY of Arts and Letters, American*), then as participant (*AMERICAN VISA; ENGLISH*), is embodied as philosopher (*ANGELIC SEXUALITY; FAME; INACCURACY; TERROR*), art historian (*BAROQUE*), critic and literary scholar (*BALLADS AND ROMANCES; BAUDELAIRE, Charles; KRIDL, Manfred*), speaks on behalf of the writer (*CAMUS, Albert*), cultural scholar (*STUPIDITY of the West; SCHOPENHAUER, Arthur; CENTER and periphery*), historian (*QUINN, Arthur; PROZOR, Count Maurycy*) and even ethnographer and scholar of religion (*BOGOMILS; BUDDHISM; SUZUKI, Daisetz Teitaro*) and so forth.

In other words, the narrator in *Milosz's ABC's* is decentred, dispersed and often plays with the reader's expectations, blurring the boundaries between the present and its mythologisation from the distance of years, which is frequently encountered in postmodern texts. He acquires various forms, including distancing from the reader or deliberate address to him, which further subjectivises reality and reveals the relativity of history. The author himself outlined this format of narration in the essay *AUTHENTICITY*: "Had I been preoccupied only with myself, I would have created a literature of accusations and groans. Instead, I kept my distance from the substance I extruded" [Milosz, 2001, p. 44]. Thus, the author's voice in *Milosz's ABC's* is each time different, deliberately blurred and indeterminate: it is thoughtful and ironic simultaneously, often internally contradictory, which is characteristic of postmodern consciousness. Probably, it is precisely in the techniques of such conscious authorial indeterminacy that one can speak of the twentieth century from the position of key postmodern themes of identity, historical memory, multiplicity of truths, relativistic relativity of knowledge, morality, culture, negation of the absolute, contextual dependence, critique of rationality and productive self-reflection, which are raised in the book. "The truth about us will remind us of a mosaic composed of little stones of different value and colours" [Ibid., p. 290], as ultimately generalised by C. Milosz.

Regardless of the type of narrative essays, which determine the 20th century in a wide range of aspects (space, time, character, journey, personage, topos), they all maintain the general sequence of narrative levels: texts are oriented towards the past with linkage to modern days, which provides a foundation for reflection; there are descriptions of specific places, time of the event and characters. All of this is described in detail, thoroughly substantiated, and includes description of complication or conflict, evaluation as the author's stance towards events, generalisation as the conclusion of the narrative and its connection with the context of 'here' and 'now.' The integrity of all these components ensures the unity of spatial, temporal and evaluative aspects of the narrative, which makes it effective for the perception and understanding of readers. Naturally, the volume of texts may vary, as the degree of narrative and reflective components may also differ. Meanwhile, in the majority of texts, the communicative strategy chosen by the author – reflection following narration, reflection as consequence and summation of narration, reflection as substitution for narration – is traced very clearly throughout the entire book.

The appropriateness of such a classification is confirmed in particular cases by the author himself, since occasionally he himself 'hints at' the ways of interpreting his own texts and declares the importance of his approaches to understanding the twentieth century through figures, events, locations, attractions, artistic works and so forth. We present fragments of certain autho-

rial reflections on this: "Biographies are like seashells; not much can be learned from them about the mollusk that once lived inside them. Even in connection with my biography based on my literary work, I feel as if I have left an empty shell behind. The value of biographies, then, is solely that they allow one to more or less re-create the era in which a given life was lived" [Milosz, 2001, p. 60]; "Working on this ABC book, I often thought that it would be most appropriate to bore into the core of each individual's life and destiny, rather than limit myself to external facts. Perhaps my ABC's are instead of: instead of a novel, instead of an essay on the twentieth century, instead of a memoir. Each of the individuals remembered here sets into motion a network of mutual allusions and interdependencies linked to the facts of my century. In the final analysis, I do not regret that I have dropped names so cavalierly (or so it must seem), or that I have made a virtue of my casual way" [Ibid., p. 313].

In *Milosz's ABC's*, such fundamental types of narrators are clearly distinguished: autodiegetic and homodiegetic. The homodiegetic one may sometimes transform into heterodiegetic [Shmid, 2010, p. 70] (for example, in accounts of communication with representatives of sects, particular Christian communities, those little known to the general public). The autodiegetic narrator is predominant in narrative essays about the past in which the author himself was involved (for example, about the Congress for the Defence of Culture or about lectures on Dostoevsky). In such works, events are often presented on the basis of character speech, and the use of first-person narration adds intimacy to what is described and creates an atmosphere of trust. Autodiegetic narration is enriched by elements of psychological analysis, descriptions of the emotional state of the hero's 'self', who comprehends events of the past from the distance of years, and subsequently by reflection.

Let us analyse in more detail one of the narrative type essays in the collection *Milosz's ABC's* from the perspective of the structure of described events as the artist's recollections, the position of the narrator and the role of reproducing cause-and-effect situations for the reflective content of the text. For example, the essay *ZAGORSKI, Stefa*, which, in fact, is not only about this childhood friend, but also about the role of rivers in human life. The chronotope of the narrative is blurred and only occasionally materialised by isolated details ('dock of the Academic Sporting Union in Wilno,' 'House on the Wilia River,' 'Lipowka was on the Wilia Rive,' 'From time to time,' 'Many years later' [Milosz, 2001, p. 306].

The text begins, in fact, with an account of this gymnasium friend, who was nicknamed Elephant. Subsequently the narrator recounts various stories connected with childhood adventures together with Stefan, and then reflects on the river, which became a peculiar symbol and recollection of childhood. The diegesis about Stefan, who later became an intelligence operative, is distinguished by calm reference, since the temporal distance between the events of the narrator's and his friend's youth and the time of narration about him is considerable. First, the account of the friend, who was initially a glazier and subsequently became an intelligence operative in the London network, is consecutive: he came from a Jewish intellectual family, was an evangelist, was a member of the 'Vagabonds' Club', engaged in sport, through circumstances of fate ended up in Lviv, was tortured and, so as not to betray anyone, jumped from the Gestapo van. The narrator recounts his own relations with Zagorski, friendship with members of his family: "Elephant's and his brother Pericles's mother was a Jew. She was a physician" [Ibid., p. 306]. Judging from the text, the author-narrator recalls their friendship with warmth ("Elephant was gentle in interactions with people, because he was a master of quiet, dry humor" [Ibid., p. 305]), which gradually develops into reflections on human responsibility, change of profession during times of war and the river, which exists in every person's life as a particular symbol, as in his life the Wilia river.

The autodiegetic narrator reproduces a portrait of a friend, companion, active citizen, intelligence operative who perished, yet did not betray service to his homeland. In the narrative part, documentary quality and artistic quality are combined for this purpose, yet preference is given to the former. Documentary quality is manifested in the precision of geographical names, in the inclusion of real details and information about the circumstances of Stefan Zagorski's life. At the same time, the information is presented from personal perspectives, since the text contains details apparently known only to the narrator about Stefan: the nickname Elephant, outwardly ungainly, hairy on the belly, his second cousin – socialist Waclaw, another second cousin – Jerzy Za-

gorski (from the 'Zagary group'). All these details lend intimacy to the narrative, create a distinctly authorial portrait of a childhood friend, which over time evokes only admiration.

The mentative (reflective) part in the text is a peculiar response to the described facts of shared childhood and tribute to the memory of Elephant (Stefan Zagorski) and Lipowka (the town near Vilnius where childhood was spent), which develop into reflections on the river as an exceptional phenomenon, a symbol of Vilnius and childhood: "Every river has its own soul, which is revealed when we first stand on its banks" [Milosz, 2001, p. 307]. The author, reflecting on the Wilia, subsequently recalls the Vistula, the Loire, the Rhine and the Ill, drawing attention to the fact that all rivers possess a soul: "I got to know a number of rivers from source to mouth. The soul of this river [Zejmiana] is green, as is the soul of the Black Hańcza River" [Ibid., p. 308]. The mentative part of the work is modest, yet through individual touches and details one reads both the author's evaluation and the narrator's generalisation regarding the place of such locations in human life, and isolated reflections on the significance of exceptional people in the history of Vilnius and Lithuania.

It is worth noting that Milosz's isolated reflections here are in some respects consonant with the general tonality of the entire *Milosz's ABC's* regarding the fact that the history of the twentieth century, personally experienced by the author, is contact with the legacy, life and thinking of various figures, known and forgotten by history, who, regardless of their place in history, shaped the very face of that century. "Unabashedly subjective, surprisingly frank and free from excessive idealisation, history appears here in the characters – contemporaries of Czesław Miłosz, accounts of whom mainly constitute the plot of the book", as rightfully confirmed by O. Kuprijan regarding *Milosz's ABC's* [Kuprian, 2011, c. 165]. Thus, the narration in *Milosz's ABC's* unfolds grounded in the personal, subjective plane of either the author-narrator, who from the distance of years has changed his attitude towards events and these very figures, or the main protagonist, who simultaneously functions as both character and narrator. These forms of narration are oriented towards modelling what was experienced in the twentieth century through the prism of the present, towards the creation of narrative as experience of the past.

Narrative-mentative essays: the discourse of narration through reflection

Narrative-mentative essays comprise the majority of texts in the book: these are works in which accounts are given of life, journeys, encounters, communication and collaboration with certain figures of the past, which are valuable to the author not so much as the fact of recollection itself, but rather as the opportunity to reflect on their significance in his own fate, and consequently in the fate of the entire Lithuanian-Jewish-Polish milieu. The narrative component in the texts becomes the ground for philosophising: the filling of texts with dates, names, precise geographical and temporal markers ontologises the artist's subsequent reflections, which often easily extend beyond the bounds of this or that sphere of the described person's life. The writer easily extrapolates comprehended facts of the past into broader contexts and switches to other themes, hence the narrative component in the text is necessary to him for the organisation of subsequent mentative narration. Yet more important is the unity of narrative and reflective components: in the process of constructing the narrative, the author fully utilises the possibilities of discursive and artistic speech as forms of representation, which subsequently enable the intuitive-emotional properties of the mentative compressed through time as evaluation of the presented cause-and-effect connections of a certain subject and narrator. In the texts one's own chronology of experienced events is reproduced together with this subject or separately from him, yet under his influence, and the author's variant of such influence on his own life from the distance of years is proposed as living reflection, as the clarification of certain meanings extracted by feeling from the depths of the unconscious.

Let us analyse in more detail one of the essays of the narrative-mentative type in the collection *Milosz's ABC's* from the perspective of the structure of described events, the position of the narrator and the role of cause-and-effect situations for the reflective content of the text. Here, specifically, is the essay *HOPPER, Edward (1882–1962)*, which is characterised by universalism, mastery of artistic technique and the fact that Milosz knew this person personally, namely good fate was acquaintance with his Modernist special friendship. The work begins with precise temporal markers of birth: 1882–1962, when part of it was in Milosz, and with the clear definition

that he occupies a place in the history of world culture: 'A classic of American painting whom I find so disturbing that I intended to write about him either in verse or in prose' [Milosz, 2001, p. 139]. In the subsequent account, the narrative strategy is not simply to reproduce his life, yet to raise Hopper Edward, and to reveal the reasons why this artist conveys such powerful expression in the author's book. The life of Hopper is narrated in an unconventional manner, traditionally biographical, smoothly shifting in various periods of his creativity, the mastery of humanity in the first half of the twentieth century, the history of culture of various continents (religion, harmony and internal conflict of Vermeer's words of the Northern Renaissance are mentioned, and also the retreat of bourgeois France during the era of impressionism, etc).

The narrator recounts significant periods in Hopper's life: his fascination with French painting before the First World War, then a decisive rejection of this fascination and complete immersion in American life and American landscape practices. The artist's fascination with New York and the Atlantic coastline became important in his life, which subsequently found reflection in his paintings. Laconic characterisations of Hopper's manner of painting impress with the precision of the author's definitions and the vividness of verbal reproduction of his work: "The aim of painting was, for him, faithfulness to experience, to life, contents, internal truth, nature"; "He considered the movements of the brush and the discovery of shapes as means to that end" [Ibid., p. 140]. These characterisations may be regarded as maximally approximating the objective and independent, since the author-narrator is not an active participant in the described biography of the artist; he is a simple appreciator of his creativity, which, as a thoughtful and creative person, impels him towards reflection.

Significant canvases by the artist are mentioned: *Sunday, Nighthawks*, whose descriptions are entirely detailed and vivid in C. Milosz: "where we see a row of identical lower middle-class houses and one idle little man, who clearly does not know what to do with the time on his hands" [Ibid., p. 140]. Gradually, fragments of biography and narrative about Hopper's worldview transform into mentative narration about how the artist's creativity can be exploited by political expediency. The text concerns the how Marxists intentionally never used Hopper's paintings to illustrate their conception of authentic America, since they lacked depictions of the horror of Black ghettos or the wandering of Black peasants, hence the chronotope of the narrative again appears blurred and open. This provides grounds for C. Milosz to reflect on the exceptionality and authenticity of art in the reproduction of reality, on the depth of the artist's worldview rooted in individuality, singularity and rejection of national and world artistic traditions, hence the narrator states: "Hopper's content or his truth, which is so hard to name, still has something in common with the Marxists' beloved concept of alienation. He paints alienation, wary of any program, attempting to make the most decent use possible of canvas and pen, this portrait painter of reality" [Ibid., p. 141].

It must be noted that the mentative part in the text is quantitatively modest, yet accomplished. Thoughts regarding Hopper's creativity and the art of isolation here are static – they are conveyed tangentially to markers of understanding. The use of thought fragments enabled the narrator to explicitly demonstrate the ideological construction of this American artist's creativity, liberated from ideological pressure. Here, in essayistic manner, the right of the creative individual to remain apart from public turbulence is reproduced, the place of American discourse in his own life is outlined, and the place of the ordinary person within the painting of the first half of the twentieth century is positioned. The mentative content of the essay on Hopper even suggests that the narrative itself about the artist's life story is secondary here: it serves as the ground for the author's reflections on 'the art of isolation.' This happens through distinctly essayistic techniques of writing: suggestive, occasionally irrational and psychological self-analysis and meditation, formulated through reflection as a type of artistic thinking.

Through association with artefacts of the past, the process of the narrator's self-reinterpretation occurs – implicitly and explicitly. The layering of associations constructs reflection as a type of artistic linguistic thinking through the use of questions approximating the rhetorical ("Is Hopper a satirist engaged in social criticism, perhaps in the spirit of Marxism?" [Milosz, 2001, p. 141]), the use of hypophora, which presupposes a question and immediate answer to it ("No, not at all. He is trying to convey his own experience" [Ibid.]), effects a correlation of objects in consciousness (canvases – epoch – worldview – theorisation of creativity), ultimately effects the

transmission of perceptual and mental activity to the contemplative consciousness. Thus, in this manner, gradually – through the account of the artist, the comprehension of his inscription within a particular epoch, the drawing of parallels with other such personalities of the art of the past – the narrator guides the reader towards the concept of isolationism.

Thoughts on the instrumentality of the artist in the creative act are amongst the important positions of postmodern consciousness, which C. Milosz demonstrates. Hence, reflections in the text ultimately acquire the status of theorisation of the art of isolationism as such. The initial ideas about the creator's intentions gradually transform into ideas about the freedom of creativity a priori. Thus, in essence, this fragment is one of the representatives of the dominant strategy of the entire book – to capture personalities important to the epoch who enabled reflections on the freedom of literary self-expression and to provide them with due evaluation from the position of one's own experience of the twentieth century lived through: "My time, my twentieth century, weighs on me as a host of voices and the faces of people whom I once knew, or heard about, and now they no longer exist. Many were famous for something, they are in the encyclopedias, but more of them have been forgotten, and all they can do is make use of me, the rhythm of my blood, my hand holding the pen, in order to return among the living for a brief moment" [Ibid., p. 313].

Mentative essays in *Milosz's ABC's*: the discourse of authorial epistemology

Mentative essays in the book *Milosz's ABC's* (texts-reflections, texts-meditations) are practically a narrative: they contain no recounted story which would precede subsequent reflections, but rather the reflections themselves. These are reflections coloured by artistic language, which demonstrate certain authorial inferences. Reflections may concern concrete (*MONEY; POLISH LANGUAGE; RUSSIAN LANGUAGE*) and abstract things (*DISAPPEARANCE, of people and objects; MINDFULNESS; TRUTH; LOVE*). In such texts, the writer transforms into a thinker, philosopher and sage, who delights in the very possibility of verbally formulating ideas and thoughts which have long accumulated in consciousness and awaited the opportunity for verbalisation. C. Milosz offers a new vision of familiar objects and phenomena, which may be interpreted as the generation of new meanings, in certain cases unexpected inferences of a logical-semantic and communicative character, generalisations, summations, indeed synthesis, interpretation, re-reading, reinterpretation, further specification of something, paradoxical ideas substantiated at his own discretion, whose content is understood only from certain contexts described by the author. Ultimately, the artist himself described such a strategy of interpreting existence: "We work at knowing the truth about our lifetime even if its images, derived from various people, are not consistent with each other. We exist as separate beings, but at the same time each of us acts as a medium propelled by a power we do not know well, a current of the great river, as it were, through which we resemble each other in our common style or form. The truth about us will remind us of a mosaic composed of little stones of different value and colours" [Milosz, 2001, p. 290].

Let us analyse, for example, the essay *FAME*, devoted to the comprehension of this, indeed, virtue. The phenomenon is comprehended in the context of regret, human madness, illusoriness, certainly not from the position of moral advantages, spiritual victory over others and so forth. The writer reflects on the conventionality and authenticity of fame in the age of the dominance of radio, press and television and writes extensively about the mania for popularity which seizes contemporary humanity. In reality, the artist reflects on fame as a concept of the primitive and elementary category. This thought is substantiated through generalisations and the stringing together of rhetorical questions, which, as is well known, are rather assertions than questions: "The desire for approval is so elementary that one could study various societies from this perspective, asking what means they use to ensure the fulfillment of ambition—orders, titles, the granting of land, money? In the wars that they fight with each other, are soldiers' daring acts of courage not performed in order to be better, or at least not worse, than their fellow soldiers in their units?" [Ibid., p. 112].

The narrator's reflections thus demonstrate his intense emotional state and simultaneously the intensive mental activity of the contemplative consciousness. It is important to the narrator in this situation to demonstrate a state of revelation, of intellectual illumination, of the discovery of truth, which is formulated through autoreflexion of verbalised thought: "I wanted confir-

mation of my worth by those who were knowledgeable" [Ibid., p. 112]. The text demonstrates how the mode of reflection is actively nourished by elements of the narrator's internal speech, which is as if extracted from the unconscious and made manifest. Gradually, the internal monologue begins to be supplemented by internal rejoinder: "Certainly, the Nobel Prize confers a certain amount of fame, but one should not forget that relatively few people understand why someone was awarded one, since the percentage of poetry readers is not very great—just a trifle larger or smaller, depending on the country" [Ibid., p. 113].

The reflections of the writer-philosopher produce certain artistic definitions and epistemologies of the phenomenon of fame, characterised by paradoxicality: "The essential characteristic of fame is its illusory nature" [Ibid., p. 112], "The game, however, is not so much between him and the crowd, as between him and his closest milieu" [Ibid.], "Dreaming about fame would be pitiful and deserving of sympathy as one of those human follies" [Ibid., p. 111]. To give examples of his own theory, the author mentions the nobleman Pashkevich, who wrote verses and aspired to be known, yet remained on the periphery of history, whilst the oak he himself planted remained in history, since this tree is mentioned in A. Mickiewicz's poem *Pan Tadeusz*. Even the fact of his own biography – the receipt of the Nobel Prize – the narrator Miłosz does not consider confirmation of true fame, being conscious that his literary works are not as well known as he would wish, and far from all admirers of artistic language are acquainted with his legacy. Thus, public recognition in its ontological essence is comprehended by the narrator as a worldview category, equal to sought-after creativity. Consequently, in the essay devoted to fame, there occurs a reconstruction of the phenomenon as emotional experience of fragments of one's own existence. Reflection is constructed on the profound awareness of existential contradiction between the ideal and reality, emphasising the discrepancies in understanding the phenomenon being comprehended between those who stand on the olympus of fame and those who merely imagine it.

The mentative in the essay is organised precisely as argumentation in view of one's own experience with the involvement of auto-creation as a practice of self-identification ("Here I draw upon my own experiences, my school in Wilno" [Miłosz, 2001, p. 112]), intimisation ("In the wars that they fight with each other, are soldiers' daring acts of courage not performed in order to be better, or at least not worse, than their fellow soldiers in their units?" [Ibid.]), with active use of rhetorical questions, behind which lies not so much a question as an assertion, dialogue with the reader, verbal accentuation and commentary ("The fame of that oak was enduring") and meta-commentary ("I also won a literary competition, apparently for a sonnet"; "Then came the university, the Creative Writing Division" [Ibid.]). Meditation in the essay has an interesting subjective organisation: it is constructed on the utterance of 'I' that possesses the gift of seeing itself from without and speaking of itself in the third person. The subject of speech in this essay functions not only as 'other' in relation to the original author, but as an indirect form of expression of authorial intentions. Thus, an effect is created whereby the author, in narrating, observes himself as if from a distance, as if it was not him who received the Nobel Prize and was filled with corresponding emotions in connection with recognition. On the contrary, the impression is created that the experience acquired by a person who achieved perhaps the greatest recognition in the field of contemporary literature became for the thinker a new way of acquiring and constructing identity, which opened possibilities for calm and balanced self-presentation, self-understanding and self-explanation.

Other mentative essays by C. Miłosz in the collection *Miłosz's ABC's* are interesting not only for their communicative strategy of evaluating the contradictory twentieth century through the optics of personalities who shaped it, but also for the representation of states of comprehension of their role and place in the context of important processes of the existence of the creative person (*HATRED; MISFORTUNE; DISGUST; EDIFYING READINGS; PREJUDICE and so forth*), the evident change of these states, which are formulated through means of reflection of verbalised thought. At the same time, the thinker in the works in no way assumes the mask of preacher or prophet, messiah or mentor. Rather, it is the figure of an experienced artist, transformed by the epoch itself into a thinker who, being an organic part of this very 20th century, is endowed with the right to evaluate it both from within and from without, to inscribe this 20th century filled with authorial mentative utterances into the general picture of the humanitarian world order.

Conclusions

The analysis of *'Milosz's ABC's* by C. Milosz has demonstrated its polymorphous nature, since the collection consists of 200 essays of varying thematic and organisational content, united by the author according to the alphabetical principle. The work is non-linear from the perspective of the chronology of the writer's described life story and eclectic from the perspective of uniting texts of various kinds: short stories, biographies, portrait sketches, recollections, travelogues, reflections, philosophical treatises, reviews, overviews with a marked essayistic principle and so forth, randomly dispersed throughout the book. The sole formal principle of arranging texts into a coherent whole is the alphabetical, deliberately chosen by the author as relatively neutral regarding the compilation of texts of various orientations. All works are directly connected with the personality of the narrator, maximally approximating the author of the collection C. Milosz, who lived a long life and sought to order its main milestones through the gathering of artefacts of the past into an aggregate, as well as to reflect upon them within his own system of coordinates.

Thus, the collection *Milosz's ABC's* is a variant of a postmodern private encyclopaedia, uniting works varying in narrative nature, which collectively present the biography of the author himself as a deconstruction of his life against the backdrop of the twentieth century in cultural, historical and philosophical registers. Before the reader emerges a biography in fragments, and the narrator is reproduced as dissolved in many images, locations and figures as 'I', grounded in constant multiplicity, changeability and constructedness depending on the circumstances described. This 'I' is presented in various guises – as writer, philosopher, lecturer, critic and essayist, whose narratives frequently transform into mentative utterances, and occasionally even demonstrate an exclusively reflective type of consciousness. Thus, in recounting his past from the distance of years, the writer simultaneously proposes his own conception of memory as a narrative of recreating the past, playing with the reader's expectations, blurring the boundaries between the present and its mythologisation from the distance of years, which frequently occurs in postmodern texts. Constantly returning to the past, the narrator seeks to restore not only external events and phenomena, but also his impressions, yet comments on what is described from the perspective of the present. Therefore, in the collection there occurs a union of the narrator and the philosopher: the author as participant and witness of described events in the past and the author as observer of these events from the position of the time of the essays' creation. The mentative line of the collection concerns predominantly the latter positioning of the author.

The essays of various types are presented in the collection. Despite their difference in terms of references and intentions, we have grouped them according to a single principle from the perspective of factors of text generation – narrative-mentative discourse. To narrative discourse we have assigned texts focused on direct accounts and descriptions of stories, facts and phenomena of the past. Here, the narrative element is primary, yet reflections of various kinds based on narration also occur. In narrative-mentative texts, the narrative and reflective principles are balanced: here events are intoned by subsequent reflections. In such works, described phenomena and situations prepare the reference for a subsequent mental event, in other words – reflection. Mentative essays, however, consist entirely of authorial reflections around a certain concept or phenomenon: in such texts, reference becomes the ground for interpretative construction of reality, as a result of which through the stringing together of thoughts the flow of authorial consciousness acquires a certain structure, form and rational stability. All together, these texts have enabled us to outline the factors of C. Milosz's identification in the context of the twentieth century as 'I-other': one who at the decline of life dared to fill his conception of himself with additional multiple meanings against the backdrop of reinterpreting events of the past. Thus the author's encyclopaedia of the 20th century in the version of C. Milosz has testified to the principled rejection of linear interpretation of the epoch and conscious preference for multiple interpretation of the circumstances of the past and their observation. It is precisely through this that the writer considers the reflective mode of presenting events which occurred long ago as the only possible one in the situation of their deliberate indeterminacy and changeability. And it is precisely for this reason that the mentative component of all presented texts is so important.

Analysis of the narrative-mentative content of the texts in *Milosz's ABC's* has also enabled us to draw conclusions that the author's thinking, materialised through artistic narratives and

obligatory reflections around them, is oriented towards postmodern knowledge of one's own past, towards the presentation of one's life story in the context of the 20th century as a mosaic and eclectic experience, towards the awareness of this past as 'further specification' and 'further comprehension'. The book has testified to postmodern characteristics of consciously fragmentary and blurred unity of reflection, documentation and testimony of facts and events of the past as resistance to grand narratives, as well as the deconstruction of metanarratives through the creation of one's own cultural map, rooted in the conjunction of personal history and collective memory of the epoch.

The results obtained and the methodology tested for analysing essays may be applied in further investigations of ego-documents (letters, memoirs, diaries, collections of essays, interviews) in European literatures.

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NARRATIVE-MENTATIVE ORGANISATION OF COLLECTION *MIŁOSZ'S ABC'S* BY C. MIŁOSZ

Tetiana M. Shevchenko, Odesa I.I. Mechnikov National University (Ukraine)

e-mail: shtn75@ukr.net

Liliia D. Chykur, Odesa I.I. Mechnikov National University (Ukraine)

e-mail: chykur_liliia@ukr.net

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32342/3041-217X-2025-2-30-9>

Key words: *narrative, mentative, collection, essay, composition, organisation, postmodern work*

The article explores the narrative-mentative organisation of the collection of memoirs and reflections *Milosz's ABC's* (*Abecadło*, 1997) by Nobel Prize laureate C. Milosz. The object of the study is the collection *Milosz's ABC's*, which contains around 200 essays, different in subject and narrative structure. The aim of the article is to determine the specifics of these essays from the point of view of their narrative-mentative organisation, the factors of their text formation in postmodern discourse. The novelty of the scientific research is the chosen perspective of analysing the narrative-mentative nature of C. Milosz's essay texts, which have not yet been studied from this point of view in modern literary studies. The chosen perspective involves the application of an appropriate research methodology based on the principles of narrative, biographical and structuralist *methods*.

In the course of the study of the collection *Milosz's ABC's* by C. Milosz, the following methodological steps have been completed: 1) the structure of the book has been analysed, in particular from the perspective of the interaction of narrative and reasoning components; 2) a classification of the *Milosz's ABC's* texts is proposed in terms of text-creation factors (narrative, narrative-mentative, mentative essays). The classification determined the author's self-identification as a witness and participant in the cultural, historical and social life of the 20th century and at the same time its observer through philosophical, historical, theological, literary, topological, ethnic, and personal discourses; 3) representative samples of all text variants have been investigated in order to demonstrate the artistic (narrative and reflective) techniques of C. Milosz as an essayist. Conclusions are drawn about the uniqueness of the collection *Milosz's ABC's* as a postmodern work in terms of the practices of uniting reflection, fixation and testimony of facts and events of the past, ideas of openness of one's own cultural map, rooted in the combination of personal history and the general memory of the era, as well as the depiction of time and space. In the texts, time and space are inextricably linked and form a unique memoir-reflective discourse of the essay collection. Space in the essays appears both physical (a specific place of events) and psychological (the space of the narrator's thoughts, memories, feelings). It is determined that the collection presents the author's biography as a deconstruction of his life against the background of the 20th century in cultural, historical, and philosophical registers. The biography itself appears in scattered fragments, in the format of a private encyclopedia, and the narrator is reproduced as a "self" dissolved in many images, locations, time slices, and figures, based on constant multiplicity, variability and construction depending on the described circumstances. This "self" is presented in various guises: as a writer, a philosopher, a lecturer, a critic, an essayist, whose narratives often turn into mentatives, and sometimes even demonstrate an exclusively reflexive type of consciousness.

The prospects of the study open up new possibilities for narrative-mentative analysis, which can be further applied in the process of studying ego-documents (letters, memoirs, diaries, essay collections, interviews) in European literatures.

Дата надходження до редакції / Submitted: 20.06.2025

Дата прийняття до публікації / Accepted: 07.11.2025

Дата публікації / Published: 02.12.2025