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SLAVS IN THE RENAISSANCE

An extensive monograph authored by Slobodan Prosperov Novak entitled *Slavs in the Renaissance* has recently been published ⁽¹⁾. This work, although written during a time of crisis in general, and in comparative Slavic studies in particular, can definitely not be seen as one of the many signs of this crisis. First and foremost, it is an anticipation of the cessation the crisis and an intimation of an era in which the portentous phrase *slavica non leguntur* will be heard with less frequency. In today's world, in which more and more Slavic nations are becoming organic parts of the European community, while the rest are preparing for accession to this supranational association, circumstances have arisen which have inspired this author to re-examine and to describe, for the first time in one volume, the geopolitical and cultural landscape of Slavic Europe in the period of the Renaissance. The author sets out to survey the scene at the time of a crucial period in Europe's history, the very inception of the early modern world, a period in which not only the rules of modern society were established, but one in which humanistic poetic principles founded on the aesthetics of antiquity were also introduced into literature. In addition, it was in this period that the legitimacy of the Slavic *linguae volgari*, as national languages, was affirmed.

In the preface to his book, printed in Zagreb in 2009, the author points out that he was inspired to write it by a 1981 congress in Rome on the connections between Italian literature and the Slavs in the period of the Renaissance. Motivated by his own, as well as by his colleagues' contributions to the symposium (the proceedings of which were published in the 1986 volume *Rinascimento letterario italiano e mondo Slavo*), Slobodan Prosperov

(1) S. P. NOVAK, *Slavs in the Renaissance*. Edited by J. HEKMAN, Zagreb, Matica hrvatska, Biblioteka Peristil, 2009.

Novak, as he states in the preface, started his work by doing research in the libraries of Vienna and Rome. The research then took him to Krakow, Prague, Dubrovnik and Zagreb. After this, the author claims that the book could only truly be completed at one of America's universities because, according to him, there it is still possible to identify in places the spirit of old-fashioned general Slavic studies, of the kind ignited in the 19th century by Viennese professors Miklošič and Jagić. In America the flame is still kept alive only by Riccardo Picchio of Yale University and the late Henry Birnbaum, a long-time professor at UCLA. Novak found the kernel of the old type of Slavic studies at Yale and in its invaluable libraries not by accident – he taught at their Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures from 2001 to 2007.

The author has also worked in Europe at Zagreb and Split Universities. He taught Slavic philology at La Sapienza in Rome and was a guest lecturer at numerous universities in Austria, Germany and Great Britain. In Croatia he was socially engaged and acted as the deputy minister of culture for some time. He was also the president of the Croatian Pen Association at the time of the 59th world Pen congress. Among some fifty books published by Novak are *Povijest hrvatske književnosti* (*History of Croatian Literature*) and the monograph *Dubrovnik Revisited*. He was also the director of the Dubrovnik Summer Festival.

In Europe, the last synthesis of the aforementioned topic was provided by the Russian I.N. Goleniščev Kutuzov in the form of his significant monograph *Italianskoe Vozrozhdenie i slavianskie literatury XV-XVI vekov*. Its first edition was published in Russian in 1963. It is no accident that Goleniščev Kutuzov spent an important part of his working life in the former Yugoslavia, having emigrated after the communist terror. As a major work, this monograph deserves to be mentioned here in its best edition, which is the second, in Italian, *Il rinascimento italiano e le letterature slave dei secoli XV e XVI*. This edition was edited by Sante Gracioti and Jitka Křesálková and was published in two volumes in Milan in 1973. It is in this format that the book was enriched by perfect additional bibliographies. It is no accident that the main promoter of the book was the Italian Slavist Sante Gracioti. Gracioti, who taught in Milan and later Rome, organised a series of successful conferences in Venice, under the auspices of the *Fondazione Cini*, during which numerous literary historians laid the groundwork for discussing issues pertaining to the relations between the culture of the Italian Renaissance and Slavic peoples from eastern Europe. This is all now seminally covered in Novak's monumental monograph which is being reviewed here. Along with Goleniščev Kutuzov's afore-

mentioned major work on the influence of the Italian Renaissance on Polish, Czech, Croatian and Hungarian literatures, he also published a supplement to his life's work, a booklet entitled *Renesansnye literatury zapadnoj i vostočnoj Evropy: literatura epochi Vozroždenija i problemy vseмирnoj literatury*, printed in Moscow in 1967, which also includes Italian echoes in the literatures of the Ukraine and Belarus.

Given the copiousness of Novak's work, which encompasses, with great minutia, hundreds of works and individual destinies which marked the Slavic Renaissance, a detailed description of its content will be provided before assessing its important general characteristics. In this way, not only will well-informed readers of this synthesis-providing work be able to perceive the multiplicity of the material covered and the complexity of the issues it poses, but the work will also be laid open to less informed readers. In the first chapter, entitled *The Renaissance, Slavs and the German - Roman Abendland*, the author challenges the preceding narrow view of Slavhood in Europe and debates the reasons for the demonisation of the Slavs. He then establishes a quadrilateral overview of Slavic presence in Europe on the basis of which he plots his literary-historical narrative. Novak very wittily reminds the reader that the demonisation of Slavhood is clearly visible in a theatrical scene from a Venetian square which took place in 1525 when, during a performance of the buffoon Zuan Polo, gods spoke in Latin, shepherds spoke in Italian and devils spoke in Croatian.

Novak's narrative feeds off the fact that after 1989 and the fall of the Iron Curtain between eastern and western Europe, new circumstances arose which gave his book a completely new significance, and which removed a possible imperial pressure of Russian Slavic studies from its conclusions. The first part of the book thus contains, among other topics, the following: how the Slavs stayed outside the first literary republic of Europe, Dante's speech on the eastern, that is, the Asian half of Europe is explained, the development of ideas on Slavic reciprocity in the Prague chancery of Charles IV is described and the pan-Slavic treatise of Vinko Pribojevič on the origin and glory of the Slavs in the form of a speech given on the island of Hvar is discussed. In addition, an excursion on the late Renaissance division of Slavhood is made, and the connection between Roman humanists and east European Vlachs is precisely noted as it was read by Cardinal and future Pope, the literary author Enea Silvio Piccolomini, and Nikola, Bishop of Modruš, his ally in Bosnia and Hungary, and who was the first ocular witness of Dracula's physical appearance. Novak also discusses Constantinople's view of humanism and finishes his introduction by cementing his complex quadrilateral view of Slavic pres-

ence in Europe, which was deeply divided by its partition into *Slavia romana* and *Slavia orthodoxa*.

In the large and crucial second chapter of his book the author meticulously documents the first transmissions of humanism into Slavic Europe, dedicating his utmost attention to the arrivals of Italian humanists in Cracow and its university, and to the first contacts of Italian humanists with Croats in Dalmatia, then in Hungary, and before that in Bohemia. Here the author pays special attention to connections with Petrarch at the time when in eastern Europe the *questione della lingua* arose in a new fashion and while the virus of humanism successfully travelled east, but left Bohemia, due to its latent and real antipapalism, somewhat deaf to it, although not completely, considering its connections with other Slavic literatures and, of course, the development of Petrarchist poetry in the verses of the king's son Hynek of Poděbrady and in the historiographic work of Jan of Rabštajn. To Copernicus and his heavenly but also earthly revolution the writer devotes some very convincing pages, as he does to Piccolomini and his east European and middle European friends. He then writes about Istrian pedagogue Vergerije and his stay in the Bibliotheca Corviniana in Hungary, about a series of writers and antiquarians and about Latin poet and conspirator Ivan Česmički, the nephew of the humanist Ivan Vitez who, in his own admission, was Panonian by nationality but Italian in custom. The book then treats the Italians Giovanni Conversini and Ciriacco de' Pizzicoli, who arrive on the east coast of the Adriatic and in Zadar, Trogir, Split and Dubrovnik, which were steeped in antiquity, encounter an already mature humanist circle gathered around Juraj Begna and Petar Cippico. In Dubrovnik, Ciriacco takes part in the making of the Asclepius capital on the Knežev dvor (the Rector's Palace), which is reminiscent of Hermes Trismegistus. It was a period of the considerable strengthening of the Renaissance spirit in Dubrovnik in which the derisory remark of the humanist Ivan of Ravenna, made at the end of the 14th century, that in that town everyone stays the way they were born, was utterly negated. When the first forms of humanist education took root in Dubrovnik, it was possible to see over twenty young noblemen perform in a single Latin play, while the Senate passed a decree in the middle of the 15th century that not a single nobleman who did not know Latin could take part in the lower spheres of government.

Novak misses no opportunity to write a very well-documented excursus on the Renaissance spies who acted between Venice and Turkey, and especially in the Dubrovnik Republic. That environment also fostered the activity of the earliest Slavic Petrarchist school. The pedagogic work of the Italian Tideo

Acciarini in Dalmatia is described carefully. His students were the most famous poets in Dalmatia, first and foremost Šižgorič from Šibenik, then Marulić from Split, and finally Ilija Crijević from Dubrovnik, who was later crowned poet laureate by the Roman Academy of Pomponio Leto. This monograph about Slavs in the Renaissance particularly stresses the importance of the treatise on the perfect merchant by Dubrovnik's Benedikt Kotruljević, as well as the high standard of Platonist texts by Bosnian émigré Juraj Dragišić, follower of Ficino and friend of Savonarola. Slav Renaissance illuminators and printers are also remembered, as are the historians of Buda, Feliks Petančić and Ludovik Crijević.

Separate chapters deal with the activity of Cracow University, the focal point of the earliest Polish humanism, and especially with the Italian Filippo Buonaccorsi who, in fleeing from Rome to Poland, met Grzegorz from Sanok, while at the same time the German Konrad Keltis helped found numerous eastern European *sodalitates*. Special attention is given to the presence of Renaissance stimuli among Orthodox Slavs, as the author sees the often barely noticeable traces of Italian influences as very important in making a general evaluation of the integral Slavic contribution to the general Renaissance movement. This is, first of all, connected with Russia through Pomponio Leto's travels, as well as with elements of Byzantine humanism in Russian documents on the Third Rome, in the work *Skazanie o Drakulé Voevodé* and other fruits of Russian trivial literature of the time, the documents of Ivan IV, or Ivan 'the Terrible', and especially with the activity of a very unusual Italian student who had received a humanist education and who was to become a monk of the Hilandar Monastery: Maksim Grek. In the first part of his life he was a full-blooded Renaissance man who then became first a prisoner in Moscow and then a saint of the Orthodox church. The book also covers the work of Peresvétoŭ, a Russian writer who read Machiavelli. The further laicisation of the literary life there is explained as well as the Russian, but also Serbian preservation of Hellas after the Kosovo defeat, and the Byzantine humanism of Constantine the Philosopher and Dimitri Kantakuzin. The book also contains some well-written analyses of the Novo Brdo mining law, the war memories of Serbian Janissary Mihailović, and letters exchanged by the monk Nikon and Jelena Balšić. The author also describes the development of humanist printing processes in Montenegro under the Crnojević family, their relations with Venice as well as the activity of Father Macarius who transported the Cyrillic printing press from Obod in Montenegro to Transylvania in order to set up his publishing activity there.

Slobodan Prosperov Novak questions the ways in which Renaissance style and its poetics increasingly permeated the pores of Slavic literatures and he answers questions regarding the creation of some of the very important Slavic opuses in the national languages, as well as the cultural function of combining these works with the use of the Latin language in the literatures of the region, referred to as *Slavia romana*. He therefore provides a detailed description of the Panonian Renaissance of Hungarian king Corwin as well as its Mediterranean purveyors. The identity of the Schiavoni in Italy is clarified, the activity of Venetian buffoon and schiavon Zuan Polo in theatre and in epic literature is explained, the contribution of the people of Kotor, who wrote in Italian and Latin during the period of Renaissance is expounded upon, and a very common Slavic story which is, in a way, a crime story, is told as it was registered in London's parliamentary documents. The author also enmeshed a chapter on Englishmen and their knowledge of Slavic languages into all of the above. The author's description of fortifications as the clearest signs of this epoch on Slavic soil is dramatic, as is his analysis of the witnesses and heralds of defeat at the battle of Mohač, and of the long-lasting Turkish dominion over central Europe. The emphasis on the Croatian author Marko Marulić, considered by the Croats as the father of their literature, is particularly foreseeable in this context because Marulić is a writer who, at the time he produced his epic poem *Judita* in 1501, wrote expressly that in that moment the Slavic world and its national literatures had gained their Dante. Novak's monograph displays an awareness of certain retrograde elements in its style, but also of the pervasive penetration of the Renaissance style among the Slavs throughout a widespread area, from the Mediterranean south to the Baltic north of Europe.

Not very numerous and therefore significant Bohemian humanists and royal secretaries such as Bohuslav Hasištejnský of Lobkovic and Jan Šlehta have not escaped the author's pervue, and neither has the cultural importance of Olomouc, the mythical locus of the middle European Renaissance. A whole series of legal documents and very good historical prose were created in the Czech language, and the first humanists in Slovenia appeared as early as at the dawn of the 16th century. Thus, the Slovenian Sigmund Herberstein travelled to Russia and wrote an excellent travelogue about his journey, Paracelsus spent some time among Slovenians and Dürer painted a portrait of a voluptuous Slovenian woman. The author discusses the late Renaissance in Poland and the very important events in literature of that style in the Ukraine and Belarus in a separate chapter in which he describes, in detail, the characteristics of the golden age of Polish literature before Jan Kochanowski. In

this chapter he treats the period dominated by Latin poets from the Polish court — Andrzej Krzycki, Jan Dantyszek, Klemens Janicki, and then he treats polemicists such as Ukrainian Stanislav Orichòvs'ky and the poet of the famous song about the bison, Belarusian Gusovsky. The author cleverly calls Poland the kingdom which would be a republic while describing with great care the importance of the Reformation among Poles as well as the selectiveness of Polish Renaissance art and its connections with Corwin's Buda. The Ukraine, in which many church and language reformers were active, in which Ostròh was for a long time the seat of the reform movement, and with polymath Stanislav Orichòvs'kyj, as a classic author of Ukrainian Renaissance literature, was referred to by the people of the period as Sparta on the steppe! The author studies the Belarusian Gusovsky and his 1523 poem Gusovsky and his 1523 song about the bison about the bison with great care as it opens up the issue of a brand new relationship of Renaissance Slavs with the landscape, which had repercussions in several literary works — of which Gusovsky and the Croat Hektorović only represent a small segment. Since Novak's book is entirely aware of the national contribution of writers, he therefore adds to Gusovsky and the Belarus corpus Skornin and Budny, Belarusian humanists.

The Renaissance in eastern Europe was a period dominated by anti-Turkish themes, generated among the Slavs on the troubled borderlines by extremely unfavourable conditions and the constant presence of crises and daily perils. Novak rightfully emphasises the anecdotal circumstances of an encounter of Slav soldiers commanded by French officer Bassompierre with the Turks at the very end of Renaissance. He sees as vital the fact that illiterate soldiers communicated with their officers in Latin and that they, terrified of encountering the enemy, exclaimed *Heu Domine adsunt Turcae!* In the period of the Renaissance many parallels with the European Renaissance can be traced in Turkey as well. Many contacts can be noticed which indicate that studying the eastern viewpoint in this matter still remains an important task. For it was not only that western engineers armed and trained Turkish soldiers or that Italian painters painted portraits of their sultans — such contacts were present also in pervasively spreading literary and cultural contacts. This is the viewpoint that Novak introduces in his chapters on the civil war over the Hungarian crown, when he discusses the conflict between the Habsburgs and Zapolya, in his analysis of the period of the scattered Panonian Renaissance and when he discusses the epoch in which, following the breakdown of Zapolya's aspirations, there still remained the Romantic court of his descendants in Alba Iulia amidst Turkish troops. The author discusses these topics in the chapters

in which the view of the Slavs held by Islamic conquerors is developed, a view which has been infantilised, and which dominated the Islamisation of the outskirts of Europe.

Although the narrow areas of interest of the author of this book are the Italian Renaissance and Croatian Renaissance literature, for the study of which he is in a privileged expert position, he tried not to devote a disproportionately large portion of his manuscript to these areas. He wanted them to take up the same amount of space as all the other national literatures, with the result that frequently the pages of this book do not give the impression that it was written from the perspective of one of the Slavic literatures. However, and rightfully so, among the largest chapters are those in which the literary activities of Croats are dealt with and in which issues of a mature Renaissance on the east coast of the Adriatic are debated, where the paradox of the Croatian geographic and political fragmentariness is deliberated upon with great expertise, as is Venice and its relationship to the Croatian language. The author stresses the importance of the influence of the Mediterranean moresque on Croatian literature and on most Renaissance writers. He very energetically analyses the case of the play *Robinja* by Hanibal Lucić and opens the question about its happy ending and about the masculine vision due to which the heroine is molested. The author emphasises the great significance of Hektorović's aforementioned long poem about fishermen and fishing. He pays special attention to the literature of Jewish refugees in Renaissance Dubrovnik and to literary works of Mavro Vetranović, author of the humanist drama *Orfej* and of an important play about Abraham's sacrifice, as well as of the mannerist epic *Piligrin*. This monograph about the Slavs in the Renaissance covers Petar Zoranić, the poet of the romanesquely structured *Planine* and the playwright and astronomer Nikola Nalješković, a man close to the reform movements in Venice. It covers in great detail the political circumstances which determined the life of the most important Slavic playwright before Chekhov, Marin Držić of Dubrovnik, who wrote a dozen excellent comedies and also political conspiratory letters to the Florentine duke Cosimo Medici. Novak devoted to this canonical author from the Slavic Renaissance a two-volume encyclopedia and he engaged almost two hundred authors in realising his endeavour in 2008.

Poetic discords and the retrograde elements caused by particular political and social conditions in eastern Europe left numerous traces in the period of the Renaissance, primarily in the literatures of the Czechs and Slovenians, and somewhat fewer traces in the literatures of the Slovaks and

Ukrainians. The smallest number of traces was to be found in Polish and Croatian literatures. The author devotes a documented chapter to these issues, especially in the spheres of drama and the poetics of drama. In this chapter he discusses the very complex issues of the formation of the Renaissance genre system in Slavic literatures, as well as the issues of the national languages in which they were written. Novak thus masterfully explains the trajectory through which the dramaturgic rules of humanism, especially in the dramatic forms, made their way to the Slavs in middle and eastern Europe. Furthermore, he explains the processes of the Italianisation of the Slavic Renaissance in these environments and of the affirmation of national languages as well as of the national contents they are meant to convey. *Ars dramatica* was a great challenge for writers from Poland and Bohemia, but more so for writers from Croatia who, in a series of individual opuses, created a completely homologous genre system akin to similar works in Italy. The book *Slavs in the Renaissance* therefore presents a very firm view of early Slav dramaturgy. It describes Polish Renaissance playwrights from the humanists to the arrival of the Jesuits and it researches morality plays, analyses the Polish Aesop, Marcholt and Sowiżdrzał. The work of Mikołaj Ray, the Polish Rabelais of a kind, is also studied. Even if there had been echoes in Polish dramatic literature of Italian humanist dramaturgy, the poetic retrograde tendency of Czech Renaissance dramatisations is quite obvious. The most important playwrights of the Czech literature of the period were the Slovaks, to whom Novak devotes due attention by covering the earliest phase of *studia humanitatis* among the Slovaks, emphasising the contributions of the famed Zsámboki, then Jesensky and Jan Silván who authored excellent hymns. Although there is a lot of material about Protestantism scattered throughout this book, there is also a separate chapter about this topic. It particularly takes into account the impact of Luther's ideas with the South Slavs and in the areas bordering Turkey. Novak covers the activity of the father of Slovenian literature, Primož Trubar, and of his reformed humanist circle, as well as the adventuring, which is of a literary interest of Pavao Skalić of Zagreb, author of a very personal *Encyclopedia*. Although the renowned protestant Matija Vlačić Ilirik, author of the seminal work *Clavis sacrae scripturae*, was of Croatian origin, records attest to no success of the reform in his homeland. In this context the author discusses two Renaissances in one body, its fanatics and its stoics, those who are rebels and those who are vassals. It is in this segment that the contribution of the protesting Catholic erasmus of Rotterdam, prince of European humanism, had among the Slavs was significant.

Since the author accepts the previous teachings of Hungarian literary historian Tibor Klaniczay, he meticulously notes and describes occurrences of mannerism and of the crises of Renaissance ideologemes in Slavic literatures. This is how excellently written chapters arise in which the author, in an inspired and richly documented manner, narrates the period he refers to as the autumn of the Renaissance. It is a period in which the Renaissance paradigm and especially ideals, are crumbling. In this context he covers the martyrdom of Zrinski in Siget and, in the words of the author, his 'post-Tridentine exercise in holiness', which is followed by the opuses of two very important lyricists from Dubrovnik (whose works were previously anthologised by Novak for special occasions), namely Sabo Bobaljević and Dinko Ranjina, both mannerist lyrical poets. A very important part of the book provides a positive answer to a rhetorical question: Were there any women in Slavic Renaissance? The polemic papers of Mare Gundulić Gozze are looked into, as well as the very recently discovered book *Difesa della poesia* by Nada Speranza Bona. The activities of the taciturn, venerated and free-spirited Cvijeta Zuzorić are also described. Results from Novak's previous pursuits also made it into this book: his interest in late Renaissance tragedies to which he devoted a whole book in its own right, published five years ago, and the utterly sensational discovery of Shakespeare's Ur-Falstaff in Zadar on the east coast of the Adriatic, where the character had first appeared in 1575 as Frangipietra and then underwent a series of documented transformations first in Italian and then in English theatre. The chapter on Giulio Camillo, advocate of hermetism and a precursor of the Internet, also carries great weight in *Slavs in the Renaissance*. The same goes for an analysis of the extremely important opus of Franjo Petrišević Patrizio, adventurer and philosopher of a radical Platonism, apostle of hermetic Catholicism, professor in Rome and one of the candidates for the stake on which Giordano Bruno had burned at around the same time. Patrizio escaped physical persecution on account of his firm friendships at the Vatican.

As soon as he sets the framework for his description of the mannerist tendencies at the end of Slavic Renaissance, Novak researches what he calls the autumn fruits among Poles, and of course, finally, among the courtiers of Rudolf II in Prague, where the flame of the Renaissance was extinguished in the crisis of Renaissance ideologists, in the fragmented world of mannerism, and in occultism. This is where a new era and a new spirit were announced, but also where the narrative of Novak's *Slavs in the Renaissance* monograph ends.

In these final chapters the author discusses the distribution of feudal power in the political landscape of eastern Europe, especially in Poland,

Lithuania and the Ukraine. He writes at length about Jan Kochanowski, poet of agitated classicism, about his courtly epics, about the classicist and politically allusive drama *Odprawa posłów greckich*, about the lyrics from the *Treny* collection and about translations of the Psalms. Political science was at its peak in Poland and the author, therefore, discusses political scientists such as Łukas Górnicki, translator of Castiglione's *Il Cortigiano*, and Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski, a very widely read political scientist in Europe. He elucidates the role and literary works of the Jesuit Skarga, and the works of many late Renaissance Polish historians and geographers. Out of the Polish cities mentioned by the author in that period, one which stands out for its intellectual might is, by all means, the tiny Zamość. A whole series of good poets, marginal characters more or less independent of politics, wrote top poetry in Polish in that period. The short-lived Mikołaj Sep Szarzyński stands out for the quality of his lyrics.

Although treated most extensively in the first chapters of the book, Russia returns to its pages later on with some frequency, evoked by numerous protagonists who cannot seem to fare without Moscow, be it their ally or their enemy. As Novak's book about Slavs in the Renaissance nears its end, it focuses more on authors from the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries. Among them are Vatican diplomats such as the Pole Krzysztof Warszewicki or the Croat Aleksandar Komulović. Balkan papers written for papal exigencies are studied, as well as Orbini's book about the kingdom of the Slavs, influential but banned by Vatican censors. Orbini's book provides a whole new fabulation of Slavic mythology, but it also expresses completely new ideas of Baroque Slavism and pleads for the liberation of eastern Europe from Turkish forces. Within this framework Novak also discusses Wujek's post-Tridentine philological perfectionism and his perfect translations of the Bible. He also writes about Vilnius, capital of the Lithuanian Renaissance and provides a dramatic excursion on the failed Moldavian experiment of a synthesis of Orthodoxy and Protestantism. Finally he returns once more to the Lutheran Reformation and to its vicissitudes in eastern Europe.

The author establishes a direct connection between the last phase of the Renaissance in middle Europe and its mannerist accents with Slavs, firstly because of the central position of imperial Prague in which the advocate of occultism and of weary souls, Rudolf II of Habsburg, had his seat, and then because of the Slavic namesake of doctor Faustus who was active there, the Dalmatian Faust Vrančić, inventor of numerous fantastic and actual machines, historian of Slavhood and creator of a five-language dictionary owing to which the Slavs found themselves among the respectable languages and nations of

Europe by means of the language of his native country. The mannerism of Rudolf's Prague court was the clearest sign of the disintegration of the Renaissance amongst the Slavs. Therefore, at the end of his journey Novak discusses Slavism in the contemporary epoch by providing links with Slavism at the end of the Renaissance, debating their differences and similarities.

Slavism at the end of the Renaissance, also called Baroque Slavism, was armed with philology just as humanist Slavism was. However, it was also characterised by a Jesuit persistence and pragmatism, and by myths which were very well put together and brimming with the popular fantastic. New attempts at integrating European Slavhood into the ecclesiastically still disunited, but civilisationally more integrated Europe, were this time not aimed only at the educated elite. These new attempts drew on a new system of pedagogy which created, for that time, progressive high-school and university education which has remained unchanged, in broad terms, to this day. At the end of the 16th and at the beginning of the 17th centuries, the perseverance of the Vatican missionaries of the new Slavhood could not measure up to the Slavhood of the early humanists who coveted Europe as an undivided *respublica literaria*. Towards the end of the 16th century the European continent grew weary of its own Renaissance, not only of ideals not-fulfilled but also of those that had been fulfilled. Now the political strategists and power-wielders of Europe foregrounded the idea of the monarchic unity of all the component states of Europe. Once again it seemed to them that it was important for the large states that the ethnic principle to be guaranteed by means of standardised national and, this time, state languages. Future divisions of Europe arose from this new unity at the dawn of the 16th century, during the end of Renaissance. New utopian national treatises were written and solutions started forming amidst very intricate ecclesiastic and ethnic divisions.

In their later development, each Slavic nation which had attained a literary and spiritual identity in the Renaissance had to initiate an independent struggle for a political form of national identity, which also meant for the territorial demarcation of their influence. The reason for this struggle for independence was that at the end of the Renaissance this set of issues was not settled for the majority of Slavic nations, but merely heralded and poorly resolved. However, the majority of Slavic nations in the struggle for national independence were too late for the global distribution of power, both during the 17th century, at the time of European absolutist and parliamentary monarchies, and following the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Slavic nations once again, at the end of the Renaissance, remained outside European integration, this time drastically and right at the moment when the old continent was

embarking on another one of its medievalisations. This post-Renaissance medievalisation was very resilient to Slavs and their national needs and nation-building goals, and lasted for too long among them. It was followed by a retrograde formation of large, one might say, drastically large states, which can even be described as 'cannibalistic' with regard to Slavs. It was only Voltaire and his encyclopedists who would try to expose the process, that is, its flaws which were reflected in the individualisation of Slavic identities in the 18th century, which is when they recognised the Renaissance epoch for the first time as a singular age of the awakening of Europe, as the first coming forth of European nations from out of barbarism. Thus it remains to this day, which Novak's book directly proves by having been written at the time of the post-modern integration of Slavhood into Europe, when the traces of Versailles Europe have vanished, and at the inception of a definitive removal of European, exclusively German-Roman, duality. This book has been written at the time when European ethnic and supranational tri-unity is increasingly being asserted, into which the Slavic segment of Europe is becoming civilisationally and culturally integrated.

It is beyond a doubt that the events that took place under the influence of the Italian Renaissance in eastern and south-eastern Europe during the 15th and the 16th centuries helped the greatest parts of the Slavic world, almost without reserve and for the first time, to come closer to their Roman and German contemporaries. This complex process described in Slobodan Prosperov Novak's book is akin to the one which has been woefully going on, almost with the same protagonists, for over two decades, since the fall of the Berlin wall to this day, in front of our very eyes. This process started at the moment in which Slavic nations, in their ancient but mostly only recently realised nation-states, were becoming equal members of the European Union, so far the biggest European umbrella organisation in which the *Abendland* has to grant the Slavs, at least those outside of Russia, ethnic tripartiteness and to forget about its former Germanic-Roman bipartiteness. Novak's voluminous book *Slavs in the Renaissance* is, to this day, the most convincing plea for European integralness. It is a work which displays an awareness that the staunchest supporters of an integral Europe have always come from the east and from the Slavic world.

The monograph which is supplemented by a large number of illustrations and thoroughly indexed, is written in a narrative style. Considered as a whole, it is characterised by the objectivity of its assessments and by a desire to assert on equal measure all the components of Slavic Europe. After this book, as stated by the author, it will finally be possible for Europe to breathe using both

of its lungs. Albeit this work is primarily concerned with literary topics, it never shies away from opening up new issues in the fine arts and from discussing issues in political history, philosophy and economics. Because its creation took place in several university centres in Europe and America, Novak's monograph *Slavs in the Renaissance* preserves the spirit of older times in which professors circled the globe in the style of theatrical vagrants. This book is dynamic, which is its most significant trait. It belongs with the most voluminous synthetic works in the centennial history of general Slavic studies and comparative studies. It is interesting to note that the author has also announced a sequel to this monograph which will encompass the periods of the Baroque and the Enlightenment.

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