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and forth between text and notes. This is particularly a problem with a writer such as Bynum, who does not limit herself to merely bibliographical matters in the notes but also makes some important remarks there.

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A. P. Vlasto, *A Linguistic History of Russia to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 1988), 408 + xx pp.

This important work, the first history of Russian written expressly for English-language readers since W. K. Matthews's flawed *Russian Historical Grammar* (1960), will be of interest not only to specialists in Slavic linguistics but also to scholars in other fields such as general linguistics and cultural history. Vlasto writes in concise, nontechnical language and has a balanced approach that avoids unnecessary polemicizing. This makes his grammar particularly accessible and useful for the non-Slavist.

The book is divided into seven chapters. Vlasto begins the first chapter, "Preliminaries," with a concise account of the earliest homeland, migrations, and linguistic differentiation of the Slavic tribes, the beginnings of Slavic literacy in Moravia and Bulgaria, and its transplantation, along with other elements of Byzantine culture, from Bulgaria to Russia—subjects that he previously treated in his masterful book *The Entry of the Slavs into Christendom* (1970). In the same chapter, Vlasto examines the chief phonological and morphological differences between the East Slavic dialects and Old Church Slavonic (OCS), the language of liturgical texts imported from Bulgaria, and gives a historical sketch of the orthography up to the modern period. His account of the varying Church Slavonic and Russian reflexes of Common Slavic **tj* and **dj* (13–15) is particularly lucid. By contrast, his uneven survey of the "principal early documents" (Table I, pp. 24–30) might more accurately be termed a list of the most anthologized texts.

In chapters 2 and 3 Vlasto provides an overview of the development of Russian phonology and inflectional morphology from Late Common Slavic up to the modern language. (Vlasto does not treat the derivational morphology, except in a few special cases, such as the demonstrative

adverbs.) The inflection is presented in useful annotated tables that include the OCS as well as the Old and Modern Russian forms. Chapter 4, on syntax, is the fullest treatment of the subject available in English. Vlasto's approach here is to emphasize "the notable continuity of sentence structure" rather than individual details (188); he describes the most important surface constructions of Old Russian syntax and compares them with their analogues or continuations in the modern language. In the same section he provides a concise excursus on the evolution of the tense and aspect systems. The chapter on vocabulary (5) is particularly rich; Vlasto's excellent discussion of loanwords can serve also as a short history of East Slavic contacts with the Baltic, Germanic, Iranian, Turkic, Greek, Orthodox Slavic, Polish, and Western European cultural spheres. This well-exemplified section is made even more useful by the inclusion of an index of the Russian words discussed in it. In chapter 6, Vlasto offers a survey of Russian dialects with particular emphasis on their contribution to the emerging standard language; he includes annotated tables on the "Diagnostic Features of the Main Dialect Areas" (XVII, pp. 304-305) and "Characteristics of Moscow Language" (XVIII, p. 325)—information that has not been readily available in English before. In one of the few polemical passages in the book, Vlasto argues at length (309-310, 315-321) that South Russian and Belorussian atonic vowel reduction (*akan'e*) was a Late Common Slavic rather than later development; but he pays little attention to the strong arguments advanced in favor of the opposite view.

In the final chapter, "Spoken Languages and Written Language," Vlasto presents his own approach to an extremely vexed question, the history of the Russian literary language. He defines a literary language as "a conscious selection from the whole resources of the language, based (normally) on the usage of one region and one class—though rarely wholly and exclusively on one—those for whom the literature is being written" and subsequently upheld by social convention (344). In Vlasto's view, linguistic authority of this kind belongs primarily to a cultured aristocracy that can patronize literary endeavor. He introduces Dante's term *volgare illustre* to denote a refined vernacular—the "accepted usage of an educated class"—as the true basis of a literary language (379), and asserts that "without 'society' in the best sense there can be no literary standard" (389).

According to Vlasto, in the Kievan period (eleventh through thirteenth centuries), Church Slavonic, imported from Bulgaria, was readily adopted as the language of learning and the liturgy, sufficient for all literary purposes: "so much of importance to be learnt and absorbed came through

the mediation of OCS that the need for an independent *literature* in some form of the native speech was hardly felt" (346). Although it was cultivated chiefly by the ruling classes and clergy, Church Slavonic was still close enough to the vernacular to be perceived as a high written style rather than a foreign language (345–346). Ecclesiastical works such as sermons and hagiography were written in Church Slavonic, while local and private legal texts were recorded in Old Russian with an admixture of slavonicisms (346–348); in the middle-style narrative genres such as chronicles, native and imported elements were able to "meet and elaborate a fruitful mixture" (348).

Vlasto believes that the hybridized language of the early Kievan chronicles might have served as the foundation for a new general literary language if political disunity had not doomed the incipient court literature and prevented the spread and improvement of education (351, 353–355). Nevertheless, the Kievan "semi-standard" persisted during the divisive Appanage period (thirteenth through fifteenth centuries), albeit in a less polished form. Church Slavonic retained its status as the sole authoritative literary language, accessible now only to the highly educated (356–357). According to Vlasto, the archaizing and re-Bulgarizing tendencies of the "Second South Slav Influence" and the exalted, convoluted style of imperial Muscovite historical writing further debased the spoken language and thus hindered the productive hybridization of Russian and Church Slavonic that might have led to the development of a vernacular-based literary language (357–358, 360). The inadequacies of Church Slavonic became ever clearer with the growth of Western influence during the seventeenth century: "no new (Western-style) literature could take ChSl. as its basis" (369). Nevertheless, a truly workable prose style based on a *volgare illustre* could not develop until the end of the eighteenth century, "when there was a court in the full sense of the term, a more uniform education of 'polite society' with some intellectual interests and artistic taste" (385).

Vlasto's approach to the history of the Russian literary language stands out from previous treatments, both Western and Soviet, by its emphasis on social factors—in particular, the need for an educated aristocracy to cultivate style and patronize letters—rather than on the genetic or functional dichotomy of Church Slavonic and the vernacular. His definition of the concept "literary language" is far less vague than that found in the majority of works on Russian; his thinking on this subject has evidently been influenced by the history of standard French, Italian, and perhaps English. While Vlasto's approach is in general original, it shares to some

extent the defects of the previous treatments. In particular, like many Soviet authors, Vlasto tends to present Church Slavonic as a hostile force that consciously waged war against the spoken language, which he believes was *a priori* the proper basis for a true literary language. For example, he writes that, as a result of the Second South Slavic Influence, "ChSl. in its more literary aspects (outside the liturgical) enclosed itself in a world of its own, the preserve of learned men who took no interest in, indeed despised the vernacular" (359), while during the Muscovite period "the mirage of ChSl. as the only possible literary language continued to deflect men's minds from the development of their own vernacular for intellectual and artistic purposes" (365). Similarly, he asserts that "by the end of the 17th c. the self-esteem of ChSl. was no longer justified and its condescension to the vernacular . . . was merely the common argument of those who have a vested interest in perpetuating what they have laboriously learnt but who lack genuine talent and imagination" (374). In reality, there is little evidence in the literature of the late seventeenth century and none in that of the medieval period to suggest that writers were hostile to the spoken language or even aware of any competition between Slavonic and colloquial elements; Vlasto is putting his own interpretation in their mouths without factual justification.

Vlasto's apparent dislike of Church Slavonic (cf. also 358, 360) seems to stem in part from anachronistic aesthetic values; this can be clearly seen in Vlasto's criticism of the Second South Slavic Influence: "the pernicious influence of this style and these literary principles must be held responsible for the denaturing of such a story of popular origin as *Peter and Fevronia*, which in its 16th c. ChSl. form has lost all the immediacy of an oral tale" (359). "Immediacy" and "naturalness" were not valorized in Muscovite literature; one might as well criticize the English metaphysical poets for being overly obscure and convoluted by twentieth-century standards. Vlasto's subsequent statement that "the market-place audience, the right judge of story-telling, would have rejected [*Peter and Fevronia*] out of hand" (360) is contradicted by his own admission that the tale "was immensely popular; at least 150 manuscripts survive in various forms" (360 n. 22).

Despite its title, Vlasto's book cannot truly be called a "linguistic history of Russia," since it deals almost exclusively with Great Russian. The author mentions the various Baltic, Iranian, Finno-Ugric, and Turkic languages of Russia, an ethnically and linguistically diverse region, solely from the standpoint of their influence on Russian vocabulary. Likewise, Vlasto scarcely touches on the long and complex independent history of

Ukrainian and Belorussian, East Slavic languages closely related to Russian, although he does provide a table (XX, pp. 338–343) of the most important “distinguishing features of Ukrainian and White Russian (Belorussian).” At worst, Vlasto treats these languages as if they were odd border dialects of Russian. For example, in discussing the development of tense jers (the reflexes of Common Slavic short **i* and **u* before yod), he claims (62–63) that “there is no good evidence that such jers differed in their quality and development in the majority of E[ast] Sl[avic] dialects (there are special treatments in the peripheral Ukr. and WhR. areas).” In fact, Russian is the peripheral dialect here; tense jers developed differently from regular jers in all the other Slavic languages and even in certain Russian dialects, except in cases of morpholexical interference. (In a similar fashion, Vlasto cites Belorussian *trapjatacca* “tremble” and *veracjanó* “distaff” as examples of irregular pretonic vocalism [321]; in fact, they are regular from the standpoint of Belorussian phonology.)

Although Vlasto’s book is generally complete, there are certain striking omissions in it. The usefulness of the “Select Bibliography” (xvi–xix) is impaired by the almost complete lack of references in the text. Moreover, it was neither representative nor up-to-date for the time in which it was written (sometime before mid-1983, judging by the preface), since it contains nothing at all by A. A. Shakhmatov, N. Durnovo, N. S. Trubetzkoy, or R. Jakobson, among others, and mentions only three volumes of Novgorod birchbark letters published by 1963 (even though six volumes had been published by 1963 and a seventh in 1978). Furthermore, Vlasto omits an important series of articles written in the 1970s by A. V. Issatschenko, B. A. Uspensky, G. Hüttl-Folter, and D. S. Worth on whether there was diglossia or linguistic dualism in early Russia. Indeed, while thoroughly expounding his own view of the history of Russian, Vlasto never informs the reader that diglossia has been the central issue in debates about the Old Russian linguistic situation during the past fifteen years, nor does he mention the older controversies that continue to rage among the adherents of Shakhmatov, S. P. Obnorsky, and V. V. Vinogradov. In the long chapter on morphology, Vlasto does not distinguish the class of verbs with “disappearing *-nu-*” (imperfective inceptive) from those with constant *-nu-* (perfective semelfactive) or trace their evolution from the Old Russian period; nor does he account for the loss of the *-l* in the masculine past (originally perfect) of consonant-stem verbs and the development of a new zero ending in its stead. Vlasto’s section on the history of the accent, which was entirely obsolete for the early 1980s, makes no reference either to C. Stang’s seminal monograph on the

subject (1957) or to the works of V. M. Illich-Svitych, V. A. Dybo, and A. A. Zaliznyak, which have revolutionized the discipline since the late 1950s. More current information might have forestalled such mistakes as the claim that North Russian dialects, though generally conservative, have abandoned the mobile stress seen in South (and standard) Russian *i*-stem verbs such as *ljubit'* "love" (332); in reality, North Russian preserves the original metatonic (neoacute) accentual pattern that the southern dialects have reformed.

In the chapters on phonology and morphology, Vlasto deals almost exclusively with the surface level, even to the extent of presenting detached stems and endings in orthography; while this is probably to the benefit of the nonspecialist, certain mistakes suggest a lack of understanding of the underlying shape of the morphology. Vlasto repeatedly cites the masculine nominative singular of mixed-declension adjectives such as *lisij* "fox's" and *tretij* "third" as if it were a soft long form with the ending -ij (109 n. 43, 115, 145); yet in fact the *j* is the final stem-consonant and the *i* an anaptyctic vowel before a zero ending. The same is true of genitive plural feminine *statej* "article," which he mistakenly analyzes as if it had the ending -ej (84). Similarly, Vlasto treats *vojsko* "army" as an exception among "nouns in unstressed -ko" (95-96). In reality, the derivational suffix in *vojsko* is different from the [#k] in diminutive nouns such as *drevko* "flagstaff," even though both are manifested identically on the surface (phonetic and orthographic) level.

A few significant errors can also be found in the other sections. For instance, the assertion that no East Slavic Cyrillic writing from the tenth century survives except the controversial Gnezdovo inscription (8, especially n. 9) is incorrect; inscribed wooden seals from that period were discovered in archaeological excavations in Novgorod in the early 1950s. The claim that no birchbark documents have been uncovered in the early eleventh-century strata in Novgorod is now out of date since the discovery of letter no. 591, an abecedarium. Vlasto's assertion that East Slavic pleophony versus ChSl. metathesis (or "inversion," in his idiosyncratic terminology) of liquid diphthongs "was *rigorously maintained* [his emphasis] as a touchstone of Ch[urch] Sl[avonic] *vis-à-vis* the vernacular even when other distinctions . . . were blurred" (18) is puzzling in the light of the useful list of variants that he himself provides (Appendix I, pp. 395-402). Moreover, the claim is not corroborated by the evidence: many texts show a stylistically unmotivated mixture of reflexes. One can also question Vlasto's notion that the initial *o* that corresponds to foreign

(particularly Greek) short *a*—for example, in *Oleksej* “Alexis”—was a substitution prompted by the rarity of initial *a* (21, 330). In fact, this phenomenon can be viewed simply as the regular phonetic development; compare also noninitial *gramota* “letter” from Greek *grámmata*. (In a later section, Vlasto incorrectly interprets this *o-* as hypercorrect evidence for *akan'e* [326].) In the chapter on morphology, Vlasto makes the surprising claim that the verbs *est'* “there is” and *sut'* “there are” were not “vernacular” (156); in fact, both were native in Old Russian, and *est'* is still a *sine qua non* in fully colloquial expressions of possession and existence. Yet despite these and other flaws in detail, Vlasto's book is by far the most complete and accurate account of the history of Russian available in English and is bound to be a standard teaching and research text for many years to come.

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