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The Millenniad, Humanity's Road to Maturity (review)

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introduction, preface, foreword, or epilogue, but at the outset it does include a very useful table of contents.

All of these deeply stirring, lapidary, tersely concise, quintessentially economical and elegantly expressive poems were written in the poet's native Serbian and offered here in English translations. Forty poems were translated by their author himself and the remaining forty by eight, in my opinion, equally competent, comparably talented, and scrupulously faithful and responsible scholarly translators. These include Edward Davis (8), Michael Collins (10), Barbara Magee (12), Dwight Stephens (1), Mirjana Matarić (2), Irena Kostić (1), Milo Yelesiyevich (2), and the writer of this review (4).

Familiar with many of these poems from earlier encounters in Serbian, I was delighted to meet again, greet and salute these charmingly captivating and unforgettably striking old friends, whose place of honor together with that of their distinguished, supremely gifted and subtly refined author, has long been assured in Serbian and world literature dealing with this seductively beguiling, strangely evanescent, and dangerously brittle genre.

Together with the great and internationally recognized master-poet Jovan Dučić, Vasa Mihailovich occupies an equally important position. Dučić's advantage in pioneering novelty is more than made up for by Mihailovich's no less outstanding formal polish combined with far greater and much more widely appealing, though always tastefully restrained, emotional openness and human warmth. To all lovers of *belle lettres*, and particularly of soothing gentle and therapeutically smooth, deeply thoughtful, and discreetly compassionate prose poetry, I wholeheartedly recommend this splendid collection of Vasa Mihailovich as his best.

The book can be ordered from the author at 821 Emory Drive, Chapel Hill, NC 27517, at the price of \$10.

Buffalo State University College

George Vid Tomashevich. *The Millenniad, Humanity's Road to Maturity*. Prometheus Books, 2006, 433 pages.

Reviewed by *Branko Mikasinovich and Branko Beljakovich*

Few people have the capacity to encompass in a single work the entire history of humanity. Few would have the audacity to try. Fewer still could successfully accomplish such a feat. Professor George Vid Tomashevich is such a person and his new lyric poema, *The Millenniad: Humanity's Road to Matur-*

ity, is such a work. As it is monumental both in scope and character, it is a book to be read at leisure and over a long period as many passages and entire sections deserve close reading and thoughtful contemplation.

Tomashevich's eminent and complex epic *The Millenniad* is probably best presented by its content *ab ovo usque ad mala* (from beginning to the end): Canto I: The Empire of Satire; Canto II: In the Light of Charters' Windows Things Appear the Way They Are; Canto III: The Evolution of Nature; Canto IV: Man and His World—A Brief Review of His Cosmic Search; Canto V: Nature and Culture, Thought and Language, Culture and Personality, Necessity and Freedom, Freedom and Responsibility; Canto VI: Human Beings and Other Creatures in the Context of Religion, Philosophy and Ethics; Canto VII: Religion, Myth and Magic—Critical Meditations and Quandaries; Canto VIII: The Human World as a Pandemonium; Canto IX: My Country, 'Tis of Thee; Canto X: Music, Ballet, Arts and Letters—General Reflections and Some Specific Instances in Free Association; Canto XI: Expansion, Conquest, Colonialism and Imperialism—History as a Process and as a Field of Scholarship: Reflections on Stereotypes, Biases, Conflicts of Interest in Current Problems and Their Perennial Implications; Canto XII: A Brief History of Social Thought—Political and Economic Doctrines, Philosophy of History and Post-Historical Eschatology.

Written in verse, *The Millenniad* resembles, in format, the writings of the Greek poet Homer or the renowned Serbian poet Prince-Bishop Njegosh of Montenegro. It is a hard book to categorize. It covers necessarily, a great range of subjects, ideas, events and personalities. In essence it evokes an almost encyclopedic significance with many beautiful, short reflections often expressed succinctly and lyrically.

Some may find this sweep of subjects and epochs too difficult to follow or absorb. One of the reasons may be that in his great sweep one could become disoriented as Tomashevich moves from personal to political and from the petty to the profound. Further, while the subtitle addresses "humanity" many passages are unique to Tomashevich and his personal odyssey as an expatriate and refugee from communist Yugoslavia. It is this personal aspect that adds mystery to this literary effort as Tomashevich shares parts of his emotional journey from immigrant undergraduate in Chicago to "professor emeritus" at SUNY Buffalo.

Tomashevich himself must have understood that *The Millenniad* would present more than one mystery to the reader. Hence, he added both a twenty-five page "Statement of Intent" along with a thirty-eight page "Prologue." In his "statement" Tomashevich offers, at core, a simple motivation:

I have certain things to utter,
Long prepared to be revealed.
My unconscious to unclutter,
If some seals can be unsealed.

That this work came late in his life is also recognized. While Tomashevich made known to confidants that he was working on a major epic, he also created a pressure of expectations which he expresses as:

Do this, do that, “nice” old fellow,
No one else can do’t so well(?),
Please be nice, good natured mellow
On resentment, please don’t dwell.

Yet, this is a work which only Tomashevich could complete or could have completed. It is his personal odyssey from youth to maturity which is intertwined in this assessment of “Humanity’s Road to Maturity” *The Millenniad*’s sub-title.

In his youth George Vid Tomashevich was a witness to the particular multiple horrors during World War II in Yugoslavia of invasion and occupation, genocide and civil war. It is this early exposure to humanities great capacity for cruelty which supplies the cynicism which occupies a central theme of this work. Tomashevich saw first hand the genocide committed against the Serbs by the Croatian Ustashi in World War II Yugoslavia as well as the vicious war-within-a-war between the Communist Partisans and the Royalist Chetniks.

I am one of those surviving,
Telling others what occurred.
The deniers are still striving:
Cover up all traces blurred.

These experiences would have remained in the background for Tomashevich but for the violent break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990’s with its echoes of World War II. From afar and safety, Tomashevich watched as the horrors of that war were relived in the same geography and by the survivors of the last tragedy, now along with their hapless descendents. More than anything else, *The Millenniad* is formed and informed by Tomashevich’s sensitivity and shock at the breakup of Yugoslavia. As a Serb survivor of past atrocities he was, in particular, disturbed by the plight of the ordinary Serbs,

inside and outside of Serbia's diminished and diminishing, but still surviving, national state.

While the mighty are permitted
To indulge their every dream
Smaller nations are outwitted
By a global mixing scheme.

Thus *The Millenniad* follows both the grand sweep of history of the rise and fall of societies and nations as well as the emotional journey of a single man, mortal and vulnerable. On one level, it chronicles the histories of "small" nations expanding, conquering, governing, decaying and giving way to other formerly small nations to begin the cycle anew. On another level, it follows the life of a single soul yearning to be both illuminated and observant of the passage of time and the tides of life.

Washington, D.C.

Dragan Bošković. *Islednik, svedok, priča: Istažni postupci u Pešcaniku i Grobnici za Borisa Davidoviča Danila Kiša*. Belgrade: Plato, 2004, 260 pages.

Reviewed by Jovana Babović

Danilo Kiš's prose has warranted extensive interpretation and analysis of poetics, psychology, and autobiography. Already at the opening of the study, Dragan Bošković acknowledges that the current debate allots a degree of unabridged understanding exclusively to Kiš, while active discussion most readily focuses on the exploration of identity and characters (as well as self-construction), development of the ideas of death and loss, intra-textual references and documentation, and categorization of Kiš's prose into the context of accepted genres. This study, however, bypasses the existing and sometimes fragmented work on Kiš, and instead sets out to map a method of intrigue and search which the author claims to be an integral part of Kiš's writings. Bošković asserts that in approaching Kiš's prose as detective stories (or, rather, as anti-detective, in a similar vain as Poe and Pekić), the reader must follow clues and hints given by Kiš in order to reach the truths of his work.

Most importantly, Bošković shifts the role of the reader onto a much more involved position, as an investigator of the texts. Through the extensive analy-