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Review

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(of nouns, for example), which would make the structure of the language easier to grasp. Some of the descriptions and explanations are couched in the language of linguistic scholarship, rather than in terms accessible to the average language student, and are, at times, rather complex, requiring an effort on the part of a non-specialist user of the book.

The authors exercise circumspection in defining standard Ukrainian. This is understandable, as the language was not allowed to develop freely for most of its modern existence. However, measures are now being taken in Ukraine to define and evolve standards and to impose norms. Criticisms of these are frequently expressed by academics and the population but, apart from a limited number of contentious issues, one finds a significant degree of consensus as to perceptions of standard literary language among true Ukrainian native speakers, that is, those who learnt the language at home and were educated in it. A more coherent approach by the authors to defining the modern standard language would have been very useful, especially to students.

Each grammar point is amply illustrated, but the examples are not always labelled as to register, variety, dialect, etc., or whether they are historical, outdated or used mainly in the diaspora. Some phrases are marked as being rare or archaic, but this still leaves a large number which are not labelled and are unlikely to be used in current spoken or written Ukrainian. The inclusion of fewer examples of this category, and more from contemporary mass media, would have resulted in a more balanced view of current Ukrainian. An indication of which of two or more variants is the preferred choice of the average educated Ukrainian would also have been very helpful.

The infrequent typographical and other errors, and inconsistent transliteration of Ukrainian place names, do not create problems for the user and may easily be corrected in future editions.

Notwithstanding the above reservations, the publication of *Ukrainian: A Comprehensive Grammar* is to be welcomed as a significant step in asserting the position of Ukrainian among Slavonic and world languages and promoting its study and teaching in the English-speaking world.

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MARTA JENKALA

Rothe, Hans. *Was ist 'altrussische Literatur'?* Nordrhein-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Vorträge G, 362. Westdeutscher Verlag, Wiesbaden, 2000. 91 pp. Notes. Appendix: Maps. Index. DM 24.00.

ALTHOUGH modestly published as a 'lecture', this study is far more than that: its aim is to establish the preconditions and historical basis for the development of literature in Kievan Russia. In his preface Hans Rothe advises those who dislike scepticism to remember the Apostle Thomas, who refused to believe before he had seen the evidence (John 20:25). If Rothe is a sceptic, then this reviewer is a pyrrhonist, e.g. the charter and will of Anthony the Roman († 1147) are almost certainly sixteenth-century forgeries, whereas Rothe accepts their authenticity (p. 41, n. 114); the idea that Xylourgou on Athos was an East Slav hermitage in the eleventh century (p. 74) owes more to Vladimir

Moshin's chimerical history of East Slav-Athonite relations than to a study of the facts, as a perusal of this reviewer's article on the origins of the principal Slav monasteries on Athos (*Byzantinoslavica*, 57, 1996, pp. 310–50) will reveal. Nevertheless, Rothe has rightly challenged many widely held opinions which are not rooted in historical fact and some of his sarcastic remarks will amuse the unbiased reader, e.g. on Lidiia Zhukovskaia's calculation that there must have been some 149,200 MSS in Kievan Russia he comments: 'A calculation of the number of lambs which would have to have been slaughtered every day for this has not as yet been published' (p. 68, n. 232).

It is typical that he objects (pp. 27–31) to each constituent term in the expression 'the history of Old Russian literature': 'history' is misleading since most of the works cannot be chronologically dated and hence there can be no portrayal of the development of ideas and genres; 'old' is questionable since it is usually applied to the seven-hundred-year period down to Peter the Great, which overlooks the fact that the Kievan period has its own peculiar characteristics including closer links with the West and greater dependency on the patriarchate of Constantinople than in later times; with regard to 'Russian' he quotes Vasilii Istrin's statement that 'the literature of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries was neither Great Russian, nor Little Russian, nor White Russian, but was 'Common Russian' (*obshcherusskii*) or, more accurately, simply 'Russian', on which he comments that it is a postulate with which Ukrainians and White Russians will scarcely agree and anyway the written language was not East Slavic; finally, 'literature' is a modern concept which implies original literature, whereas the originality of the Kievan period is mainly to be found in the adaptation of translated literature, e.g. that of Greek liturgical hymns for Slav saints. He points out that there was no systematic evolution in this adaptation and sees the Kievan period as that of 'the formation of the basis for a literature in various regions in a standard language' (p. 78).

Rothe points out that one of the consequences of the Stalinist policy of 'Socialism in One Country' was the suppression of all comparativism and regrets that comparative Slav philology has not as yet been revived (pp. 23–24). In this connection it must be said that the omens are not bright: the latest issue of *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury* (52, 2001, pp. 780–89) contains an article written in the name of the members of the Section of Early Russian Literature of the Russian Academy and the Department of Russian Literature of St Petersburg University by Natal'ia Demkova and Milena Rozhdestvenskaia criticizing the article calling for a revival of comparative studies published by Lidiia Sazonova and Mikhail Robinson in 1997. That even today there is a political aspect to the Russian study of Kievan literature is illustrated by the fact that Aleksandr Zimin's denial of the authenticity of the *Slovo o polku Igoreve* of 1963 has still not been published despite the fact that even the editor of the five-volume *Entsiklopediia 'Slova o polku Igoreve'* (St Petersburg, 1995), Oleg Tvorogov, called for its publication (see vol. 2, p. 225).

The literature quoted in the footnotes (there is, alas, no bibliography) attests to the author's erudition, although there are some surprising omissions, e.g. Rudolf Aitzetmüller's edition of Ephraem Syrus's *Paraenesis* and this reviewer's study of the *Chrysorrhoea* (*Žlatostrui*). With regard to the chronicle of John

Malalas Rothe regrets that neither Anatolii Alekseev, Tvorogov nor Thomson gave any reference for Izmail Sreznevskii's opinion that it was translated in Bulgaria (p. 56, n. 179): it is to be found in *Sbornik Otdeleniia russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti*, vol. 20, pt. 4, 1879, p. 118. The footnotes have been inadequately proofread and there are too many misprints, e.g. n. 18, l. 2 Slavjanovdenie; n. 19, l. 2 ausgebilet; n. 130, l. 23 ekste; n. 146, l. 6 Zzbornik, as well as misspelled names, e.g. n. 79, l. 2 Thompson (= Thomson); n. 152, l. 1: Ehraim; n. 223, l. 10 Forssmann (= Forssman), and in one case the wrong name, viz. n. 124, l. 3 Isačenko (= Ishchenko). However, these are minor details and it must be emphasized that no serious student of the literature of the Kievan period will read this stimulating 'lecture' without considerable profit.

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FRANCIS J. THOMSON

Lauer, Reinhard. *Geschichte der russischen Literatur. Von 1700 bis zur Gegenwart*. Beck, Munich, 2000. 1072 pp. Figures. Bibliographical references. Index. DM 98.00: €50.11.

REINHARD LAUER (b. 1935), professor of Slavonic Studies at the University of Göttingen, has won universal acclaim amongst Slavists for his many publications on Bulgarian, Croatian, Serb and, especially, Russian literature and culture of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Furthermore, he has written extensively on the relationship between German and Slav literatures. His history of Russian literature is an all-encompassing treatise which stands comparison with the standard German books of this kind (Stender-Petersen, Tschizewskij, Kasack) and other international publications. It may be regarded as Lauer's crowning work, and certainly deserves to be translated into other languages.

One of the book's particular merits is that it seeks to place Russian literature and culture not only in a West European, but also in a world context. Like Emmanuel Waegemans's Dutch study, which has been translated into German, Lauer begins with Peter the Great and an analysis of the roots and principal characteristics of Russian literature, and ends with a review of the situation in autumn 1999, and, finally, some speculation on its future in the new millennium. In each section, detailed analysis is preceded by a synthetic overview. Particularly valuable is his treatment of periods of transition which cannot easily be reduced to fixed time frames.

Lauer's approach could be called holistic: Russian literature's roots, splits and renewed integration are treated from the perspective of a strong sense of unity, but the subject is never treated as a monolithic block. He sees literature as a living organism, as is clear from his heuristic approach to the discussion of various periods, highlighting difficult questions and avoiding dogmatic classification. Lauer combines study of individual writers with reviews of the main currents and ages of Russian literature from the Golden age of poetry through Realism, Modernism, Socialist Realism and the three waves of emigration to the divisions and reintegration of Russian literature after 1985, presented as a living process, for all the setbacks and difficulties.