

two points. First, it is difficult to accept what I consider a parochial and ethnocentric viewpoint that publications have to appear in English in order to have “impact upon the wider world.” Serious historians have a reading knowledge of the language of the nation which they are studying so they can analyze primary sources and published literature. Second, a systematic research on Hrushevs’kyi’s activities started in the 1960s in the US with the introduction of “Hrushevs’koznavstvo” (Hrushevsky studies) by the Ukrainian Historical Association, resulting in publication of numerous materials which were abstracted in *Historical Abstracts* and other reference publications. In fact, Dr. Prymak notes his reliance on these works in the preparation of his own English language biography. The materials published by the Ukrainian Historical Association from the 1960s to the present are well known by serious scholars of Ukrainian history and Hrushevs’kyi.

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Prof. Prymak chooses not to respond.

To the Editor:

Two letters to the editor in *Slavic Review* 52, no. 3 took exception to James Cracraft’s review of John Alexander’s *Catherine the Great: Life and Legend* (“Great Catherine,” *SR* 52, no. 1). Their main objection is that Cracraft criticized the book’s emphasis on Catherine’s sex life.

The letters’ use of rhetorical phrases, such as “political correctness” and “the suspicious odor of censorship,” obscures the real issue raised by Cracraft’s review, namely scholarly standards in relation to the selection of historical data. No one would object to publishing detailed evidence of Catherine’s sensuality, if it had an impact on her policies and rule or if the book were a psychohistory or a study of eighteenth century monarchical mores. However, Alexander’s obsessive chronicling of every rumor and innuendo concerning Catherine’s favorites and her sex life is misplaced in a broad biographical study, which should include but not highlight such information. Instead, there is explicit sex on roughly 100 of the 350 pages of the book, whereas serfdom and the Pugachev revolt are treated in less than a dozen pages and the empress’s deep involvement in cultural development is virtually ignored.

Since it is widely known that Catherine kept her love life separate from her public life, the only reason to have this theme dominate the book is to sell more copies or, as Marc Raeff put it in another recent review, “to satisfy the prurient curiosity of adolescent college students.” This unwarranted emphasis on sex distorts the architecture and importance of the life of the empress and comes at the expense of serious scholarly analysis. It is thus a normal, valid ground for criticism and not at all a question of censorship or “political correctness.”

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