

the dissidents' political impact by Burlatsky (2), Horvath both highlights their influence and exaggerates their profundity as a group. He has written a very informative book which should prove valuable for specialists interested in the renewal of Russian intellectual life after Stalin, even for those who see the fate of democracy in Russia as affected by forces other than the clash of ideas.

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Algimantas P. Taskunas, *Lithuanian Studies in Australia: The case for low-demand language and cultural courses in higher education* (Sandy Bay, Tas.: Tasmania University Union Lithuanian Studies Society, 2005), xiv + 2000 pp.

In its analysis of why 'Lithuanian Studies' has generally failed to find an enduring home in Australian universities, this thoughtful study encompasses far wider issues, such as why languages in general, but especially community languages, tend to struggle in Australian tertiary institutions; why mass education is an impediment to the introduction of highly specialised subjects; and how ethnic studies illuminate and complement multiculturalism in Australia. Algimantas Taskunas' work has relevance for all ethnic communities in Australia and, indeed, for every citizen concerned with the role of market forces in Australian tertiary education.

The core of the book consists of five case studies illustrating the generally disappointing experience of Lithuanian Studies in some of Australia's major universities. At La Trobe its sponsors lacked the necessary insider's knowledge university decision-making processes, while at Monash a promising Baltic-Slavic linguistics course (including Lithuanian) did not survive the departure of its initiator. At the Australian National University attempts were made to include Lithuanian in an existing course in Indo-European linguistics, but in the event ancient Hittite was deemed a more suitable choice. Strong community support for the introduction of a Lithuanian language program proved insufficient to persuade the University of Melbourne (or any other Victorian university) to apply for financial assistance in 1980–81 under the Federal Government's community languages program. As Dr Taskunas sadly observes, Lithuania was considered at the time but a 'tiny speck on the globe'.

Where others failed, however, the University of Tasmania has succeeded, despite the fact that only about 40–100 Lithuanians live in the Apple Isle. The reasons for this success include notably the presence of a well-informed ‘change agent’ within the university structure (Dr Taskunas himself), the inclusion of Lithuanian topics in many departmental honours/postgraduate programs (as opposed to expensive undergraduate courses), and the creation of an independent Lithuanian Studies Society (LSS) which provides administrative, intellectual and some financial support to the program and takes pressure off the university. The LSS has served as an intermediary body within and without the institution, sponsoring lectures and cultural events, setting up a specialised research library of over 1000 volumes, and publishing an internationally circulated journal *Lithuanian Papers* which has helped create a ‘virtual’ support community in many countries. By 2005 this program at the University of Tasmania had produced three doctoral and six honours graduates with a number of publications, very few of whom have come from the Lithuanian community.

Taskunas proposes that the Tasmanian model might be followed by other universities considering the introduction of similarly low-demand subjects. For its conceptual framework, however, his argument relies on the somewhat artificial and mechanistic ‘generic systems theory’, purporting to explain through complex flow charts how institutions like universities absorb, digest and pass on modified information about resources and intentions. This may not appeal to all of those sympathetic to his aims, and might seem to take inadequate account of the vagaries of human agencies. Moreover, the repeated use of such inelegant terms as *incongruent inputs*, *withinputs*, *pseudo-conversion outputs* and *boundary guardians* tends to stall an argument which could perfectly well be expressed in more comprehensible but also more graceful prose.

However, as the author himself admits, minority languages of lesser demand face an uphill battle, whatever the dominant paradigm, as Australia’s tertiary institutions are forced to embrace mass education that is commercially-driven. As market forces gain supremacy over the traditional quest for knowledge, the quality of subjects is often judged by their ‘usefulness’ to (commercial) society. In this utilitarian educational atmosphere, subjects with relatively few students are considered superfluous. Too often this results in dramatic gaps in our basic knowledge, the so-called ‘honeycomb effect’. In the meanwhile, state-encouraged entrepreneurial ‘multiversities’ compete tenaciously for (often foreign) students,

and for outside funding from profit-driven businesses. What happens in this cut-throat climate to the traditional university duty of acquiring and safeguarding knowledge, not to mention its vital role as a critic of the status quo? These are the broader questions raised by this book: good questions, but the answers are disconcerting.

Reviewing the success of the University of Tasmania Lithuanian Studies program, begun in 1987 with few material resources, the author concludes: ‘Money isn’t everything’. Perhaps his is a voice in the academic wilderness, but the career and wise reflections of Algimantas Taskunas suggest that a few good people can make a difference in today’s universities.

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Karin Larsen, *The evolution of the system of long and short adjectives in Old Russian*, Slavistische Beiträge 439 (Munich: Otto Sagner, 2005), 283 pp.

The first chapter of this remarkable book contains in its 35 pages a very satisfying, perhaps definitive, illustrated account of the principles governing the distribution of long and short forms of adjectives (LF and SF, respectively in the author’s system) in the earlier Old Russian (OR) chronicles and so does for their language what Michael Flier’s (1974) volume does for Old Church Slavonic (OCS). The remainder of the book is devoted to fulfilling its avowed objective by investigating the shifts of emphasis in the practical realization of these principles in a selection of texts extracted from seven chronicle compilations in such a way as to constitute an essentially continuous chronological band extending over the six and a half centuries that are still fairly frequently referred to as the OR period, i.e. from the mid-eleventh century to the end of the seventeenth.

Several of the distributional factors revealed by the author are found to be similar to those operating in OCS and unashamedly adopted, or adapted, mostly from Flier (1974), e.g. the essentially monoform derivational categories (e.g. possessives, adjectives with the forerunner of the modern suffix *-sk-*) and monoform semantic categories (e.g. adjectives implying ‘knowness’ by specifying unique or complementary portions of a given semantic field, such as ‘polar opposites’ and the like); but occasionally also from Tolstoi (1957), e.g. adjectives denoting