

Renaissance and Humanism from the Central-East European Point of View: Methodological Approaches. Grażyna Urban-Godziek, ed.

Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2015. 326 pp. \$50.

To say that the Central and Eastern European political events of 1989 and beyond had a profound and groundbreaking effect on how Western historiography perceives the region would currently amount to a truism or a cliché. Yet despite the thirty-odd years that have elapsed since the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, only recently has Eastern European scholarship started to be integrated into the wider net of European patterns such as the Renaissance, the Baroque, and the Reformation. This integration (or reintegration) presents both an opportunity and a requirement that this reviewer has called for on many occasions. After all, to call pre-1989 Anglophone historical awareness on matters Eastern and Central European basic, naïve, or downright wrong would be an understatement, and, once again, a cliché.

Titles such as the one under discussion are therefore welcome additions to the corpus. Though the grand and all-encompassing title promises a bit more than it delivers, this publication, a complex *mélange* of conference papers and presentations, offers a unique and detailed insight into the Renaissance taken from a mostly Eastern European (largely Polish) perspective. But there's an asterisk, a caveat. Or, actually, several. The first one deals with timing. Though time often moves slowly in historiographic circles, the collection under review is now four years old. What is more, the conference presentations included in it date all the way back to 2005. This of course calls into question the currency and utility of the project, the purpose of which, as the editor herself announced, was "to fill in the lack of scientific analyses of the Polish Renaissance in Western languages and also to invite foreign scholars to a debate about Polish humanistic literature" (11). Still, considering that the lacuna covering the Central and Eastern European Renaissance has not yet been adequately filled, and that most of the points brought forth in this collection have not yet been explored in Anglophone scholarship, perhaps the novelty of this work, though now in part over a decade old, has not yet fully diminished.

The second caveat—philosophically speaking—might seem somewhat more fatal to the self-proclaimed aims the collection's editor wishes to accomplish. There is an almost arcane and esoteric quality to many of the discourses found within—many of the contributions in this volume engage in fascinating though somewhat hermetic investigations of minutiae of Polish Renaissance studies, targeting the narrowest and most specialized market, and are thus hardly welcoming to Western scholars, either new or established, wanting to broaden their research in Renaissance studies. This is especially true of the many essays on Mikołaj Rej, a Renaissance poet and one of the first writers of vernacular Polish, who claims the title of the father of Polish literature. Yet instead of seeking to contextualize Rej within the broader Renaissance context and historiographic currents, which would be of great benefit to Anglophone readers, the vast majority of

the essays present an in-depth analysis of a specific component of his oeuvre that is clearly intended for the Polish specialist. To be sure, there are more-general pieces as well, more broadly painted and welcoming gateways into new vistas of interesting and new scholarship, as well as manual-like essays explaining the intricacies of journeyman-level labor inherent in Eastern European research and scholarly production—Janusz Gruchała's essay "Problems in Editing Renaissance Texts" comes immediately to mind. Still, in the end, the criticisms laid out here are minor, as in the grand scheme of things any new research on Eastern Europe in general, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in particular, no matter how specific, is a win for everyone concerned.

The twenty-four essays (including the essay-like introduction) presented in the volume are divided into five major parts: From the History of the Renaissance Idea, The State of Research on the Renaissance Humanism (mainly in the Polish context), Editing of Primary Sources, Old and Contemporary Translation Studies, and The Renaissance Genres. This is a true cornucopia of materials, making it possible for most Renaissance scholars to find something to their liking.

Władysław Roczniak, *Bronx Community College*
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Philology Matters! Essays on the Art of Reading Slowly. Harry Lönroth, ed. Medieval and Renaissance Authors and Texts 19. Leiden: Brill, 2017. xxvi + 224 pp. \$114.

The focus of the book, volume 19 of the Medieval and Renaissance Authors and Texts series, is on the craft of philology and its relevance in the twenty-first century. Philology, as the in-depth study of language, literature, culture, and history, and as "the art of reading slowly" (Calvert Watkins), is an interdisciplinary practice, often involving many different areas of research within the humanities. The aim of this volume is both to present philology as a critical method in cultural studies and to exemplify the powers of philological scholarship in "echoing the past for new audiences" (75). The book is intended for academic specialists within the humanities, although it would also be of use to students as an overview of philological history.

The volume consists of ten scholarly chapters, written by well-known Danish, Finnish, Norwegian, Swedish, and Italian philologists working on West and East Norse philology as well as cultural history, Romance philology, and English studies. In "Philology and the Problem of Culture" (1–20), Helge Jordheim analyses the development of the discipline over the last three centuries. Looking backward to recent works of James Turner and Sheldon Pollock, he argues that philology and the methods that accompany it are the common denominator of modern humanities. A new order of knowledge (ushered in by the digital revolution as well as by climate change) will certainly demand new post-