

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR:

It was flattering, indeed, to read Professor Henrik Birnbaum's assessment of my book *Medieval Slavic and Patristic Eulogies* (*Slavic Review*, 42, no. 3 [Fall 1983]: 476) as "learned and instructive," including "many subtle and on the whole compelling observations which correct, or at any rate put in proper perspective, some of the views held heretofore." Although presumably this is what scholars are supposed to do, I cannot elaborate on Birnbaum's vague comments. I propose, instead, to supply a much needed statement of what exactly my book is and represents, as the reader of *Slavic Review* has not yet been told, and to correct some misrepresentations.

Medieval Slavic and Patristic Eulogies is the first book-length, published study to analyze Slavic works of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in terms of definite kinds of composition rather than style. As the first study to establish the relationship between these Slavic works and a *body* of literary-rhetorical theory (that of the Second Sophistic), it documents concrete patristic sources, including some previously unknown, which were used as models of composition by Slavic medieval writers (the patristic works cited were written by major fourth-century Greek Fathers, including Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Chrysostom). This kind of *studia divina* contrasts with the beginnings of *studia humana* in Italy during the same period. The importance of my study lies not only in its discovery of concrete patristic links between Slavic medieval works and the theory of the Second Sophistic but also in its breadth, which Birnbaum refers to as the author's "great erudition in both primary sources and secondary literature."

Besides misrepresenting *Medieval Slavic and Patristic Eulogies* to the reader of *Slavic Review* by omitting any meaningful discussion of the ideas expressed in the book, Birnbaum has also distorted the contents by devoting a disproportionate amount of space to picayune, refutable objections. The focus that the reviewer requires is given by the detailed, clear table of contents, which describes almost every paragraph; in fact, the focus was clearly conveyed to Birnbaum, who restated it in the second paragraph of his review. The definitions of "eulogy" (adjective: "eulogistic") and "encomiastic" that Birnbaum could not find are given on pp. 1 and 7f., while the word "panegyric" is used very rarely and only with respect to highly ornate style. My use of the term "patristic" in the "narrow technical sense" is acceptable in English, according to Webster, and more focused than the broader, vaguer meaning that Birnbaum advocates; the difference is that I refer to patristic authors, while he means subject matter. The bibliographical "omissions" are not "glaring" since the first was published after my own book, as the reviewer admits, while the second has been on order for years. (The problem is not the Norwegian language, which I would gladly add to the bibliography as the fourteenth used, but rather the Norwegian book industry.)

I look forward to a more thoughtful discussion of my book and the legitimate literary issues it raises in other scholars' work and in the other reviews that are now being prepared for American and European journals.

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Professor Birnbaum chose not to reply.