

The Captive Mind

Czeslaw Milosz

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The most famous work by Czeslaw Milosz, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1980, *The Captive Mind* remains, according to a leading European historian, the “seminal essay” of the Cold War. It has been in print for more than sixty years. Growing directly out of Milosz’s vaunted “density of lived experience,” the index reflects its analysis—Milosz’s “huge canvas” serves us today as a general reader’s description of the Soviet phenomenon and a singularly useful window into the crucial period in Europe in the aftermath of World War Two.

The Captive Mind is an interconnected and complex literary expression, divided into nine essay chapters, arising out of Milosz’s experiences in Lithuania and Poland before, during and immediately following the War; the book’s intertwining of “faultlessly perceptive” portraits, eyewitness accounts, autobiography, history, and political and philosophical commentary generates a magnetic attraction which remains for us today, in the opinion of many qualified observers, as powerful as that of his poetry. The narrative retains its vigor, freshness and cumulative power.

The index is mindful of the needs of the younger reader of today who may be “mystified,” at the state of mind discussed in the book. Topic selection takes into account the vaunted “specificity” which Milosz injects into discussion topics ranging from literary commentary and comparative theology to straight history and shrewd political observation and analysis. The main entry “religious wars, Europe...” collects discussions occurring throughout the text which are of value to the reader or researcher.

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