

*RICHARD BUTTERWICK-PAWLIKOWSKI*

*(School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London)*

A DIALOGUE OF REPUBLICANISM AND LIBERALISM: REGARDING ANNA GRZEŚKOWIAK-KRWAWICZ'S BOOK ON THE IDEA OF LIBERTY

*Regina Libertas*<sup>1</sup> is the magnificent culmination of the research that Profesor Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz has conducted for many years on Polish political thought in the eighteenth century. This research has already yielded numerous and valuable publications – books, articles, lectures and source-editions – some of which have appeared in English and French. As the author informs us, some of these earlier works have been reused in modified form in this book. Her deep knowledge of the field is reflected in the construction of the monograph. It is not divided by the criteria of political camps, social categories or – with one justified exception – period. The book consists of seven parts, of which four are divided into eleven chapters. This arrangement may sound complicated, but it does not in practice disturb the reader. It is precisely thought-out. The ‘heroine’ of the book is the concept of liberty, which is analysed from various perspectives and at several levels. With impressive ease and grace Grześkowiak-Krwawicz leaps from author to author, choosing telling quotations to illustrate her theses, without unnecessary repetitions. She wears her extraordinary erudition lightly, so that it neither overwhelms nor intimidates the reader. The book is written in elegant and accessible Polish. The author subtly encourages the reader to ask questions, which she answers, inviting the next question in turn. This is a kind of dialogue between the author and the reader, whom the author treats as a companion in her journey into the past. This review article is an acceptance of that invitation to enter into dialogue with the author. For this reason the reader is asked graciously to forgive the too frequent citations of my own work.

The theses advanced by Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz would be worth the closest attention even if they were not presented in such an accessible manner. Polish historiography is adorned by such experts on eighteenth-century political thought as Władysław Konopczyński, Henryk Olszewski, Emanuel Rostworowski, Jerzy Michalski, Zofia Zielińska and Jerzy Lukowski. Most historians have long since freed themselves

---

<sup>1</sup> Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz, *Regina libertas. Wolność w polskiej myśli politycznej XVIII wieku*, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo słowo/obraz terytoria, 2006, pp. 515.

from the vision of the history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as a particular, anarchic and ‘Sarmatian’ path to partition and perdition. For more than a century a kind of consanguinity has been noted between Polish thinkers and such luminaries as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Charles-Louis de Montesquieu, Benjamin Franklin and Edmund Burke. Nobody would deny the Euro-Atlantic world’s shared rhetorical roots in classical antiquity. However, until now nobody has tried to write the key concept of early modern Polish political thought into the common history of Europe.

For more than twenty years, researchers of early modern European republicanism, led by Quentin Skinner and John G. A. Pocock, have focused their attention on the republican theory of liberty. The republican idea of freedom differs from the liberal concept of freedom in that it is not satisfied by the condition in which man may – for the moment – freely dispose of his person and property because of the absence of coercion. Unlike the liberal concept, the old republican idea of liberty does not appeal to natural law. The conviction of the natural right of every human being to freedom powerfully influenced the evolution of the concept of liberty in the eighteenth century. For early modern republicans, it was axiomatic that a man may be truly free only in a ‘free state’, that is, one in which the single ruler – the monarch – cannot in tyrannical fashion impose his will on his subjects, because as citizens they participate in the exercise of power. This is not a rejection of ‘negative liberty’ in favour of ‘positive liberty’, as later liberal theorists would have put it, but rather the conviction that the first concept of liberty depends on the second. Our own times have seen the ‘excavation’ of the republican idea of freedom and its recommendation as an alternative to nineteenth- and twentieth-century liberalism.<sup>2</sup>

Using the arguments presented in *Regina libertas*, a strong case could be made that the theoretical foundations for research on early modern republicanism fit the constitutional conditions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth even better than those in England, the Dutch Republic or the Italian city-states. Polish theorists only began to distinguish clearly

---

<sup>2</sup> For example: Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*, Cambridge, 1998; idem, ‘A Third Concept of Liberty’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 117, 2002, pp. 237-68. See Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz, ‘Quentin Skinner i teoria wolności republikańskiej’, *Archiwum Filozofii i Myśli Społecznej*, 4, 2000, pp. 165-74; Bogdan Szlachta, ‘Wolność republikańska. Na marginesie debaty o tradycji republikańskiej w “atlantyckiej” myśli politycznej’, *Państwo i Społeczeństwo*, 1, 2001, 1, pp. 207-32. Cf. Isaiah Berlin, ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’, in idem, *Four Essays on Liberty*, Oxford, 1969, pp. 118-72.

between ‘civil’ (negative) and ‘political’ (positive) liberty in the last three or four decades of the eighteenth century. Even then, they very rarely placed the two concepts in mutual opposition – although such exceptions, such as Reverend Hieronim Stroynowski and Józef Pawlikowski from one side, and Reverend Stanisław Staszic from the other, were important. In order to write the history of Polish republican thought into European history, not without relevance was Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz’s active participation in the important programme, financed by the European Union and directed by Quentin Skinner and Martin van Gelderen – *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage* – which bore fruit in two volumes with the same title. Similarly pertinent is her organization of a conference in Warsaw for the International Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies with the significant title *Liberté: Héritage du Passé ou Idée des Lumières?*<sup>3</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that she displays an easy mastery of the French- and especially the abundant English-language scholarly literature on early modern republicanism.

With regard to Polish political thought, the author reaches back deep into the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries, using both literature and sources. It seems to this reviewer (although specialists on earlier periods will know better) that modesty dictated the apparent limitation of the scope of the book to the eighteenth century. The book’s title is itself derived from a treatise written in the seventeenth century, *Domina palatii regina libertas*, which was reissued several times in the following century (p. 9). Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers such as Andrzej Maksimilian Fredro, Łukasz Górnicki, Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski, Łukasz Opaliński, Szymon Starowolski and Jan Zamoyski are often cited, as are anonymous authors of shorter works, especially from the period of the Zebrzydowski rebellion (1606-09). Grześkowiak-Krwawicz cites experts on these questions, including Anna Sucheni-Grabowska, Janusz Tazbir, Stefania Ochmann-Staniszevska, Zbigniew Ogonowski, Urszula Augustyniak, Jerzy Urwanowicz and Edward Opaliński (who was also a participant in the programme *Republicanism: A Shared*

---

<sup>3</sup> Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz, ‘Anti-Monarchism in Polish Republicanism in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries’, in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, ed. Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, 2 vols., Cambridge, 2002, vol. 1, pp. 43-59. Eadem, ‘Deux libertés, l’ancienne et la nouvelle, dans la pensée politique polonaise du XVIIIe siècle’, in *Liberté: Héritage du Passé ou Idée des Lumières? / Freedom: Heritage of the Past or an Idea of the Enlightenment?*, ed. Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz and Izabella Zatorska, Kraków and Warsaw, 2003, pp. 44-59.

*European Heritage*).<sup>4</sup> It should be noted, however, that she rarely conducts polemics with other historians. She invites others to enter into discussion with her, but she is not insistent. Had she done otherwise, the notes, which are already extensive, would have taken on gigantic dimensions. Instead of such polemics, the introduction and the first part of the book ‘The eighteenth century: old and new freedom?’ set out her programme fully.

In the conceptual foundations of her work Grześkowiak-Krwawicz lays more emphasis on the *longue durée* of the early modern Polish and republican idea of liberty over a period of three centuries more than on changes in its understanding during the second half of the eighteenth century. She writes about those changes, but in almost every case she finds and underlines elements of traditional thinking about freedom. Let us take Reverend Hugo Kołłątaj as an example. Convinced as he was of the natural right of (almost) every man to liberty, Kołłątaj reversed the usual relationship between political and civil freedom – for him the former depended on the latter. Yet he did not break with the republican attachment to a ‘free state’ in which citizens participated in government. This continuity testifies, according to the author, that the early modern idea of liberty did not undergo petrification, but was able to adapt to new circumstances and challenges. In this regard Grześkowiak-Krwawicz belongs to the increasingly numerous historians who ‘optimistically’ interpret the history, values and heritage of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. She is not, however, a naive apologist who aims to ‘rehabilitate’ early modern Polish republicanism. She explicitly distances herself from such a position. She seeks to explain, not to judge. It should be noted, however, that she hopes that better understanding of the former idea of liberty in Poland will lead readers away from negative stereotypes on the subject.

For this reason Grześkowiak-Krwawicz carefully avoids the adjective ‘Sarmatian’ (*sarmacki*). It has acquired too many pejorative connotations to be useful as a label for the main tendency of Polish political thought between the sixteenth and the eighteenth century. If she uses it at all, she does so in strictly defined meanings and contexts. I should add here, that the emotion-laden ‘rehabilitation’ of ‘Sarmatism’ attempted by some historians and researchers in ‘cultural studies’ also hinder the use of the word ‘Sarmatian’ as a epithet

---

<sup>4</sup> Edward Opaliński, ‘Civic Humanism and Republican Citizenship in the Polish Renaissance’, in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, vol. 1, pp. 147-67.

in serious academic research.<sup>5</sup> The author prefers the adjective *staropolski* (literally ‘old-Polish’, but translated here as ‘early modern Polish’) in order to emphasize the traditional character of republican thought in this period. This preference may be debatable, but – unlike a previous reviewer – I would also incline towards her solution. The use of ‘Sarmatian’, ‘Sarmatia’ and ‘Sarmatism’ (or ‘Sarmatianism’) is helpful only when these terms are used in the sources in question.<sup>6</sup>

According to Grześkowiak-Krwawicz, one of the reasons for the insufficient attention paid hitherto to elements of continuity in Polish political thought has been historians’ concentration on the most illustrious writers, above all on Stanisław Dunin Karwicki, Stanisław Leszczyński/Mateusz Białłozor, Reverend Stanisław Konarski, Józef Wybicki, Reverend Hugo Kołłątaj, Reverend Stanisław Staszic and Józef Pawlikowski, at the expense of authors belonging to the category ‘*minorum gentium*’ (p. 13), such as Reverend Walenty Pęski, to whom is ascribed the treatise *Domina palatii regina libertas*. She argues that emphasizing novelty rather than continuity leads to the distortion of the thought of writers associated with ‘turning points’ and the neglect of other authors. She postulates research on a wider range of writings – less original or notable from the perspective of posterity, but more representative of the political thought of the period studied. Here Grześkowiak-Krwawicz approaches Anglophone historians, such as Harry T. Dickinson, who is quoted at the beginning of the introduction (p. 5), in order to convince the reader of the sense of her research: ‘Jeśli chcemy nadać sens siłom i działaniom politycznym w jakimkolwiek dawnym społeczeństwie, to musimy poznać jego wartości polityczne i zrozumieć, co owo społeczeństwo lub jego część podziwiała, a co odrzucało.’<sup>7</sup>

At this point it is worth explaining that this sentence is part of Dickinson’s argument, following in the footsteps of Quentin Skinner, against the followers of Sir Lewis Bernstein Namier (who was sceptically disposed to the possibility that any ideology could influence the practice of politics and who in his research focused on the details of the

---

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Stanisław Grzybowski, *Sarmatyzm*, in the series *Dzieje narodu i państwa polskiego*, vol. 2, no. 26, Kraków, 1996.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Maciej Parkitny’s review of *Regina Libertas* in *Wiek Oświecenia*, 23, 2007, pp. 268-69.

<sup>7</sup> H. T. Dickinson, *Liberty and Property. Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, London, 1977, p. 6.

material interests and family connections of people engaged in political activity).<sup>8</sup> Grześkowiak-Krwawicz does not transpose this polemic to Polish historiography. She writes with the utmost respect of scholars such as Zofia Zielińska and Wojciech Kriegseisen who have drawn back the curtain of rhetoric to reveal the off-stage machinations of Polish political life in the eighteenth century. Without in any way negating such achievements or their underlying conceptual assumptions, she conveys to the reader that she is dealing with another political plane.

Grześkowiak-Krwawicz adopts a similar stance towards research on the political culture of the Commonwealth and its dominant noble estate – the szlachta. It could be argued, following the line taken by Dickinson and Skinner, that in order to establish the ideological or rhetorical boundaries of the politically permissible or possible, or to identify the positions, which bring a politician the greatest popularity, research on the frequency and contexts of the key slogans repeated in the given political culture is essential.<sup>9</sup> The author quotes further fragments of Dickinson's arguments on page 361, footnote 10. She herself declares on page 251: 'Even these empty declamations deserve closer interest. Although they were repeated more or less automatically, without any deeper political thought, they nevertheless reflected a coherent and long established theory of liberty'. The full realization of such a programme would require the immensely time-consuming study of countless instructions acclaimed by the sejmiks (or dietines – the local assemblies of the nobility), parliamentary speeches, sermons, poems, occasional speeches and so on, not to mention the interpretation of works of art and architecture. Answers to many particular problems would require the study of private correspondence (Grześkowiak-Krwawicz does this on page 327 and elsewhere). The task would be fully achievable only for a much shorter timespan. Nevertheless, a book of this kind, based on such a conceptual framework has been written – for an earlier and somewhat shorter period – by Edward Opaliński. It has been widely acclaimed as a model of its type.<sup>10</sup> We shall shortly discover the harvest of

---

<sup>8</sup> Quentin Skinner, 'The Principles and Practices of Opposition: The Case of Bolingbroke versus Walpole', in *Historical Perspectives: Studies in English Thought and Society*, ed. Neil McKendrick, London, 1974, pp. 93-128.

<sup>9</sup> I expand on this theme in 'Political Discourses of the Polish Revolution, 1788-1792', *English Historical Review*, 120, 2005, pp. 695-731.

<sup>10</sup> Edward Opaliński, *Kultura polityczna szlachty polskiej w latach 1587-1652*, Warsaw, 1995, reviewed, *inter alia*, by Juliusz Bardach (*Przegląd Historyczny*, 86, 1995, 2, pp. 238-41).

Jerzy Lukowski's research on the political culture of the eighteenth century. He could not be accused of ignoring continuities or omitting mediocre authors. But it would be equally difficult to convict him of sympathy towards early modern Polish political thought (with the exception of Reverend Konarski).<sup>11</sup>

Grześkowiak-Krwawicz distances herself from postulates to prioritize research on the political culture or mentality of the szlachta, in order to concentrate on political **thought**. Admittedly, she sometimes quotes a parliamentary speech, a sermon, or, in the seventh part of the book, a proclamation, but in general her sources are pamphlets and treatises of a political character. She wishes to understand key principles, not to delve into the circumstances in which those principles took rhetorical form. This in turn allows her to avoid the potential criticism, that she views the early modern Polish world through rose-tinted lenses. On the contrary, she repeats that, especially in the Saxon period (1697-1763), practice could depart markedly from theory. She argues, however, that discovering the values contained within political thought is a necessary step towards the understanding of the society in question. Such values, moreover, are more clearly exposed in political thought than in political culture. The novelty here lies not in the use of new kinds of sources, but in the refusal to disdain *a priori* those theoretical works (that is, those belonging to the sphere of political thought rather than political culture) which contributed no new ideas or proposals. In the end Grześkowiak-Krwawicz manages gracefully to balance on her tightrope; on the one hand she might be accused of writing only of an elite plane of thought, which had nothing in common with dirty and ugly political practice; on the other she might fall into a vast swamp, from which level it would be difficult to discern any of the elevating principles of freedom. These principles are however visible from an avian perspective.

---

<sup>11</sup> See Jerzy Łukowski, 'Od Konarskiego do Kołłątaja – czyli od realizmu do utopii', in *Trudne stulecia. Studia z dziejów XVII i XVIII wieku ofiarowane Profesorowi Jerzemu Michalskiemu*, rd. Łukasz Kądziela, Wojciech Kriegseisen and Zofia Zielińska, Warsaw, 1994, pp. 184-94; idem, 'The Szlachta and Their Ancestors in the Eighteenth Century', *KH*, 111, 2004, 3, pp. 161-82. Lukowski's estimable monograph *Disorderly Liberty: The Political Culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Eighteenth Century*, London, 2010, was published after the Polish original of this review article went to press. I reviewed it in *Slavonic and East European Review*, 89, 2011, 3, pp. 562-64.

The second part of the book, titled ‘Whence came liberty?’ develops and explains one of the crucial themes of the first part. It contains two concise chapters: ‘The history of Polish liberty’ and ‘Liberty as a gift of nature’. The author notes the very down-to-earth manner in which early modern Poles wrote about freedom, regardless of whether they believed it to have been graciously bestowed on their nation by kings, or instead to be timeless in its origin, but regained by the nobility from royal usurpations. They were concerned by specific constituents of a ‘free [system of] government’ – the privileges of Košice (Kassa, 1374) and Nieszawa (1454), *nihil novi* (1505), the elective throne, the supreme tribunals – which the *szlachta* had inherited from its forbears. Significantly, they quite rarely mentioned *neminem captivabimus nisi iure victum* – this privilege, which took shape during the 1420s and 1430s, was a quintessentially individual freedom. Changes came towards the end of the eighteenth century, when critically disposed writers created alternative narrations of Polish history – downward spirals of ‘anarchy’ or ‘slavery’. This change was linked to an increase of interest in natural law under the influence of Enlightenment currents, especially Physiocratism. Its consequence was the increasing attention given to the peasant question. Even such a conservative writer as Michał Wielhorski – notably in the course of and following his dialogue with Gabriel Mably and Jean-Jacques Rousseau – had to acknowledge the axiom of the natural gift of freedom: he rather weakly explained that the services performed by the knights of old justified the exclusion of the common folk from liberty. Grześkowiak-Krwawicz underlines the significance of the ‘typical philosophical concept’ of liberty as a natural gift in the growing calls at the end of the eighteenth century to extend freedom beyond the noble estate (p. 82).

‘Pillars of freedom’ is the third and longest part of the book. It contains four chapters. In the first of these, ‘Liberty and law’, Grześkowiak-Krwawicz presents the cult of law and in particular – old laws. The conviction that, ‘*lex regnat, non rex*’ (p. 87) was one of the fundamental elements of the constitution of the Commonwealth, as demonstrated by a range of quotations from the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Poles did not need John Locke (quoted at the beginning of the chapter) to persuade them that without laws, there can be no liberty. However, whereas in the liberal theory, laws protect freedom, in the republican theory of liberty laws protect the free Commonwealth which in turn guards the liberties of citizens. Some authors even discerned the true sovereign in these laws. Most importantly, the king was subjected to the laws. The cult of old laws was extraordinarily strong. For several generations the conviction that it was not necessary to create new laws, but only to execute the old ones, went virtually



unchallenged. However, in the last decades of the eighteenth century some authors, most bluntly Józef Wybicki, did not hesitate to state that new situations require new laws. Grześkowiak-Krwawicz emphasizes, however, that these authors generally attacked the cult of old laws from republican positions – new, good laws should protect ‘the political existence, the external independence and the internal freedom of the nation’, as the preamble to the Constitution of 3 May 1791 declared.

In the second half of the eighteenth century more emphasis was laid on the role of law in defending citizens from their fellow citizens. Although Grześkowiak-Krwawicz detects the influence of Western European theories here, especially on the learned Piarists (Fathers Wincenty Skrzetuski, Antoni Popławski and Konstanty Bogusławski), she draws attention to the fact that this problem had already been noted in the second half of the sixteenth century. It was constantly present in early modern Polish political writing, although it was less prominent between the middle of the seventeenth and the middle of the eighteenth century. For the essential function of law was to restrain licence. Laws should moderate liberty, and educate free men to make good use of their liberty. Because laws were made by citizens, disobedience to the laws had far worse effects in a free state than in a monarchy. However, the author argues that the use of law to impose far-reaching restrictions on individual freedoms, advised by Rousseau and propagated by Staszic and others, never met with widespread acceptance. She quotes Jan Ferdynand Nax’s telling critique of Staszic, in order to contrast the latter’s extreme interpretation of republican liberty with the position of the former, which was close to liberal concepts (p. 104).

The long and crucial chapter, ‘Liberty and power, or nothing concerning us without us’ provides further perspectives on the guiding principle of the republican idea of freedom: that citizens’ participation in the exercise of power protects the liberty of individual citizens from the monarch. Again, she chooses quotations from three centuries to demonstrate the continuity of this principle. In the words of Adam Wawrzyniec Rzewuski, ‘everyone governs and everyone is governed’ (p. 109). This principle was expressed in the *pacta conventa* concluded with each newly elected king – which tangibly implemented the idea of the social contract well before the theories of Locke and Rousseau were written. With the passing of time, noble ideologists ceased to speak or write of the participation of the ‘knightly estate’ in the exercise of power, consigning the entirety of sovereignty to the noble nation. In the first half of the eighteenth century this supremacy of the ‘nation’ was supposed rather to protect old laws – protecting liberty – than to make new ones. The author suggests that later, especially during the Four Years Sejm of 1788-

92, foreign authorities (especially Rousseau) encased the old conviction of the sovereignty of the nation in a shiny new frame. In my view, she might in this place (at least in a footnote) have clarified her position *vis-à-vis* Lukowski's argument (which partly descends from Reverend Walerian Kalinka and Konopczyński) that Rousseau played the key role in dynamizing Polish republicanism: from a basically passive ideology it became an active one. To some, that was a threatening development.<sup>12</sup>

The fear of the omnipotence of the sejm had in any case much older origins than the Four Years Sejm. Theorists and pamphleteers had long since argued over the proper relations between the sejm and the sejmiks, before the Constitution of 3 May 1791 resolved the dispute by declaring the envoys to the sejm 'representatives of the entire nation' – rather than delegates bound by the instructions given to them by their sejmiks. According to Grześkowiak-Krwawicz: 'In the years 1788-90 visions of a sovereign sejm as the highest legislative organ and at the same time the guarantor of freedom were very rare' (pp. 120-121). She is probably correct regarding the pamphlets and other writings addressed to the wider 'public', which was mostly, but not exclusively composed of noblemen. However, within the sejm many declamations were made of the sovereign power of the Commonwealth, as constituted in the deliberating estates of the sejm. This principle was proclaimed by such orators as Wojciech Suchodolski and Stanisław Kublicki, and in turn provoked warnings against the 'despotism' of the Commonwealth.<sup>13</sup> The author is surely right, however, to note that in 1791-92 the concept of direct democracy at the level of the sejmiks was decidedly rejected only after the most 'enlightened' politicians (who professed a distinctly 'republican' creed) had suffered a setback at the sejmiks held in November 1790 – and so within the sphere of practical politics.

Grześkowiak-Krwawicz considers the *liberum veto* in the context of the problem of whether sovereign power belonged to the entire 'nation' or to each and every individual citizen. Eighteenth-century writers were divided on this question, but gradually the first

---

<sup>12</sup> Łukowski, 'Od Konarskiego do Kołłątaja', *passim*. Cf. idem, 'Political Ideas among the Polish Nobility in the Eighteenth Century (to 1788)', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 82, 2004, 1, pp. 1-26.

<sup>13</sup> Cf., for example, Richard Butterwick, 'O ratunek Ojczyzny. Sprawa opodatkowania duchowieństwa katolickiego w początkach Sejmu Czteroletniego', in *Spory o państwo w dobie nowożytnej. Między racją stanu a partykularyzmem*, ed. Zbigniew Anusik, Łódź, 2007, pp. 237-40.

interpretation came to prevail. The author links the second interpretation with the principle of equality among noble citizens. She shows that whereas in the seventeenth century the *liberum veto* developed from the idea of unanimity in decision-making, in the first half of the eighteenth century it was the right of an individual to oppose everything ‘that could harm liberty’ (the words of Szczepan Sienicki, quoted on p. 129) that came to the fore. New laws, but above all the actions of the king could harm freedom. This threat necessitated the *liberum veto*, according to its numerous supporters. Criticism of those using the *veto* was always abundant. Even fervent apologists for the *veto* displayed mixed feelings regarding its all too frequent abuse (Reverend Pęski compared such a condition of liberty to Purgatory, which was at least better than the Hell of slavery). However, it was only Reverend Konarski who ‘magisterially [demonstrated] the contradiction between the *ius vetandi* and liberty on both levels’ – positive and negative (p. 133). As the author frames the argument, Konarski’s demolition of the theoretical justification of the *liberum veto* was a return to key principles of republicanism, which had been somewhat forgotten in the intervening generations: without a free, independent and strong Fatherland, there could be no liberty for its citizens.

Even Konarski, however, was unable to persuade his compatriots to abandon the principle of unanimity completely. Grzeškowiak-Krwawicz makes the important argument that the continuing popularity of the principle of unanimity in later eighteenth-century Poland, at least regarding the most important laws,<sup>14</sup> being ‘in some measure’ a return to a sixteenth-century tradition, arose from the fear ‘no longer of the despotism of an individual, but of the tyranny of the majority’ (p. 139). This is not stated explicitly, but the author appears to be referring to an aphorism from one of liberalism’s canonical texts, John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty* (1859).<sup>15</sup> This would be another element of a specifically Polish synthesis between republicanism and the precursors of liberalism, but also part of a dialogue conducted by the author with the liberal tradition of thinking about liberty. She closes this chapter by returning to the question of ‘freedom old and new’ at the end of the eighteenth century, stating: ‘The traditional republican conviction that participation “in government” is the guarantee of all freedoms, showed its enduring power; it was shared

---

<sup>14</sup> On this question cf. Jerzy Lukowski, “‘Machines of Government’: Replacing the Liberum Veto in the Eighteenth-Century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth’, *Slavonic and East European Review*, 90 (2012), 1, pp. 65-97.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. J. S. Mill, *On Liberty and Other Writings*, ed. Stefan Collini, Cambridge, 1989, p. 8.

even by authors who proposed a modern division of liberty and who devoted much attention to civil liberty' (p. 141).

In the chapter 'A free voice securing freedom' (the title of a prominent work ascribed to Stanisław Leszczyński) Grześkowiak-Krwawicz discusses the meanings attached to one of the crucial principles of liberty from the end of the sixteenth century onwards. Initially this concerned the free speech of a citizen at a sejmik or the sejm, so that he might warn his fellow citizens of the monarch's designs against liberty. The scope of the principle was later widened to include printed material. To speak freely was, perhaps even more than an individual right, a patriotic duty. It was only towards the end of the eighteenth century, in certain justifications of the freedom of thought and of the press, that Enlightenment influences can be detected. In the last years of the Commonwealth, the possible dangers flowing from the abuse of freedom of expression were analysed and the permissible boundaries of that freedom were debated. It would perhaps have been worthwhile to have underlined the distinction signalled on pages 158-59 between the free voice in political matters and freedom of expression in questions of religion. Whereas the first right (between the reign of Stefan Batory in 1576-1586 and the confederacy of Targowica in 1792-93) was an inviolable foundation of republican liberty, only a few declared their opposition – in principle – to ecclesiastical censorship of works that were potentially harmful to religion and morals. I would however question the author's statement that 'clergymen's demands provoked few polemics and it can be concluded that they arose rather on the margins of the discussion of freedom of expression' (p. 159). It is the case that in these polemics something else than the traditional 'free voice' was at issue. However these polemics, for example between Reverend Karol Wyrwicz and Reverend Piotr Świtkowski, Reverend Wojciech Skarszewski and Jan Baudouin de Courtenay, Reverend Stefan Łuski and the editors and publishers of *Gazeta Narodowa i Obca*, or Reverend Karol Surowiecki and numerous adversaries, were heated, and they echoed loudly at the time.<sup>16</sup> It is another matter that in practice ecclesiastical censorship functioned weakly, if at all.

The chapter 'Liberty and equality' acquaints us with the role of the idea, or rather the myth of equality within the noble estate as a guarantor of freedom. For many writers from the sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century, equality among citizens replaced

---

<sup>16</sup> Cf., for example, Władysław Smoleński, *Przewrót umysłowy w Polsce wieku XVIII*, 4th edn, Warsaw, 1979, chapters 8 and 9.

the function of strong royal power in securing to the nobleman ‘the tranquil possession, without fear’, of his property. Civic equality remained in a certain tension with the vision of the Commonwealth as a *monarchia mixta*, in which senators were supposed to hold the balance between *maiestas* and *libertas*. Demagogic attacks on the magnates, as the author writes, had a long tradition. It was however only towards the end of the eighteenth century that such attacks contributed to essential changes, both in political practice and in thinking about liberty. The key element in the campaign of late eighteenth-century royalists to restore to the monarch his lost prerogatives (and in some cases, to establish a significantly stronger executive power) was the convincing of their listeners and readers that equality was merely a myth that veiled an oligarchy of the richest and most powerful. Their success was facilitated by the increasing economic, social, cultural and political importance of the middling nobility during the reign of King Stanisław August Poniatowski (1764-95). Another reason for their success was that ‘as early as the 1770s, in Polish political theory the old concept of a mixed form of government was rejected and replaced by modern constitutional constructions, in which “the third force” of the aristocracy was not only superfluous, but positively dangerous’ (p. 180). The Four Years Sejm saw the reduction of the role of the senate. It was also at this time that landless nobles were stripped of their (theoretically) equal participation in the exercise of power. This step was intended to curtail the licence of the magnates, but it was at odds with the canon of noble values and with the privileged position of the *szlachta* with regard to other social estates. However, the question of equality (in its constitutional and legal aspects) was not debated in relation to burghers; with regard to peasants such a discussion would have been unthinkable.

The fourth part of the book is titled ‘Liberty in peril’ and has three chapters. The first of these deals with the most obvious danger: ‘The king lies in wait for liberty’. The author reminds us that this conviction ‘was not merely a phobia among nobles’ and did not only derive from observations of the deeds of foreign monarchs who successively overthrew liberty, and ‘a little’ from experiences of the Commonwealth’s own kings. It also had theoretical foundations reaching back to classical Antiquity, which were ‘common to all European thought about the state’ (p. 189). It was not only the Polish nobility that feared its kings, and it was not only in the Commonwealth that people feared the degeneration of the state into anarchy or tyranny. In Poland, however, the typical sixteenth- and seventeenth-century conviction of the delicate but necessary balance *inter maiestatem ac libertatem* began at the start of the eighteenth century to give way to the ‘republicanization’ of the constitution (or at least to the ‘republicanization’ of discourse

about the form of government), a tendency that proceeded simultaneously with the loss of faith in the optimal qualities of *monarchia mixta*. To a considerable extent this programme was implemented in the 1770s, when Stanisław August lost most of his prerogatives of distribution and nomination. However, the ‘granting’ to the king of executive power in the form of the Permanent Council established in 1775 provoked considerable mistrust, despite the fact that in accordance with the proposals of Konarski and others, the principle of collegiality was applied and the Council was subordinated to the sejm. Any influence wielded by the executive power or the monarch on the legislature and the judicial power raised particular hackles. This testifies to the asymmetrical and selective reception in Polish thought of Montesquieu’s concept of the triune division of powers.

On the other hand, this republican programme – depriving the monarch of power and turning him into the country’s highest official and the guardian of national sovereignty – prepared the path for the supplanting of free royal elections by hereditary succession to the throne. Grześkowiak-Krwawicz stresses, however, that this was a long road, and not one taken by all. She also discerns that among supporters of free royal elections a shift in emphasis took place – from the accentuation of the positive role of elections in cleansing and renewing the free Commonwealth towards ever more frightful warnings against hereditary kings. In the end, but only in the end, a few of the most consequential republicans proposed an ‘eternal interregnum’ (p. 213). Deep-rooted distrust of any kind of royal power was voiced in the furious criticism of the Constitution of 3 May 1791 by its opponents.

For many historians, especially those of a somewhat ‘pessimist’ persuasion, the struggle *inter maiestatem ac libertatem* is the main axis of the history of the Commonwealth.<sup>17</sup> It was not, however, the only source of peril. The chapter ‘Liberty as a threat to liberty’ presents evidence that early modern Polish political thought by no means underestimated the possibility that *libertas* might degenerate into *licentia*, although the frequency with which the adjective *periculosa* was joined to the noun *libertas* suggests that ‘often there seemed to be no remedy for [the danger]’. The author then states firmly that Poles forgot to post the necessary guards around liberty (pp. 216-17). She then considers the important problem of *nierzqd* (literally – the absence of government or more loosely –

---

<sup>17</sup> For example: Jerzy Lukowski, ‘The Szlachta and the Monarchy: Reflections on the Struggle *inter maiestatem ac libertatem*’, in *The Polish-Lithuanian Monarchy in European Context, c. 1500-1795*, ed. Richard Butterwick, Basingstoke, 2001, pp. 132-49.

misrule) which is sometimes mistaken for *swawola* (licence) or – as in the later eighteenth century – with *anarchia* (anarchy). In the seventeenth century *nierzqd* was associated with the disorder that was unavoidable in a free state. *Swawola* on the other hand was always – however ineffectively – condemned. From the middle of the eighteenth century, however, *anarchia* and *nierzqd* were usually treated as synonyms for a catastrophic actual state of affairs which contradicted liberty and threatened the further existence of the state. This change was linked to the conviction that it no longer sufficed to correct morals, it was necessary to change institutions and laws. Instead of postulates of returning to ancestral virtues, the noble nation's forbears were sometimes accused of mistaking 'licence for liberty' (p. 226, a quotation from the pamphlet *Suum cuique*, circa 1771). In order to demonstrate the significance of this change, Grześkowiak-Krwawicz manages to show empathy with Hetman Seweryn Rzewuski, who as early as 1776 lamented that 'for no little time they have been trying to call *rzqd* (government) everything that would bring us closer to despotism, and *nierzqd* (anarchy), noise and confusion everything which secured the noble freedom of citizens' (pp. 227-28). I would add that this change in the discourse of 'government' and 'anarchy', which yielded the slogan *rzqdna wolność* (orderly freedom), was strongly expressed at and by the sejmiks which in February 1792 welcomed the Constitution of 3 May.<sup>18</sup>

The chapter 'The external threat, or liberty and independence' follows on naturally. This problem has been critical to the evaluation of the Commonwealth in virtually the whole of Polish historiography since the nineteenth century. Grześkowiak-Krwawicz endeavours to look at this problem without the prism of the partitions. She seeks to enable the reader to understand the roots of such shocking statements (from a later perspective) as, for example, that of an envoy to the Four Years Sejm, Jan Krasieński: 'It should be indifferent to us whether we fall victim to an overpowering neighbour or our own government [...] slavery (*niewola*) is always slavery' (p. 445, note 3). Polemicizing with Władysław Konopczyński, she shows that independence and liberty were not at odds with each other, but in republican theory they were complementary. The first depended on the second. The understanding of independence and liberty was common to the opponents and supporters of the Constitution of 3 May, but they located the greatest threat to liberty in different places. The author admits that this principle became less prominent in the second

---

<sup>18</sup> Wojciech Szczygielski, *Referendum trzeciomajowe. Sejmiki lutowe 1792 roku*, Łódź, 1994, passim.

half of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century. The awareness that the freedom of the Commonwealth was threatened from abroad, although it appeared in 1733, when the election of Stanisław Leszczyński was overturned as a result of Russian intervention, became almost universal only during and after the confederacy of Bar (1768-72) and the first partition. After 1772 attention was often drawn to compatriots groaning under the yoke of the neighbouring absolute monarchies. Grześkowiak-Krwawicz nonetheless soberly reflects that in 1775 and 1776 ‘the supposed despotism of the Permanent Council aroused significantly more fear and indignation than the fact that it had been imposed by a foreign power’. This attitude changed somewhat during the early phases of the Four Years Sejm (pp. 240-241).

Pages 242-44 contain probably the severest accusations made by the author, addressed to ‘those participants in political discussions’, who seemed not to discern any external threat. This illusory bliss, she believes, derived from the creation in their discourse of ‘a kind of imaginary world [...] in which royal despotism was still the greatest threat to freedom’ and changes to old laws paved the way to such despotism. When the external threat remained, it seems, beyond the horizon of Seweryn Rzewuski and his ilk, the advocates of reform spoke of it ever more drastically in order to justify change – their *leitmotiv* was the ‘chasm’ into which the nation was poised to fall. I would add here that this reformist discourse was strongly marked by the theme of Divine Providence.

‘To live in a free country, or man and liberty’ is the fifth part of *Regina libertas*. It is divided into two chapters, ‘In the service of liberty’ and ‘The blessing of liberty’. Without losing sight either of the heritage of Antiquity or of early modern European thought, Grześkowiak-Krwawicz excavates the model of a free man and citizen, as described by early modern Polish authors from the sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century. The demands were high: bravery in the defence of the Fatherland, zeal in public service, prudence in counsel (here lay the most important sense of the ‘free voice’), and above all the voluntary, selfless and sacrificial submission of the individual good to the common good. This was the essential basis of *amor patriae* (I would add that in the second half of the eighteenth century we encounter the word *patriotyzm* ever more frequently). Almost everyone agreed that the continued existence and felicity of the free Commonwealth depended on the virtue of its free citizens. But the laments that care for the public good had become empty words were beyond counting. A specifically Polish contribution to this litany, which was fairly typical for early modern Europe, was the



conviction that Poles, to an exceptional degree, loved freedom. *Amor patriae*, we might say, overlapped with *amor libertatis*.

How could a man be made worthy of liberty? This classical dilemma was revived in the early modern period, leading some thinkers, such as Niccolò Machiavelli and Rousseau, and in Poland Staszic, to postulate the drastic restriction of individual freedom in the name of collective liberty. The author conducts a concise review of Polish views on the formation of a free man, first emphasizing the role of religion, and then that of ‘national education’. Perhaps rather more could have been said about the role of religion in fortifying civic values, but this would have required the use of different kinds of sources.<sup>19</sup> Towards the end of the Commonwealth’s existence disputes ignited over whether ‘enlightenment’ was necessary to the citizen, as such writers as Andrzej Zamoyski, Wybicki and Kołłątaj maintained, or whether it was better to trust in an ‘unenlightened’ but virtuous heart, as Seweryn and Adam Wawrzyniec Rzewuski claimed. The question of the link between ‘enlightenment’ and liberty also appeared in calls for the gradual ‘enlightening’ of the peasants, so that they might be admitted to personal ‘freedom’. Grześkowiak-Krwawicz concludes the chapter by underlining the turning point effected by Konarski, who upturned the usual dependency between a free state and virtue: only the ‘repair’ of corrupted institutions and laws could raise up the fallen virtue of Poles.

This conceptual reversal leads to the discussion of the blessings ascribed to liberty. Only a free person was capable of virtue. This was no Polish particularity, shows the author, but a common strand in European thought, reaching back to Antiquity. A Polish perspective is however given by the comments of Polish travellers and writers on the qualities of those unhappy nations deprived of their freedom, and of the happy ones who still enjoyed liberty. A certain change took place towards the end of the eighteenth century, when some authors began to write of the natural desire for freedom felt by all humans. In this case as well, Grześkowiak-Krwawicz sees a synthesis between the heritage of early modern Polish thinking about freedom and the currents of the Enlightenment.

The sixth part of the book, without separate chapters, brings us the author’s perspective on ‘Myths and dilemmas of liberty’. It shows how nobles imagined Poland’s place among free nations. Grześkowiak-Krwawicz devotes considerable space to the motif of fear in early modern Polish writing on freedom. While retaining the character of a

---

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Piotr Badyna, *Model człowieka w polskim piśmiennictwie parenetycznym XVIII w. (do 1773 r.)*, Warsaw, 2004, pp. 113-27.

researcher of political thought, she trespasses somewhat into the territory of discourse theorists, especially when she writes of the epithets of liberty: ‘the fragile gift’, ‘the priceless treasure’ etc. She encounters most difficulty with the connection between ‘Faith and liberty’. The elaborate theory of providential liberty expounded by Reverend Szymon Majchrowicz, often mentioned in this context by historians, was quite exceptional. A previous reviewer of *Regina libertas* has already written at length on this point, so I simply refer the reader to his arguments and evidence for the ‘presupposed background’ of political writing in the Commonwealth.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps a different selection of sources, such as sermons preached before the sejm, would have led Grześkowiak-Krwawicz to different conclusions. An important addition to the picture presented in this part of the book can be found in an article by Benedict Wagner-Rundell. At the beginning of the eighteenth century confessional hostility prevented Catholic Poles and Protestant Britons from recognizing each other as free nations. The two narratives of islands of liberty, exceptionally favoured by Providence, were so close to each other, that they were mutually exclusive. As he argues, ‘it was the very point of comparison between the republican ideas of Britain and Poland-Lithuania that made contact between them so difficult’.<sup>21</sup>

The reader might well ask why, instead of a conclusion containing a summary of the author’s theses, the last part of the book is a (previously published) piece titled ‘*Gustavus obiit... The idea of liberty in the Kościuszko Rising*’. It transpires, however, that this text plays the part of conclusion extremely well. Firstly, a separate summary is unnecessary, because the theses of the book are clearly stated at the beginning, and recalled in almost every succeeding chapter. Second, as Grześkowiak-Krwawicz explains, ‘the question of the understanding and functioning of the concept of liberty in the Kościuszko Rising, although it chronologically falls within the eighteenth century, is undoubtedly a distinct problem, if only because, in this period of exceptional tension, which the insurrection certainly was, it is difficult to speak of some deeper political reflection’ (p. 333). This question is also undoubtedly a most important problem in its own right. Theoretical reflections on the relation between liberty and independence have already been

---

<sup>20</sup> Parkitny, op. cit., pp. 265-66.

<sup>21</sup> Benedict Wagner-Rundell, ‘Liberty, Virtue and the Chosen People: British and Polish Republicanism in the Early Eighteenth Century’, in *Britain and Poland-Lithuania: Contact and Comparison from the Middle Ages to 1795*, ed. Richard Unger and Jakub Basista, Leiden and Boston, MA, 2008, pp. 197-214, quotation at p. 214.

discussed. In 1794 it was time for the discourse of liberty and independence, linked to a discourse of ‘fettters’, ‘chains’ and ‘the yoke’, of ‘violence’ and ‘slavery’ to be applied to the armed struggle to restore a free Polish state – regarded as synonymous with a free Polish nation. For this reason the sources for this part of the book differ from those of the preceding parts. Quotations are taken from decrees, proclamations, appeals and sermons, which were intended not so much to persuade readers and listeners to accept the views presented therein, but to inspire them to action. ‘Most of all, however, it is essential to note that we are still dealing with the same tradition of thinking and speaking about freedom’, argues the author on page 334. No new concepts of liberty were invented, although the social scope of freedom was widened considerably. Long-standing convictions of the qualities of free people were reflected in the contrasts drawn between ‘knights of freedom’ and ‘bands of frightened slaves’ (p. 345). This was not the time for discussion of civil and political liberty. The principal slogan of the insurrection linked ‘liberty’ and ‘independence’, but the boundary between the two concepts ‘was quite fluid’ *była dość płynna*” (p. 337). The experience of the rising etched into Polish consciousness the old republican precept, that without an independent Fatherland there can be no liberty for its citizens.

The insurrection also directed anger towards those degenerate sons of the Fatherland who by their treasonable collaboration with foreign despots had led to the loss of liberty. The author notes that the fear of treason, which in France sanctioned ever more terrorist acts undertaken by the revolutionary government in the name of liberty, appeared in Poland in a far milder form than on the banks of the Seine. She does not engage with the question of the suspension of some rights and freedoms in order to establish a kind of insurrectionary dictatorship. It would be interesting to discover whether these steps were justified by references to the institution of the dictatorship in the ancient Roman republic. Perhaps the sources contained no traces of this. But this problem would have linked itself to another matter raised by the author regarding the ‘Jacobins’: namely, that the preservation of national unity was of foremost importance. Such unity was praised and elevated above, for example, religious divisions. Grześkowiak-Krwawicz rightly emphasizes the significance of the slogan ‘liberty or death’, connecting it to the problem discussed earlier – of being worthy of freedom. God appears in this part of the book more often than elsewhere, perhaps as a result of the use of different sources. I would however

somewhat more strongly than the author (pp. 345, 351) have accentuated the sacral tone in insurrectionary discourse.<sup>22</sup>

Grzeškowiak-Krwawicz closes her book with an extremely important conclusion: In 1792-94 ‘it was apparent that liberty in the liberal understanding of the concept, individual freedom guaranteed only by law irrespective of who held power in the state, could not function in the conditions of the partitions. Reality expressly confirmed the old republican conviction that individual liberty is possible only in a free country, in which citizens influence the exercise of power’ (p. 357). And so it proved, for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I would add that in this experience lies the historical weakness of liberalism in Poland, which is still felt today. During liberalism’s heyday in Western Europe, it did not have the conditions to flourish among Poles. The author stresses, however, that in the 1770s and 1780s writers shaped by the Enlightenment contributed new concepts, based on natural law, to the early modern Polish idea of liberty. This enabled the lasting widening of its social scope. And on this note the book finishes.

The other – let us call it proto-liberal – side of the thought of Wybicki, Pawlikowski, Łoborzewski, Popławski, Bogusławski, Stroynowski and Skrzetuski left a weaker legacy. In the conditions of the insurrection nobody spoke of freedom as the ‘tranquil enjoyment of property under the protection of the law’ (p. 357). This reflection might be applied to the legacy of the Constitution of 3 May. Since the partitions, the Constitution continues to be more strongly present in Polish consciousness as a symbol of independence than as a solution to constitutional dilemmas. The content of the *Statute on Government* passed on 3 May 1791 was a kind of compromise between a renewed republicanism and limited monarchism. It might have led Poles, had it not been for the insurrection and the final partitions, towards the issues that preoccupied nineteenth-century liberalism.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Magdalena Ślusarska, ‘Między sacrum a profanum. O obrzędowości powstania kościuszkowskiego’, *Wiek Oświecenia*, 12 (1996), pp. 107-33.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Emanuel Rostworowski, “Marzenie dobrego obywatela”, czyli królewski projekt Konstytucji’, in idem, *Legends i fakty XVIII wieku*, Warsaw, 1963, pp. 265-464; idem, ‘Czasy saskie i oświecenie’, in *Zarys Historii Polski*, ed. Janusz Tazbir, Warsaw, 1980, pp. 368-70; idem, *Rok monarchii konstytucyjnej. Maj 1791-Maj 1792*, Warsaw, 1985, p. 11; Richard Butterwick, ‘Konstytucja 3 Maja na tle nowożytnej Europy. Synteza republikanizmu i monarchizmu’, in *Lex est*

A dialogue can be conducted with the author at different levels, from the strictly historical to the fully contemporary. It seems to me that ‘excavation’, the favourite metaphor in the methodology proposed by Quentin Skinner, also characterizes the work of Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz. Skinner has sought to excavate the republican (or ‘neo-Roman’) theory of liberty by research on its sources and meanings in early modern Italy and England. Having excavated republican freedom, he presents it to the public at the beginning of the twenty-first century as an alternative to the liberal concept of freedom. He leaves the choice to his readers and listeners, but makes his own preference fairly clear.<sup>24</sup> It is similar, I believe, with the book under review. The early modern Polish, republican idea of liberty is presented to us anew, free from the dirt and dust which has covered it during the intervening centuries. The Enlightenment advocates of ‘orderly freedom’ probably did most damage to its image, in characterizing several generations of the Polish past as a time of ‘aristocratic anarchy’.<sup>25</sup> Such judgments were perpetuated (and taken out of context) after the shock of the partitions, during further struggles for liberty and independence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In *Regina libertas* we find both an argument against such stereotypes and a dialogue with the liberal idea of freedom. Grześkowiak-Krwawicz tries to keep with the bounds of chronology. She only slips up once, writing that Wybicki ‘following the model of the liberals identified [civil liberty] with the freedom to act within the boundaries set by law’ (p. 42). Wybicki rather drew on the same sources as those used by later liberals, above all Montesquieu and Locke. In the dialogue conducted by the author, proto-liberal elements are harmoniously written into the republican tradition.

It remains the case that the liberal idea of freedom has significantly weaker roots in Poland than in Great Britain or Italy, or even in contemporary France. The method of ‘excavation’ should also be applied to those, who in other circumstances could have become the progenitors of a Polish (or Polish-Lithuanian) liberal tradition. Apart from the authors listed above, and various other writers, preachers and orators, I would argue for the

---

*rex in Polonia et in Lithuania... Tradycje prawno-ustrojowe Rzeczypospolitej – doświadczenie i dziedzictwo*, ed. Adam Jankiewicz, 2nd edn, Warsaw, 2011, pp. 157-75.

<sup>24</sup> Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*, especially chapter 3.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Butterwick, ‘Political Discourses’, *passim*.

‘excavation’ and recognition of the crucial contribution made to the ideology of limited monarchism by King Stanisław August.<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately Grześkowiak-Krwawicz treats the views of the king as obviously self-interested, and does not consider them on their merits (pp. 122, 140-141). His prominent, albeit anonymously published pamphlet *Suum cuique* (circa 1771), which undoubtedly belongs to the category of political thought, is twice quoted, but without the name of its author (pp. 226, 258, notes on pp. 444, 456). This is a significant omission. It appears that the last king of the Commonwealth has been excluded from the precept which is rightly applied to other writers: even if the author wrote from a self-interested position, his work should still be studied carefully, in order to discover the values of the society to which it was addressed. That might invite the reply that limited monarchists were a small minority among those who created eighteenth-century Polish political thought. However, their influence on the legislation of the second half of the Four Years Sejm was enormous. As Grześkowiak-Krwawicz demonstrates with regard to Wybicki and others, these authors contributed significantly to the shaping of republican thought. Stanisław August, brought up within and intimately acquainted with Polish republican culture, also exercised an influence on the Polish idea of liberty. The zenith of his influence came during the *annus mirabilis* of 1791-92, before it was consigned to oblivion as a result of the transformations described in the seventh part of the book.

*Regina libertas* is distinguished by its coherence and clarity. We might however wonder whether historical reality, even in the sphere of the theory of liberty, was as coherent as it appears in the pages of this book. The picture would have been complicated had more attention been given to the arguments of ‘throne and altar’. However, reviewers should emphasize what a book contains, rather than what it leaves out. I could not find any factual errors. One might possibly carp that the author, in providing bibliographical details of books published beyond Poland, sometimes gives the publishing house, rather than the

---

<sup>26</sup> Emanuel Rostworowski, *Ostatni król Rzeczypospolitej. Geneza i upadek Konstytucji 3 maja*, Warsaw, 1966, passim. Richard Butterwick, ‘The Enlightened Monarchy of Stanisław August Poniatowski (1764-1795)’, in *The Polish-Lithuanian Monarchy in European Context, c. 1500-1795*, ed. Richard Butterwick, Basingstoke, 2001, pp. 192-217. Idem, ‘Positive and Negative Liberty in Eighteenth-Century Poland’, in *Liberté: Héritage du Passé ou Idée des Lumières? / Freedom: Heritage of the Past or an Idea of the Enlightenment?*, ed. Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz and Izabella Zatorska, Kraków and Warsaw, 1993, pp. 60-69.

place of publication (publishers rarely give their addresses prominently). Nor are there many faults on the technical side of the book. The absence of a separate bibliography should be lamented, as it would have greatly assisted other researchers and students, especially those writing Master's theses. This function is only partially fulfilled by the extensive notes, which occupy 142 pages at the end of the book. Personally I prefer them placed at the bottom of each page, in order to facilitate reading. This is not difficult to achieve with today's publishing techniques. It should be recognized, however, that the book is attractively and carefully produced. It has an index of persons, and benefits from wide margins and an easily legible font, employed in an only slightly smaller format in the endnotes. It's handy size means that it is suited to reading in a train or an aeroplane. These qualities are far from universal today.

To conclude, Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz has given us an illustrious and hitherto unique book. *Regina libertas* greatly deepens our understanding of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, its values and its heritage. It enables us to rethink the phenomenon of the Enlightenment in Poland through the appreciation of elements of continuity, and not only turning points in political thought. It is at the same time an invitation to dialogue at various levels. For this reason it should be required reading not only for academics and students of various disciplines, but also lawmakers and other people engaged in public activity. Last but not least, it writes Polish-Lithuanian thought on liberty into European history. It shows both foreign influences and original Polish contributions. For this reason this magnificent book should be translated into foreign languages as soon as possible.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> A shortened (135 pp.) English edition was published by Brill (Leiden and Boston, MA) in 2012 under the title *Queen Liberty: The Concept of Freedom in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*.