

Andrzej Kochanowski and other Carmelite preachers, Nowicka-Struska returns to topics already covered such as the theatrical aspects of funeral sermons, the significance of the printed word, and the Baroque's preoccupation with *vanitas*.

The closing chapter focuses on Carmelite religiosity. Here the author demonstrates to what extent Andrzej Kochanowski's sermons diverged from those of other Carmelite preachers. However, here her methodology becomes somewhat unclear; the reader is not sure whether she writes this part of her book from the point of view of a literary scholar, an anthropologist of religion, or a religious person. For instance, the previous chapter ends with the following sentence: "Kończąc [ten] rozdział. . . wypada podpisać się pod niepodważalnym słowem Biblii, siebie uznając za filologicznie grzesznego autora" (Concluding [this] chapter. . . it is proper to endorse the indisputable veracity of the Bible while declaring oneself a philologically sinful author) (188).

Overall, Anna Nowicka-Struska's book is a rich source of information about seventeenth-century Carmelite sermons, their authors, and the milieu from which they emerged. As such, it is recommended for scholars studying European literature in general and European Baroque in particular. ▲

## MORE BOOKS AND PERIODICALS

**Więszego cudu nie będzie, by Zdzisław Krasnodębski.** Kraków: Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, 2011. 427 pages. Index, Bibliographical Note. ISBN 978-83-62628-06-3. Paper. In Polish.

A collection of essays—most of them previously published in Polish periodicals—on issues vital to contemporary Poland. The first section compares the European Union and Barack Obama's America. In spite of shortcomings, America wins the comparison while the author wisely observes that in many ways American social habits are closer to the Polish than to German or French. America has not thrown away patriotism, love of liberty, and religious belief, three features that are also prominent in Poland. The second section contains essays on issues of Polish history such as the Warsaw Rising, and includes a useful survey of changes in the understanding of liberty in Europe and the United States. Krasnodębski points out that individual freedom is possible only when a national group lives in a free state. This position, also held by British politologist Margaret Canovan and, according to Krasnodębski, by Liah Greenfeld, is being elbowed

out of public view in many ostensibly "free to all" public fora. Then come essays about heroes, prestige, myths old and new, tolerance and its implications. Section 2 ends with an essay on subtle forms of discrimination against Poles in German and American academia and mass media.

Section 3 deals with religion and politics in the contemporary world. Krasnodębski deconstructs the Enlightenment falsifications of the role of Christianity in European civilization. He writes about the acknowledged philosophers of modernity, from Voegelin and Strauss to Heidegger and Carl Schmitt. This section demonstrates that Krasnodębski's easy essayistic style has deep grounding in philosophy. He repeatedly stresses that in matters of religious belief Poland is an exception in Europe and can only be compared to the United States where being religious is also taken seriously in social life and in politics. In contrast, the laicization of Western Europe is now so deep that Polish migrant workers' churchgoing habits evoke amazement in citizens of countries where Poles go in search of jobs.

Section 4 deals with problems of modernization in Poland. This ambiguous term requires explanation, and Krasnodębski provides it. Unlike in section 3, here he quotes mostly Polish thinkers. Section 5 gathers Krasnodębski's articles on literature, and section 6 deals with universities.

The book is a compendium of contemporary thought. It mentions numerous popular philosophers and sociologists of the twentieth century. A good percentage of them hail from Germany, a country that has usually stood ready to provide verbalizations and explanations of the phenomena that were sometimes beyond the understanding of the individual human mind (e.g., Hegel's theory of history). While these verbalizations often issued from plain ignorance of data (German opinions about Poland), they gained wide recognition. Krasnodębski provides an admirable introduction to all these voices while damping the enthusiasm of the naive believers in the demise of the national state. (*SB*)

**Report o zagrożeniach wolności słowa w Polsce w latach 2010–2011** (Report on dangers to the freedom of speech in Poland in 2010–2011), issued by Stowarzyszenie POLSKA JEST NAJWAŻNIEJSZA ("Poland Comes First" Association). Warsaw: SPJN, 1 October 2011. 69 pages. Endnotes, Addendum on lawsuits. In Polish; chapter 1 and Addendum available in English.

The *Report* charges that owing to the monopolization of power by the ruling party (Platforma Obywatelska), Polish courts, television, and press exclusively promote an interpretation of the social and

political situation in Poland that is flattering to the present government. Members of the opposition are seldom invited to explain their views on state television; when they are, they are vastly outnumbered by commentators praising the government. In addition, television presenters display an obvious bias in favor of the ruling party. The Polish courts, where a number of former communist judges still maintain their positions, pass sentences on government critics and burden them with fines beyond their capacity to pay. Former dissident Adam Michnik and the powerful and monied press conglomerate Agora with which he is associated are singled out as particularly opprobrious. The Addendum lists the lawsuits that Michnik has initiated against those who criticized him and the Agora. There were thirteen such lawsuits between 2001 and 2008; the defendants included not only politicians but also respectable scholars such as Professor Andrzej Nowak of Jagiellonian University, Professor Andrzej Zybertowicz of the University of Toruń, and poet Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz. Some of these lawsuits are still ongoing, but those on which the court has ruled have invariably favored the plaintiff and imposed punitive fines on the defendants. (JB) ▲

## *Mitteleuropa Blues, Perilous Remedies*

Andrzej Stasiuk's Harsh World

Terrence O'Keeffe

PART 2

(continued from the September 2011 issue)

By the late 1990s Stasiuk was willing to show his hand without benefit of fictional transformations. His survey of the broader region's pulse and life takes the form of a series of short essays called *FADO* published in an English translation by Bill Johnston in 2009. *FADO* records two types of journeys—one the repeated geographical forays to nowhere, which give rise to meditations on memory and loss, the other a quizzical to-and-fro interrogation of what might be labeled the “dialectical” relationship between technologically and economically advanced societies and the more backward regions of Europe, that is, the West and the East. In Stasiuk's view the field of these interactions constitutes an almost metaphysical map of reality, with the map shifting with each tremor of change that modernity brings. We from the West invade. They from the East absorb, deflect, or retreat, keeping some of the “old map” intact. In this game of back and forth, of exchange of opportunities and illusions, he has settled one matter in his mind—neither side has much of a spiritual advantage, though he would like to bestow just this on “Europe's losers” (the East).

Stasiuk begins his wanderings through the small towns and remote country and mountain regions of southeastern Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania (ah, mysterious, magical Transylvania! still contested by the latter two nations), Montenegro, Serbia, and Albania like a charged-up Polish Jack Kerouac. He's on the road again, like he was as a hitch-hiking teenager, driving like a demon through the dark, comfortably embraced by the night sky and immense blackness of invisible (yet imagined, even well known) landscapes. Such lonely trips take him back to the anxious joy of our distant ancestors prowling through the night, with their wonderment under the stars as they scan the horizon for the flickering fires of another human settlement, where comfort or death, enticement or dread, await men on the move.



Cover page of the *Report* on the freedom of speech in Poland.