

place in order to examine their ideological and social significance, as well as the historical unfolding of these myths themselves.

Focusing on a description of how he would have written my book, were he its author, Cracraft expressly refuses to engage my claims concerning the social and political function of the myths of Ivan and Peter, since they can be “neither proved nor disproved.” Further, he fails to note, in this review championing empirically grounded argument, even a single work or figure that I analyze. Apparently, Cracraft feels that the study of historical myth is irrelevant to scholars concerned with historical “realities.”

It is not. Cracraft has authored three books whose titles include the words “The Petrine Revolution.” Can the “revolutionary” character of Peter’s reign be proved or disproved? In none of these excellent works does Cracraft retrace the history of conceptions of Peter as a crowned revolutionary in Russian political thought, which winds from Aleksandr Pushkin, through Aleksandr Herzen, to Soviet historiography, and up to the present day. Although he may not acknowledge as much, Cracraft is a participant in the circulation and elaboration of this mythic conception. I would suggest to him that only by laboring to recognize and analyze the myths that structure historical views may we gain purchase on historical realities and on our own moment in time. That is my book’s topic.

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Professor Cracraft responds:

I think my review of Kevin Platt’s book made clear my admiration of the sheer wit, energy, and great erudition that went into writing it—a book that will interest, I concluded, “every student of Russian culture.” But, as his letter makes clear, we differ fundamentally on what constitutes history; or, in the terms used in his letter, what separates history, not from the history of myth (obviously), but from myth itself (myth-making, myth-promoting, myth-utilizing, in short, mythologizing). Perhaps this difference will be bridged some day at some epistemic level, though I doubt I shall live to see it. Meantime I must wish Professor Platt well in the quest.

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