

world's embassy" (p. 37); *v bespamiatstve* means "delirious," not "in absent-mindedness" (p. 65); *bessmertnik* means the flower immortelle, not "the everlasting" (p. 65); to read the line *goriachii par zrachki smychkov slepit*, "hot steam blinds the eyes of the violin bows," as "Seething steam of violin bows blinds my eyes" (p. 79) is indeed to construe Mandelstam's word order as if it were the "Russian Latin" of which he was sometimes accused; *presyshchen* means "surfeited," not "absorbed" (p. 83); *meniat' na* means "exchange for," not "change into" (p. 85); *leto*, "summer," does not mean "flight" (p. 87); *vse vremia valitsia iz ruk* means "keeps falling out of my hands," not "and time keeps leaping from my hands" (p. 91); the veins in the line *do prozhilok, do detskikh pripukhlikh zhelez* should surely not be diagnosed as "varicose" (p. 111); *znamenityi* means "famous," not "notorious" (p. 151); and when Mandelstam refers to his own year of birth in a well-known passage, he does so with a strangely offhand vagueness, and the phrase *v devianosto odnom/Nenadezhnom godu* means "in the unreliable year of eighteen-ninety something-or-other," not "in the untrustworthy year of 'ninety-one" (p. 159).

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THE OLD CHURCH SLAVONIC TRANSLATION OF THE "ANDRŌN HAGIŌN BIBLOS." In the edition of *Nikolaas Van Wijk*. Edited by *Daniel Armstrong, Richard Pope, and C. H. van Schooneveld*. Slavistic Printings and Reprintings, 1. The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1975. x, 310 pp.

Did Methodius translate a patericon? And if so, which of these collections of sayings, parables, and anecdotes about the monks of the Syrian and Egyptian deserts did he choose? Slavonic manuscripts offer at least four types of paterica as well as a bewildering array of mixtures. Van Wijk, an erudite linguist and skilled philologist who died in 1941, favored the Skitskii paterik (the Scete Patericon), chiefly on the evidence of the archaic text preserved in two fourteenth-century South Slavic manuscripts. After a decade of study, he prepared this important witness for publication, as a basis for further work. His edition is finally printed in this volume.

Van Wijk's German introduction (pp. 29–92) assumed an informed reader. Therefore, Pope's English preface (pp. 1–26) fills in the background of scholarly controversy before 1941 and provides a summary of Van Wijk's work. Pope also reviews subsequent studies, lucidly and judiciously presenting conflicting views. One sympathizes with his unwillingness to accept wholeheartedly any of the candidates, including Van Wijk's. At least one question persists: since paterica are primarily for monks, why would Methodius not prefer to translate works specifically for laymen? Yet the evidence now leads, under current assumptions, to the conclusions that at least three paterica existed in Slavonic by about A.D. 910. *Faut de mieux*, Slavs read the paterica—for centuries. (Compare the episode on page 168 with Tolstoy's *Otets Sergei*.) Pope rightly insists that the problems of Methodius's work and three of the paterica are complex and he protests against simplistic solutions. Papers from a recent international conference (*Slovo*, vol. 24 [Zagreb, 1974]) continue the controversies, and new complications have been added by the discovery of a thirteenth-century manuscript of the Scete Patericon, by the examination of East Slavic copies, and by studies of other manu-

script materials. Clearly, what we need is more primary material—editions like this one. When we no longer have to rely on subjective vocabulary lists which allegedly prove that a translation was made in one or another center, we will be able to compile exhaustive comparative lexica. These, together with detailed syntactic information, might possibly allow us to make realistic estimates concerning the time and place of different schools of translation before A.D. 1100.

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ON MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE SLAVIC WRITING: SELECTED ESSAYS. By *Henrik Birnbaum*. Preface by *Roman Jakobson*. Slavistic Printings and Reprintings. The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1974. 381 pp.

The appearance of this elegantly-jacketed book should give us cause for joy. Here are seventeen collected essays—two in Russian, five in English, ten in German—all written by a distinguished American Slavist. Covered in English are such topics as the comparative study of Old Church Slavonic literature, aspects of the Slavic renaissance, and Old Serbian literature. The Russian and German selections deal largely with problems of Old Church Slavonic and Old Russian syntax.

Yes, problems of syntax! Which brings us immediately to the book's chief defect: the author's *own* syntax. (We will focus on the essays he has written in English, but are those in Russian or German any better?) Birnbaum rarely expresses himself in a simple declarative sentence. Instead, he favors long, graceless "periods" which twist back and forth as he keeps qualifying his ideas. Overuse of the passive voice further obscures the meaning. Here is a sample utterance, found on pages 37–38: "However, mention should also be made here of the fact that, in some instances, Slavic hymns which, while originally written and composed, to be sure, for specific ecclesiastical purposes and occasions, subsequently could be used in more or secular contexts (cf., for example, the well-known account by the Polish chronicler Jan Długosz, who notes that the Polish warriors intoned the *Bogurodzica* in the battle of Grunwald in 1410)." Similar syntax prevails throughout much of the book. When such sentences follow one another in suffocating succession, a reader's interest gasps and expires.

If Birnbaum's sentences suffer from overloading, so do his paragraphs; they, too, tend to be unnecessarily long. And they are afflicted with "this-itis": the overused demonstrative adjective or pronoun recurs in sentence after sentence (for example, pp. 14–15, 33, 42). A reader sometimes loses track of the particular idea to which "this" refers. Worse yet, a Birnbaum paragraph—even the rare short one—may change course in the middle, to the reader's distress. The last paragraph on page 314, for example, begins with a topic sentence promising a "more positive appraisal" of old Serbian *vitae*, yet the same paragraph concludes that "the quality of Old Serbian writing . . . declined. . . ." As a result of all this, thoughts which would be clear when discussed by other scholars (such as Eremin, Unbegaun, Vinogradov, and Worth), become turgid and confusing when Birnbaum takes them up.

Nevertheless, a brave reader may persist. For his pains he will get generous amounts of description and analysis where Old Slavic syntax is concerned, plus some literary criticism of uncertain quality. On occasion Birnbaum can be tantalizingly cryptic, as when he offhandedly alludes to the "almost modern realism"