

## LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR:

In his review of *Medieval Russian Culture* (in the *Slavic Review* 43 [Winter 1984]), edited by H. Birnbaum and M. Flier, Horace W. Dewey writes: "The contributions by Riccardo Picchio . . . and Boris Uspensky . . . both emphasize the dominant role of the church in Old Russian culture. Yet how differently these two scholars write and think! In contrast to Picchio's abstract, jejune meandering, Uspensky comes right to the point, with specific insight supported by well-selected corroborative evidence." This is all Dewey has to say about my contribution. I not only agree with this evaluation of Boris Uspensky's outstanding scholarship, but I also recognize the reviewer's democratic right to dislike and even deride my own way of writing and thinking. What cannot be tolerated, however, is Dewey's failure to comply with the elementary rules of review writing. The reviewer should first have told his readers what my article is about and then he should have explained why he thinks that my presentation is either wrong or poorly written, or both. The readers are led to believe that Uspensky and I discuss the same, or similar, problems. This is not true. In my paper only two out of thirty-three pages deal with the linguistic interrelation of Church Slavic and Russian, which is Uspensky's only concern. My article deals with *literary techniques* and their dependence on rules and principles established by the ecclesiastic power in Old Rus'. In particular, I discuss the place of Old Russian civilization in the cultural context of Orthodox Slavdom, the foundations of Old Russian "literary doctrine," textual transmission, the nature and function of the written language, formal structures and devices, and levels of meaning and semantic markers. It is worth noting that some of the arguments and theses that I recapitulate in this paper are not new. I presented them on various occasions in the last two or three decades. I discussed them with scholars of different countries and also revised them by accepting constructive criticism. It seems to me that the reviewer should have at least tried to show that he is familiar with problems to which a growing number of Slavists, besides me, are devoting their attention. Some of Dewey's readers, both here and in Europe, may not be persuaded that these are "abstract" and sterile fields of study.

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TO THE EDITOR:

I have never before written in response to a review of one of my books because it's a mug's game. But since Eugene K. Bristow saw fit to use my *Serf Actor: The Life and Art of Mikhail Shchepkin* as an example of abuses in Russian studies, I am compelled to reply (*Slavic Review* 44 [Summer, 1985]). His bill of indictment rather irresponsibly charges that because I did no work in Russian archives my work is wholly derivative, a crib from T. S. Grits and A. P. Klinchin; therefore, it parrots the Soviet party line on Shchepkin and his times; and, consequently, is of no value to "English-speaking students who know Russian."

When I began my research on Shchepkin, as far back as 1973, I ascertained that there were no caches of important material in the archives that had not yet been published, either before the revolution or since. The occasional source that was unavailable to me in libraries in the United States was procured for me by friends in the Soviet Union. My book's bibliography contains 149 items in Russian and Ukrainian, 65 of them prerevolutionary in origin and content; it does not include newspapers, which are cited in the footnotes and which I consulted on microfilm at Widener Library.

My debt to Grits is conspicuously acknowledged at the beginning of my book, for he had put together a chronicle of materials on Shchepkin's life. But he never wrote a