

Unity in Diversity, Diversity in Unity: Slavdom and Its Facets,
eds. Agnieszka Kołodziej and Ewa Komisaruk, Harrassowitz
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The collective monograph *Unity in Diversity, Diversity in Unity: Slavdom and Its Facets* (2025), edited by Agnieszka Kołodziej (University of Wrocław) and Ewa Komisaruk (University of Wrocław), represents a transformative contribution to contemporary Slavic studies. Moving away from traditional, purely geographical or chronological approaches, the volume adopts a problem-oriented framework that, according to the editors, “lends the collection internal coherence and conceptual clarity” (A. Kołodziej, E. Komisaruk, *A Note from the Editors*, p. VIII). The core editorial concept is built on the dialectical tension suggested by the title: the search for shared underlying values and collective memory versus the unique, often conflicting linguistic and cultural manifestations of individual Slavic nations.

Slavdom in this book appears not as a collection of historical facts or a set of established narratives — but as a living, breathing system of meanings that continues to evolve through modern geopolitics, digitalization, media, and global scholarly exchange.

This collection represents contributions from leading academic centers in Poland and abroad, utilizing a multifaceted approach to analyzing everything from 19th-century pan-Slavic ideals to 21st-century “ironic politeness” on Twitter, from mechanisms of resistance to terror and to the cultural impact of the pandemic. This polyphonic composition of texts forms a rounded and compelling portrait of the contemporary Slavic world and deepens our understanding of complex Slavic identity.

The volume consists of 11 essays logically organized into five thematic sections. The first two essays under the common title *Slavdom — Literary Concepts and Ideas* look at the Slavic idea in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The opening essay by Suzana Coha and Goranka Šutalo (University of Zagreb) examines the legacy of Tomaš Mikloušić, one of

the last major writers of the Croatian Kajkavian literary language (pp. 3–11). It focuses on one of his works concerning the history of Croats within a broader Slavic context. The chapter studies the intertextual links between Mikloušić's writing and early modern historiographical and literary texts. The article by Svetlana Kalezić-Radonjić (University of Montenegro) focuses on Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić — often referred to as the "Croatian Andersen" — and her preoccupation with the concepts of Slavdom and Slavic heritage. The study examines these themes within her modernist literary works, specifically the collection of fairy tales *Croatian Tales of Long Ago* and the unfinished novel *Jaša Dalmatin* (pp. 13–23). The contributions in Section I demonstrate the aesthetic and psychological evolution of the "Slavic idea" throughout the 19th and the first half of the 20th century.

The Past in the Present: Cultural and Literary Perspectives serves as the title and thematic core of the three essays in Section II. The first contribution by Lucie Jílková (Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic) examines the bilingual plaques in Prague, revealing how the city physically marks its historical and cultural connections through this "linguistic map" (pp. 27–35). The subsequent essay authored by Jarosław Malicki (University of Wrocław) is a study of street and square names in Poland that refer to Czech history, geography, and culture (pp. 37–58). Sylwia Wójtowicz-Marszał (University of Wrocław) contributes the final essay to this section. It presents a firsthand account — an ego-document — by a prominent Western Ukrainian politician, Kost Levytsky, arrested and imprisoned by the Soviet regime in November 1939 (pp. 59–75). While the first two contributions in this section analyze how memory is "written" onto the city through plaques and street names, the third explores how memory is "inscribed" into personal testimony.

Section III, entitled *Degeneration and its Literary Representations: An Anthropological Perspective*, includes two essays. The contribution by Marcin Maksymilian Borowski (University of Wrocław) explores how Fyodor Dostoevsky's imperialistic and messianic ideas are used in modern Russian Orthodox Church narrative, specifically by the influential priest Andrei Tkachev (pp. 79–93). This essay is paired with the subsequent contribution by Miłosz Bukwalt (University of Wrocław) that offers an anthropological study of an Ustaše officer and war criminal named Ivan — the main protagonist of the 1958 debut novel by Croatian writer Krsto Špoljar (pp. 95–105). The mental turmoil, psychological and physical disintegration of the protagonist (as he transitions from a powerful oppressor to a desperate fugitive) are central to both the writer's and researcher's focus. These two essays depict the darker side of the Slavic experience: dehumanization resulting from war, trauma, and ideological propaganda.

Section IV *Conflict and its Various Manifestations: Cultural and Linguistic Perspective* focuses on conflict, revealing how language often serves as a battlefield for politics or global crises like the pandemic. Both chapters in this section argue that in the modern Slavic world, the most significant battles are often linguistic and informational. Language can be regarded as a weapon and used to create conflicts between ethnic groups, or it can be viewed as a tool for managing the crises and controlling the population. The chapter on fake methodologies of linguistic research by Oleh Beley (University of Wrocław) investigates the controversial 21st-century efforts to classify Rusyn as a distinct fourth East Slavic language, separate from Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Russian (pp. 109–123). The subsequent contribution by Danuta Pytel-Pandey (University of Wrocław)

offers a comparative study of the linguistic strategies used in Poland and Russia to persuade citizens to get vaccinated during the 2020–2021 pandemic (pp. 125–149). The author examines how state authorities used “war metaphors” (the virus as an enemy) and “emotional appeals” (responsibility for loved ones) to influence public behavior, and how language here reflects the deeper cultural values of each society.

The two articles in the final section V entitled *Diversity of Systems, Meanings and Contexts in Literary, Translational and Linguistic Approaches* deal with language that does not “mean” what it says on the surface. The chapter by Sybilla Daković (University of Wrocław) shows how the Croatian particle *bogami* evolves from originally a solemn “holy oath” into a common “filler word” and highlights the challenge it poses for translators (pp. 153–163). The closing essay of this collected volume by Kamila Mrázková (Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic) moves from the traditional world of literary translation to the cutting-edge reality of digital communication on social media (Twitter/X) (pp. 165–173). The author examines the phenomenon of “ironic politeness” and investigates how polite linguistic markers are used by social media users for delivering insults or mockery.

Ultimately, this collection is an essential resource for scholars and students that offers a profound reflection on how shared linguistic roots, memory and traumatic histories continue to shape contemporary Slavic identity in an increasingly globalized reality. The book embraces new methodologies in Slavic Studies, Linguistics, Literature, and Cultural Studies and serves as both a synthesis of current knowledge in those fields and a provocative reconfiguration of established narratives in response to the challenges of the modern world.

Despite being loosely connected thematically, the volume’s contributions successfully construct an overarching framework for a complex and captivating story of Slavdom. The emphasis on commonalities among various Slavic national narratives makes the collection emotionally engaging, leaving a strong impression of unity and belonging to a single subject area. Besides being a solid scholarly work, this edited volume provides an objective account of many controversial aspects of Slavic history, paving the way for future research in this domain. One can only wish that, alongside the impressive breadth of topics, the book had embraced a more geographically diverse scholarly scope. Adding Balkan and Eastern Slavic perspective to the Polish, Czech, Croatian, and Montenegrin research findings would have provided an even more balanced picture of the themes explored in this fascinating volume.

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