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## Book Review:

### "THE OTHER EUROPE" REVISITED

**Czeslaw Milosz. UNE AUTRE EUROPE (Paris: Gallimard, 1964).**

In the minds of many West Europeans and Americans in the academic and literary world East-Central Europe still resembles an early medieval map: mythical dragons perched on non-existent promontaries still spout the fires of distortions and oversimplification. Patronizing still abounds, true understanding is still rare.

Those who want to journey to the more real East-Central Europe can hardly do better than taking Czeslaw Milosz, the exiled Polish poet, novelist and critic as their guide. While all his books provide insights into the East European mind and history, *Une autre Europe*, translated from the original *Rodzina Europa* (Paris Kultura, 1959) is perhaps the most rewarding volume.

Milosz states that the aim of his book is twofold: to draw a profile of Eastern Europe and to "travel to the bottom of my past". The book is thus an interplay between Milosz's autobiography and East Europe's biography.

For students of Lithuanian culture and history, *Une autre Europe* has much to offer. Although Poland is the protagonist, Lithuania plays the main supporting role in the book. The author — *gente Lituanus, natione Polonus* — has always treasured the memories of his native land and his deeply ingrained love for nature is inextricably intertwined with the Lithuanian landscape.

In the chapter on "the search for roots", Milosz recreates the peaceful, historical, "nonrevolutionary" microcosm of his hometown Labunava; he speaks about the "so Flemish love of matter" by the Lithuanian peasantry. The return to Lithuania after the exile of World War I is described as paradise regained. He knew each stone in Vilnius, that "jesuitic city of Latin America", where he was witness of the last days of independent Lithuania. "No, I shall not imitate those who erase their footsteps", is one of the key mottoes of his book.

*Une autre Europe* is rich in other rewards as well. Admirers of *The Captive Mind* will find here the author's own fascination and disillusionment with Marxism, unrolling step by step of the dialectical choreography. Deification of History — a subject now haunting the entire Communist world — is also discussed at length in dramatic, personal terms. The author's picture of prewar and wartime Poland is sharply critical, but not unbalanced or without affection.

The publication of *Une autre Europe* in the United States and England, slated in the near future, should be an important event for everybody interested in East Europe and in our tortuous century in general.

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