

Horace G. Lunt In Memoriam

Professor Horace Gray Lunt II was born in Colorado Springs on September 12, 1918, and died in Baltimore on August 11, 2010. The trajectory of his lengthy and distinguished career at Harvard University has already been described elsewhere: in Jan Perkowski's introduction to the 1978 *Folia Slavica* collection of studies in his honor, and more recently in Michael Flier's reminiscence on the Linguist List mailing list (21.3534). Accordingly, this is a more personal recollection.

One of the unexpected things I learned from Horace concerned the early history of what we might call Slavistics in the United States. From 1809 until 1814 John Quincy Adams had served as our country's first ambassador to Russia (officially the "Minister Plenipotentiary in the Russian imperial capital of St. Petersburg"). In the 1830s, concerned that Americans did not know as much as they should about Russia, he donated a small number of books about Russia to the Harvard College Libraries. I learned these facts from an informal presentation that Horace delivered to a group of members and friends of the Harvard Slavic Department one evening in 1986, in a graduate student's apartment. Although most of the details about his own biography that Horace shared that evening found their way into the published version of that conversation (a review article about the history of Slavic Studies in the United States in *Slavic Review* 42(2)), what Horace emphasized for us, with characteristic modesty, was that his birth date placed him just a year or two ahead of most of the generation of American Slavists who emerged during the flowering of the discipline in the wake of the first Sputnik launch in 1957. This timing meant that he was present for the education and training of a good part of the next several generations of American Slavists, continuing the tradition inaugurated at Harvard by our sixth president of taking steps to ensure that Americans know something about the Slavic lands and peoples.

As a freshman at Harvard in 1937, Horace had never heard of linguistics, although, like many a prep-school student of his generation,

he had studied several foreign languages: Greek, Latin, French, German, and (somewhat unusually for the time) Spanish. Horace's initial interest in Russian emerged from a simple desire to round out his acquaintance with the major language families of Europe and, at the urging of Samuel Hazzard Cross, he majored not in Russian, but in German, writing a B.A. honors thesis on "Herman Hesse since 1928." Horace's early graduate studies at Berkeley with George Rapall Noyes were followed by service abroad during the war, and then by a decision to study in Prague on a Masaryk Fellowship in 1946. In Prague his Czech colleagues expressed surprise that an American would choose to study Slavic linguistics in Europe when Roman Jakobson was, after all, in the United States. Horace had met Roman Osipovič in 1946 at the Summer Linguistic Institute of the Linguistic Society of America, where Jakobson was lecturing on Indo-European metrics. Although Horace recalled having had considerable difficulty understanding both the content of the lecture and Jakobson's English pronunciation, they did have an amiable conversation about Prague. When Ernest Simmons visited Prague in 1947 and encouraged Horace to complete his degree at Columbia, where Jakobson was teaching, Horace relocated to New York, where he defended his dissertation on "The orthography of eleventh-century Russian manuscripts" in 1949. That same year Michael Karpovich succeeded in persuading Jakobson to move to Harvard, bringing with him Horace, Svatava Pirková Jakobson, fourteen current Columbia graduate students, and five newly admitted Columbia graduate students who had not yet begun their studies. The "renaissance" of Slavic studies in the States in general and at Harvard in particular slowed slightly in the mid-1950s, but the tremendous increase in federal funding that emerged after Sputnik in 1957 (a new reason for our government to think that Americans should know something about Russia) meant that for most of his career Horace found himself teaching in one of the most active and productive North American centers for Slavic studies.

Slavic linguistics was a less specialized business in Horace's day than it has subsequently become, and his hundreds of publications touch on almost all of the Slavic languages (as well as the occasional non-Slavic ones). In some areas his scholarship has exerted a particular impact.

First of all, although Horace was modest about his dissertation, which he once described as a continuation of an idea conceived earlier in the century by Nikolaj Durnovo, it nonetheless exerted a powerful impact on our understanding of the proper role of medieval manuscripts as evidence for Slavic historical linguistics. Horace's thesis was simply that scribes were trying to write *correctly*, and they sought to replicate neither the phonetics of their own speech nor the orthography of the sources they were copying. From this salutary perspective, what might otherwise have appeared to be inconsistencies in the distribution of Slavonicisms and vernacular East Slavic reflexes in the work of a scribe came to make sense in the context of orthographic (not explicitly linguistic) norms. It is difficult to overestimate the importance, during the emergence of American anthropological linguistics, of remembering that written language must be understood on its own terms and should not be mistaken for an attempt at phonetic transcription.

Second, the synchronic, structuralist orientation of Horace's *Old Church Slavonic Grammar* (1955), the first monographic description of the language in English, was a fine complement to the historically oriented handbooks and grammars then available in other languages. This *descriptive* grammar was not primarily a textbook, but Horace employed it as a combined *teaching* grammar and *reference* grammar. From the very beginning of his graduate seminar in Old Church Slavonic, Horace gave his students authentic texts in which he had annotated almost every word with pointers to the relevant section numbers in the *Grammar*, and we learned Old Church Slavonic not so much by reading the continuous, descriptive chapters (although we did that, too) as by looking up individual forms on a need-to-know basis. It was difficult to trust that if we looked after the small details the big picture would take care of itself, but it did, and by the end of the semester we no longer needed the annotations. I had already studied Old Church Slavonic at another institution before coming to Harvard, and this gave me a modest head start on my fellow students, but the advantage disappeared on the first day of class when Horace decided that, since I had begun studying Greek the summer before, I should prepare, alongside the Old Church Slavonic, the Greek counterparts to the Slavic texts. That experience proved unexpectedly valuable years later when I had to confront a difficult Greek-Slavic translation problem as part of my dissertation research.

Horace's *Fundamentals of Russian* (1957), an introductory language textbook, followed the same type of structuralist principles as his *Old Church Slavonic Grammar*. *Fundamentals of Russian* was published long before the emergence of the emphasis on oral proficiency that has made the modern Russian language classroom a much more communicative place than it used to be, but within the grammar-and-translation context that predominated in language instruction at the time, Horace's textbook provided clear descriptions and ample opportunity for practice. Horace cheerily told us that when he was preparing the genitive plural exercises for the textbook, he pestered his native Russian consultants about how to say "five Vera Ivanovnas" until one of them, recognizing that this was a phrase unlikely ever to occur in real communication, responded in exasperation, "Xvatit ètix Ver Ivanoven!" —providing the desired form in a completely unanticipated context.

In 1952 Horace published the first Macedonian grammar in English, jump-starting the study of the youngest of the Slavic literary languages. Horace had long maintained a particular interest in the South Slavic languages (he had taught Serbo-Croatian at Columbia before moving to Harvard), and, as Victor Friedman described it in his article "Horace G. Lunt and the beginning of Macedonian studies in the United States of America" (Skopje 1998), Horace's familiarity with Yugoslav languages and cultures left him well positioned to assume responsibility for introducing the non-Slavic world to the Macedonian language. (About this see, in addition to the grammar, Horace's 1959 article on the subject in *Anthropological linguistics* 1(5).)

At the time of his death Horace was completing an annotated translation of the *Rus' Primary Chronicle* (*Povest' vremennyx let*) into English; it is currently being prepared for publication by the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute. Many years earlier Horace had generously recommended me to Donald Ostrowski as a collaborator on the 2004 critical edition of the *Chronicle* that Don was editing, and through that work I was able to develop much of the expertise in reading, transcribing, and interpreting medieval Slavic manuscripts that I have relied on ever since. Horace himself served as Senior Consultant on that project; he considered it essential for his own work, since if he was to translate **the** *Primary Chronicle*, he had to determine first what to translate, and that meant identifying a Russian text that could function as the input to the translation.

Horace was known for his outspoken book reviews. The strong language in, for example, his 1984 review of the new edition of the Old Church Slavonic *Codex Suprasliensis* in the *International journal of Slavic linguistics and poetics* made the younger generation quail at the prospect of failing to meet expectations. In person, however, in the more than thirty years I knew Horace he was unfailingly generous and constructive in his criticism of my work, and his stringent expectations of others were matched by the similarly high expectations he set for himself. Horace was a hands-off advisor, and when I took longer than I should have to submit the first chapter of my dissertation, it wouldn't have occurred to him to remind me. When I finally did submit it, with trepidation, I wondered how to interpret the week or two of silence that followed, and I finally steeled myself to ask directly. Horace merely smiled and said "oh, yes, it's fine; now where's the next one?" and when I completed the dissertation—which included typographically dizzying transcriptions from and descriptions of accented middle-Bulgarian manuscripts—he read it with meticulous attention. Horace provided a model for mentoring that worked very well for me as a student, and one that I have tried to observe in my own direction and supervision of graduate research.

Among the other things I learned from Horace are:

- (1) The importance of recognizing both the connections and the differences between language and orthography.
- (2) The importance and satisfaction of working broadly within both the linguistic and the textological domains of Slavic philology.
- (3) That a review article is not a long review. It is an article inspired by a need to respond to someone else's work, but its purpose is to propound a new thesis or analysis, and not merely to march serially through that other work.
- (4) Lengthy and copious footnotes are an organizational virtue. They allow an author to incorporate into a publication a large number of micro-articles, including polemics with himself or herself, in a way that does not interfere with the logic and exposition of the primary argument.

I wrote one of the last doctoral dissertations that Horace supervised before he retired from Harvard. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to study with him, and I continue to be reminded on a regular basis—both as a scholar and a teacher—of how much I learned from him about how to be a Slavist.

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