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Literature and History of Slavic Studies: Conference Report

Danslav Slavenskoj

A conference entitled *Literature and History of Slavic Studies*, organized by the Commission for the History of Slavic Studies of the International Committee of Slavists, was held on April 12, 2016 – April 13, 2016 at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia. Under the auspices of the Visegrad Eastern Partnership Literary Award project (VEaPLA), the conference presenters covered a wide range of topics related to both specific authors and literary phenomena, which covered a large time period and were likewise of a broad geographic specificity. Presenters affiliated with universities and research centers based in four Visegrad countries, as well as Germany, Italy, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia and Ukraine were given an opportunity to present their work, and could attend in the Eastern Partnership Film Festival, which took place concurrently with the conference.

Following a warm welcome by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University, Jaroslav Šušol, M. Robinson, from Russia, opened the conference with his presentation on the methodological approaches of V. N. Perets (1870–1935) to the study of the history of literature. Indeed, the conference proved to be devoted to various methodological approaches to the study of literature, largely based on the approaches of their respective countries' academic traditions. This topic along with the influence of the political winds of change was discussed in the first section. M. Zelenka (Czech Republic) spoke about the phenomenon of the Prague linguistic circle and the role of Roman Jakobson in its history, A. Eliáš from Slovakia presented on the foundations of structuralism in Slovak literary studies, and L. Sazonova (Russia) explored the concept of *Textkritik* in the works of D. S. Likhachev (1906–1999).

H. Schaller from Germany presented on the place of Russian literature in Germany before

1917. Taking up the theme of literature as a dialog about cross-cultural influences, M. Bradaš from Serbia gave a presentation in which she compared, often side-by-side with the use of slides, the similarities in the stylistic patterns of the 'native' Serbian folk songs, translated into the Italian by Niccolò Tommaseo (1802–1874) and by Giovanni Nikolić (1822–1902). L. Pálfavi from Hungary presented on the changing Belarusian ethnic identity, as expressed through conscious choice of language: Belarusian, Russian, and Polish. Changes in language choice in the production of literature, made both intentionally and out of necessity, was also addressed by L. Matejko from Slovakia, who outlined specific criteria useful in assessing rapid social change and transformation in three countries of the Eastern Partnership: Belarus, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan. Matejko proposed a broader approach, that redefined the traditional scope of Slavistics to include regions influenced by Slavic languages.

Returning to the more traditional topics in Slavistics and to the authors of the 19th century, I. Pospíšil from the Czech Republic, gave a talk on the correspondence of Brno philologists, and commented on the changing state of the field at a time when it was under significant external political pressure. V. Franchuk from Ukraine, in assessing the correspondence of the linguist A. A. Potebňa, urged current scholars and teachers to be “*as kind and nurturing towards their students as he was.*” S. Bonazza from Italy assessed Jernej Kopitar's (1780–1844) relationship with German scholars, while Babič touched upon the earliest days of Slavic writing in his analysis of the Glagolitic fragments in the National and University Library in Ljubljana. T. Lewaszkiewicz from Poland gave a presentation which summed up the role of writers in the formation of Slavic literary languages.

The concluding section of the conference focused on various Slavic literary topics, ranging from what did not take place: the meeting of the Ukrainian writer Panteleimon Oleksandrovich Kulish (1918–1897) with the leader of the Slovak national revival, Eudovít Velislav Štúr (1815–1856), presented by Ya. Polischuk from Ukraine, and the intersection of Slavistics and Russian Romanticism, presented by S. Aloe; to that which did: a presentation about unknown manuscripts of P. O. Hviezdoslav (1849–1921) by A. Zelenková from the Czech Republic and an overview of the prolific first Romanian linguist and scholar of Slavistics, Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu (1857–1907), presented by S. Paliga from Romania.

L. Gorizontov from Moscow, concluded with a lively exploration the of the St. Petersburg literary *milieu* of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when the popular series *Zhivopisnaya Rossiya* was published. He also presented a humorous, but surprisingly accurate publication of rankings, based on the official Table of Ranks of the Russian Empire of then active authors.

While I avoided ranking the presenters of the conference, and was unable to discuss in detail each presentation for expediency's sake, I am pleased to report that a complete collection of the conference proceedings is expected to be in print in the final quarter of this year.