

## VENELIN AND THE SLOVENES

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The year 2002 marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of the man who first coined the word “Slovenia.” Jurij Venelin was one of Russia’s pioneer Slavists, and is recognized as the father of modern Bulgarian studies. His book on Slovene history and geography came out posthumously in 1841, patterned after his much more famous work on the Bulgarians, which was published in 1829 (the publication history of this volume will be given in more detail below). As Iskra Čurkina has pointed out, this was “the first book published in Russia devoted to the Slovenes” (Čurkina 35). Though largely forgotten now, Venelin was something of a celebrity in his day, and can be seen as the perfect embodiment of all the vices and virtues of Romantic-era Pan-Slavist scholarship. Even if this pedigree has rendered his own work less than useful to modern researchers, it makes him a valuable object of inquiry for students of the Slavic Renaissance of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

### Biography<sup>2</sup>

Jurij Ivanovič Venelin was born Georgius Huca on March 22, 1802, in northeastern Hungary. In the words of his cousin, friend, and first biographer Ivan Molnar,<sup>3</sup> Venelin “... by birth a Carpatho-Russ always strove [to go] to Russia, and ardently wished to settle among his own people...” (Molnar IX). In other words, though ethnically what we would today call a Transcarpathian Ukrainian from the southwest of

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<sup>1</sup> Below we will briefly examine how some of his ideas have been echoed in a number of modern works.

<sup>2</sup> Biographical information is culled from both Bajcura volumes (1968 and 1971), especially the earlier one, which is, in fact, a biography of Venelin. Facts about his life are diffused throughout this curiously-organized volume. Bajcura 1968 lists a variety of earlier biographies of Venelin on 47, footnote 125.

<sup>3</sup> Molnar himself was a somewhat notable figure in nineteenth-century Russian intellectual life; see Bajcura 1968, 61.



present-day Ukraine, Venelin viewed himself as Russian.<sup>4</sup> His father was a priest in the Uniate (or Greek Catholic) church, and served in a number of villages in the region. The future scholar spent most of his childhood in Velika Tybava and Synij Vyr (Bajcura 1968, 47–48), and he apparently recalled the latter village in later life with particular fondness.<sup>5</sup>

At first, the young Huca wanted to become a priest like his father. He studied with distinction at several first-rate Hungarian educational institutions: the gymnasium at Užhorod (the largest Transcarpathian town) and, later, its Uniate seminary; and the lycees at Satu-Mare (now in Romania) and Szeged. He matriculated at the university of L'vov (Ukrainian L'viv, Polish Lwow, German Lemberg) in 1822, taking courses in the philosophy faculty. Although always fascinated by the study of history (Bajcura 1968, 48), Venelin apparently did not decide to devote himself to the subject until this time (Bajcura 1968, 49).

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<sup>4</sup> The issue of ethnic self-identification among Ukrainians from the various nineteenth-century territories (i.e., Dnepr Ukraine, Galicia, and Transcarpathia) are much too complex to treat in detail in the present article. The reader is referred, *inter alia*, to the discussion in Magosci, chapters 28–31, and Bajcura 1971. Both authors point out (Magosci 465; Bajcura 1971, 16 and 177) that the most prominent Transcarpathian intellectuals of the early nineteenth century viewed themselves as Russian (also note the revealing contemporary quotes in Bajcura 1968, 59, and Bajcura 1971, 23). East Slavic residents of northeastern Hungary (Transcarpathia had been a part of that kingdom since the eleventh century [Magosci, 385]) numbered 470,000 in 1843 (Magosci 403), and were called Rusyns, Rusnaks (Magosci 403), Rutheni, Ugro-russy or -rossy, or karpato-russy or -rossy (Bajcura 1971, 15–16). I plan to devote a separate article to questions of Venelin's ethnicity, its influence on his work, and also his role as a Ukrainianist. Incidentally, to further confuse an already confusing issue, Bajcura 1968 reports that at least one nineteenth-century biographer referred to Venelin as "Moldavian"!

<sup>5</sup> Bajcura quotes an anonymous author writing in *Moskovskie vedomosti* shortly after Venelin's death in 1839: "[Venelin] would often movingly [ot polnoj dušy] tell anyone who wanted to listen about how he lived in mountain Rus' [v gornioj Rusi], in Synij Vyr, the place of his early youth and first studies..."; see Bajcura 1968, 48.



Still rather obscure is Venelin/Huca's decision to emigrate to Russia, a move he made in 1823 with Molnar. A nineteenth-century writer (quoted in Bajcura 1968, 57) declares, in the flowery nationalistic language of the period, that "Venelin had been drawn to Russia from childhood," but more solid evidence needs to be cited before claiming that he had made such a momentous decision so early in life. Molnar's son, writing in 1873, states that the two young men had to flee Hungary because of the machinations of the local Catholic Church: "... seeing in [Huca and Molnar] talented [young men] useful to their order, [the Catholic authorities] ... intended to make them monks against their will"; in 1821, according to the younger Molnar's cryptic account, "...taking monastic vows had become unavoidable," and the cousins resolved to escape to Russia (Bajcura 1968, 51). Bajcura herself speculates, perhaps more reasonably, that Huca wanted to leave Hungary to escape his obligations to the seminary—after all, he no longer wished to be a priest, and he felt the call of Russian history (Bajcura 1968, 50). It does seem clear that he changed his surname (at first to "Venelovič"), and, presumably, also russified his given name, to make it harder for the authorities to find him (Bajcura 1968, 51). In any event, Venelin and Molnar crossed the border into Russia at Kišiněv, without official permission or passports, in the spring of 1823 (Bajcura 1968, 51).

The cousins lived in Kišiněv for about two years, teaching and tutoring at the boarding school affiliated with the local seminary (Bajcura 1971, 37). Here he met Bulgarian émigrés—some 24,000 were living in Bessarabia in 1818—and conceived a lifelong fascination for them and their culture.<sup>6</sup> In 1825, Venelin and Molnar moved to Moscow, where two Transcarpathian Ukrainians prominent in Russian education (Petro Lodij and Ivan Orlaj)<sup>7</sup> took them under their wing, and

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<sup>6</sup> Bulgarians started to settle in Bessarabia at the end of the 1700s; their numbers increased dramatically after the Bucharest peace of 1812, when the province was joined to Russia; see Bajcura 1968, 63.

<sup>7</sup> On these two important personages, see Bajcura 1968, 54–61; Bajcura 1971, 23–26, 43, 55–58, et passim.; and Magosci 404ff. On the prominent role played by "Karpato-russy" in Russian education in the nineteenth century, see, along with the above, Bajcura 1971, 21–22, 44–45. Despite the unique circumstances involved, Bajcura discusses Venelin and Molnar's move to Russia as the last wave of this general influx of Transcarpathian intellectuals into Russia: see Bajcura 1968, 54, and Bajcura 1971, 37 (also 185). She



secured them fellowships at the medical faculty at Moscow University (Bajcura 1968, 63). Venelin graduated with honors (“*s xorošimi uspexami*”) in 1829, and worked briefly as a doctor at the Moscow Military Hospital, before quitting to devote his time to his true passion: Russian and Slavic history.<sup>8</sup>

Jurij Venelin began his scholarly career while still in medical school, in 1828, when he published a review in the journal *Moskovskij vestnik* (10.15; 11.17). The following year he published his most famous work, *The Ancient and Present-Day Bulgarians in their Political, Ethnographic, Historical and Religious Relation to the Russians*. In 1830, the Russian Academy of Science sent him to Bulgaria, Moldavia, Wallachia, and Rumelia to track down old Slavic manuscripts and learn the Bulgarian language.<sup>9</sup> He returned to Moscow in November, 1831. The material he collected on this expedition served as the foundation for a whole series of publications, many of them posthumous.<sup>10</sup>

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repeatedly pairs Venelin and Orlaj as the most important of these figures (for instance, Bajcura 1968, 54). Bajcura does convincingly demonstrate the closeness of their personal relationship, however: Orlaj had a “powerful influence” on the younger man (Bajcura 1968, 61), who, in turn, “deeply respected him” (Bajcura 1971, 187), and whose scholarship apparently influenced Orlaj’s own ideas (Bajcura 1971, 161–62, footnote 162). Some in the 1830s even thought Orlaj was Venelin’s uncle (Bajcura 1968, 50). Finally, of direct interest to us in the present article is the fact that Venelin had his book on the Slovenes warmly dedicated to Orlaj (Bajcura 1971, 187).

<sup>8</sup> Venelin’s reaction after his Bulgarian grammar was rejected for publication implies that he at least sometimes regretted not making use of his medical degree; see Bajcura 1968, 135. Also note the distinct ambivalence in his diary entry from April 3, 1830, the day he picked up his medical diploma at the university, some two weeks before he left on his scholarly expedition to Bulgaria and Romania (Bajcura 1968, 94, footnote 239; also see Bajcura 1968, 53, footnote 144).

<sup>9</sup> For a detailed account of this trip, see Bajcura 1968, 87–119.

<sup>10</sup> See Bajcura 1968, 123–33, et passim.; on 145, she asserts that more or less all of what he wrote in the 1830s was based on this material. For a complete bibliography of Venelin’s published works, see Bajcura 1971, 189–91; for a description of the scholar’s voluminous archive in the Lenin Library in Moscow, see Bajcura 1968, 37–46. Besides his work on Bulgaria and Slovenia, Venelin also wrote on Russian history, Ukrainian history and folklore, and the Baltic region. Bajcura also reports that drafts of novels and stories can be found in his archive.



In general, however, the 1830s were not kind to Venelin. He had trouble with the Russian Academy, which had received the results of his trip to the Ottoman Empire less than enthusiastically;<sup>11</sup> he was thwarted in his attempt to be appointed to the Slavic studies chair at Moscow University in 1834 (Bajcura 1968, 211–12); his Bulgarian grammar, one of the most anticipated fruits of his field trip, was rejected for publication (Bajcura 1968, 134–35); and he had tremendous difficulty holding onto the remunerative posts his various benefactors tried to secure for him.<sup>12</sup> The anecdotes in Bajcura's biography suggest a man bitter, depressed, and withdrawn.<sup>13</sup>

He did seem to revive somewhat in late 1837, after the Bulgarian "enlighteners" V. E. Aprilov and M. S. Palausov contacted him. Venelin embarked on a lively correspondence with them, and with other Bulgarians with whom they connected him. He drew up a plan of action for the study of Bulgarian history, and examined the modern Bulgarian books they regularly sent him. This resulted in the last work published in his lifetime, "The Embryo of Modern Bulgarian Literature" (*Moskovskij nabljudatel'* 14 [1837]); also published separately in 1838; see Bajcura 1968, 147–72). Venelin died in Moscow on March 26, 1839, probably of tuberculosis (Bajcura 1968, 54); he was lionized by the Bulgarians, especially the vigorous émigré community in Odessa, who took up a collection for the monument that adorns his grave at the Danilevskij Monastery (Bajcura 1968, 168–69).

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<sup>11</sup> Bajcura 1968, 119–22, et passim. Venelin was convinced that the Academy's secretary, P. I. Sokolov, harbored a grudge against him, with which Bajcura agrees; see Bajcura 1968, 135 (also footnote 363).

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, Bajcura 1968, 205–206, and 284–86; these anecdotes also suggest a man often too proud to accept such relatively trivial work. Venelin's most important sponsor was the Slavophile historian and journalist, M. P. Pogodin; Bajcura 1968 contains many interesting details about their complex relationship.

<sup>13</sup> Note, for instance, his comments about being good for nothing, made to A. O. Kraevskij after being rejected for the Moscow University post (Bajcura 1968, 214). It is also telling that he refused to even answer the first laudatory letter Aprilov and Palausov sent him on May 22, 1836; and see his comments when he finally does write them on September 27, 1837: Bajcura 1968, 150.



### Venelin as a Romantic: his Reception in Russia

Venelin was a Romantic nationalist; this point is made more than once by Bajcura,<sup>14</sup> and is self-evident to any educated person who opens any one of his works. In his historiography, he clearly embraces the Pan-Slavist position first formulated in the 1820s by the Slovaks Jan Kollár and Pavel Josef Šafařík.<sup>15</sup> Like them, he repeatedly calls the Slavs “tribes” of one nation, speaking “dialects” (*narečija*) of one language; and he stresses these general themes in all his studies:

1. The Slavs have been living in their present homeland(s) from time immemorial; the so-called “migration of peoples”, during which they allegedly migrated from some distant *Urheimat* to the east, never took place, and, indeed, never could have taken place.
2. The Slavs’ home territory once extended well beyond its present borders, deep into present-day Italy, Germany, and even Asia; the reason for confusion on this point is that contemporary scholars persistently misidentify them in the accounts of Classical writers, out of a blatant Germanophile bias (“teutomania”).
3. Far from being the bucolic, passive, primitive agriculturalists of “Teutonic” historiography (Herder, et al.), the ancient Slavs had an advanced, dynamic culture with their own alphabet, a highly-developed law code, magnificent cities, and a rich mythology rivaling those of the Greeks and Romans.

Examples of all these points abound in his Slovene book, which we shall examine in detail below.

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<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, Bajcura 1968, 275–77. Still, she downplays this obvious side of the Transcarpathian scholar’s thought, while frequently stressing the “progressiveness” of some of his views. All this is undoubtedly due to ideological considerations.

<sup>15</sup> Kohn remains a good introduction to Pan-Slavism; on the Romantic era, see esp. Part 1, in which Venelin makes a cameo appearance on 66–67, in connection with his Bulgarian research. On the mystical side of early Pan-Slavism, see the quote in Bajcura 1968, 275, from an 1893 Russian article: “[At this time Slavistics] was a matter of faith and poetry...”



Although, for now, we can only speculate about the sources of Venelin's Pan-Slavism, it seems reasonable to suppose that he was exposed to Romantic thought as a student, both in his various Hungarian schools, and in West Galicia (L'vov), where the influence of Kollár, Šafařík, et al., seems to have been particularly strong.<sup>16</sup> Bajcura also quotes the reminiscences of people who knew him as a highly "poetical" and naïve personality—the very stereotype of a certain kind of Romantic intellectual (Bajcura 1968, 48, 51, and 54). She quotes one admirer, speaking of him shortly after his death: "I have never known a soul so childishly pure."

As we consider Venelin's scholarship, we have to remember that not only is he a Romantic-nationalist historian: he is an *amateur* Romantic-nationalist historian. His raw talent was impressive, and his basic erudition was broad: Bajcura claims he knew all the modern European languages, including Hungarian, as well as Latin and Greek, and even some Turkish (Bajcura 1968, 261, plus footnote 714). His education was good for its day, as far as it went—he was able to pepper his writing with references to an impressive array of Classical writers, but he had little sustained, formal training in modern historical methods, and, in the end, he is more autodidact dilettante than professional scholar. His lack of a degree in history was the main reason cited by the Moscow University board for not hiring him (Bajcura 1968, 212). In the end, "his works are completely unscientific ... he was, after all, just a medic" (Bajcura 1968, 274).

Venelin's amateur status is evident in his writing style. His language is a hard-to-read amalgam of antiquated Slavonicisms and overly-colloquial contemporary Russian. The famous critic Vissarion Belinskij once complained that Venelin "loves to use words and expressions that no one else uses" (quoted in Bajcura 1968, 11). The

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<sup>16</sup> See Magosci 401, 402, et passim. (Most unfortunately, he erroneously includes Jernej Kopitar in his list of "Czech and Slovak" writers who made a strong impact in Galicia.) On the strong influence Lvov University had on Venelin's subsequent views, see Molnar IX. On Šafařík's (occasionally quite negative) reaction to some of Venelin's published work, see Bajcura 1968, 246–50. I have seen no indication yet in my research that suggests Venelin was personally acquainted with these fellow Hungarian Slavs in the 1820s; that he was intimately familiar with their work, however, there can be no doubt, as we shall see below.



Moscow University board also criticized stylistic lapses in the work he submitted for their consideration in 1834 (Bajcura 1968, 220). Bajcura never alludes to the point, but we may suppose that all these difficulties were due to the fact that standard Russian was, after all, not his native language.

As we shall see below, he chose to employ this “second language” in an overly-aggressive, polemical style that is closer to “op-ed” journalism than a dispassionate pursuit of knowledge. He openly scoffs at his far more learned opponents—August L. Schlözer is his particular *bête noire*<sup>17</sup>—and uses highly intemperate language to characterize their views. One gets the feeling that he is going out of his way to stake out positions different from the accepted theories of the day: he himself once candidly stated that he could never repeat what had already been said, for he possessed an “excessive passion for always saying something new” (Bajcura 1968, 212).

Such writing could not help but be noticed, of course, and Russian critics returned Venelin’s fire with devastating broadsides of their own. N. A. Polevoj’s scathing response to his Bulgarian tome is typical:

There are two kinds of ignorance, unscholarly and scholarly, and the second is much more ridiculous and unbearable than the first ... In a word, it is impossible to read Mr. Venelin’s book without laughing, and to laugh without being annoyed, that even in our age, such literary monstrosities crawl out into the light of day [*na belyj svet*]. (Quoted in Bajcura 1968, 67–68).

Unfortunately, the ingenuous Rusyn was ill-equipped psychologically to deal with such criticism (Polevoj’s review, in particular, seems to have

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<sup>17</sup> See Bajcura 1968, 192, 197–98, et passim. On Schlözer (1735–1803) and his seminal influence on the “fathers” of Slavic studies, Dobrovský and Kopitar, see Pogačnik, esp. 52–56, and Lencek 1982/1996, 55–56, and note 6; on the negative response in Russia to Schlözer’s Russian grammar of 1764, see Buck 209–210, and note 57. I suspect there may be a connection between Venelin’s animus toward the German scholar and Mixail Lomonosov’s, although I have not yet found any evidence to corroborate this.



wounded him deeply<sup>18</sup>); and this would be another reason for possible depression toward the end of his life.

Of course, there were many Russians who supported Venelin's positions. He was well-known within early Slavophile and pre-Slavophile nationalist circles, and at various times enjoyed the encouragement of such well-known personages as M. P. Pogodin, S. A. Ševyrëv, N. I. Nadeždin, and the Aksakov family, among others.<sup>19</sup> Also note Bajcura's account of the rousing polemics Polevoj's review provoked in the Russian press (Bajcura 1968, 68–69). Most revealing is a remarkable letter from the minor writer M. Staxovič to the historian M. A. Popov, which offers further proof (if any is needed) of the Romantic underpinnings of Venelin's work, and the mystical quality of Romantic thought in general (quoted in Bajcura 1968, 86–87, footnote 218):

I've read and read Venelin already; now I'm going to study him, that is, try to learn him by heart. You ought to study him, too, brother. This propaganda [!] should be made the epigraph for all the scholarly activity of a Russian man. God sent him to us, and put us in such a position that we can't judge his direction as others do, or his ideas orthodox [as he puts it himself] and faithful. Venelin is closest of all to us, and we especially can't speak of him as others do, can't even utter "but," "all the same," and other classical expressions...

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<sup>18</sup> See Bajcura 1968, 89, footnote 226. Polevoj later declared that his negative review was prompted in the main by the impudence and disrespect with which Venelin discussed Schlözer and other established authorities; Bajcura 1968, 69. (He also took exception to the book's long title Bajcura 67.) This review seemed to have even played a role in Venelin's theory of education (!) i.e., as an example of how a teacher should *not* behave (Bajcura 1968, 289). For the reaction of later Soviet-era scholars to *Bulgarians*, see Bajcura 1968, 86–87.

<sup>19</sup> On Venelin and Ševyrëv, see, *inter alia*, Bajcura 1968, 93; on Nadeždin 92, 204–206, 211; on the Aksakovs 88–89, 92. As mentioned above, Pogodin was Venelin's main sponsor in Moscow, and their stormy relationship is discussed throughout Bajcura's biography.



### Venelin on Slovenia

Venelin first mentions the Slovenes in *Bulgarians*: "... the name *Sloven* [sic] (*Slovene*, *Sloveny*, *Slovaki* [sic] all one and the same, like *Rossijane*, *Russkie*, *Rusaki*) have always belonged exclusively to one Slavic tribe, namely the Pannonians and Italo-Ukrainians."<sup>20</sup> He was also thinking of Slovenia two days before his departure for Bulgaria in April 1830: at this time, he writes to Ševyrëv, who was in Italy:

I beg you on behalf of all slavophiles [*"slavjanoljubcev"*] to not ignore on your return trip the Slavic inhabitants of Krain, Carinthia, Carniola [sic!], Styria ... You could make for yourself particular points: 1.) about the expanse of their dwellings [*"o prostranstve ix žilišč"*]; 2.) about the nuances of their dialect; 3.) their manners, habits, and customs; 4.) household management [*"domovodstvo"*]; 5.) collect what has been printed in their language!<sup>21</sup>

His wording here suggests that he had been recently reading Kopitar's 1808 grammar, *Grammatik der slavischen Sprache in Krain, Kärnten und Steyermark*; why he would be engrossed in that volume so soon before leaving for Bulgaria is a matter for speculation.

Bajcura 1968 (40) asserts that Venelin worked on the book that was to become *The Ancient and Present-Day Slovenes in their Political, Ethnographic, Historical and Religious Relation to the Russians* from 1834 to January 1839, when he submitted fifteen typeset folia to the printer; according to his biographer, he relied on source material collected on

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Molnar XXVI, and Čurkina 36. Below we shall comment on the place of the Slovaks in Venelin's formulations, as well as his rather clever play on the similarity between the ethnonyms *ukraincy* and *kraincy*.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Bajcura 1968, 93–94, and in Čurkina 34. Neither writer mentions Ševyrëv's response, or whether or not he complied with this request. Both quotes manifestly demonstrate the infelicities of Venelin's writing style: I make no claims for my prowess as translator, but the reader is hereby warned that passages from Venelin's work make for difficult reading! Also note the overall Romantic tone, the creation of spurious neologisms which suggest a fundamental misunderstanding ("Italo-Ukrainians"), and a careless error (Krain and Carniola as separate provinces) that bespeak his lack of formal training. Incidentally, his use of *narečie* and *jazyk* as near synonyms is typical of Romantic Pan-Slavism in general.



his sojourn to the eastern Balkans in 1830–31.<sup>22</sup> It was not published, however, until 1841, two years after his death, and then only thanks to the vigorous efforts of the author's loyal supporters within the Odessa Bulgarian community (Bajcura 1968, 159–61). Molnar started revising the first edition in 1846, eventually adding a forward, a biographical sketch of the author, and the dedication to Ivan Orlaj; plus, he augmented the text with several heretofore unpublished pieces from Venelin's archive. He also changed the title to the present one: it had come out in 1841 as volume two to *The Ancient and Present-Day Bulgarians...*<sup>23</sup> *Bulgarians and Slovenes* came out together in a single volume in 1856, under the title *Historical-Critical Investigations (Istoričesko-kritičeskie izyskanija)*, volumes 1 and 2, the title which subsequent scholarship usually refers to.

According to Molnar, Venelin decided to study the Slovenes because "ignorance of their antiquities was a cause for confusion in the history of ancient Rus' and Bulgaria" (Molnar, XXVI); this sentiment is expressed in somewhat more general terms by Venelin himself toward the beginning of his book (9). Čurkina (35) suggests a more mundane reason: the author was simply drawn to those Slavic nations which had yet to be extensively studied.<sup>24</sup> Whatever the ultimate reasons for embarking on this project, he treats in it all of the major themes he dealt with in his Bulgarian, Ukrainian, and Russian research, as enumerated above: the wide expanse of Slovene territory, their unjustly neglected role in ancient civilization, the interconnectedness of the various Slavic "tribes," etc.

### Definitions of "Slovene" and "Slovenia"

Venelin defines the objects of his interest straightaway, on p. 1: "Slovens [sic] are what the inhabitants of Styria, Carinthia, and

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<sup>22</sup> See Bajcura 1968, 113; she never explains how material collected in Bulgaria and Romania was germane to a book on Slovenia, and the relevance is not self-evident in the book itself.

<sup>23</sup> Bajcura 1968. Note, however, that on 228, she reproduces the title page of *Slovenes* with the later title *and* the date 1841. No explanation is offered for the discrepancy.

<sup>24</sup> In the future piece on Venelin which I referred to in footnote 4 above, I hope to investigate what role his own origins as a Rusyn played in his scholarly choices.



[western?] Hungary call themselves; the inhabitants of Carniola call themselves *kraincy*; the language of one and the other group constitute the same dialect.” He goes on to say that the Germans call the Slavs of both these groups *Winden*.<sup>25</sup> He comes up with the name “Slovenija” on 2,<sup>26</sup> and creates from it the ethnonym *slovenin*, pl. *sloveny*. He then asserts their autonomy from other Slavic “tribes”: “The *Slovenin* is not a Czech, not a Serb, not a Pole, not a Croat [*Kroat*], neither in name, nor dialect, nor dress, nor manners, nor in history.” He does, however, refer to the Slovaks as the “second branch of the Slovene nation,” and their language as the “second Slovene *narečije*” (see below); and he again returns to the affinity between the names “Ukraine” and “Kranj,” without insisting on any particularly close historical relationship between the two groups.

He then defines the territory of *Slovenija*:

Thus, the borders of Slovenia were the Danube to the north, the Danube and Croats to the east, the Adriatic Sea from Fiume up to Venice to the south; the western boundary goes due north from Venice, through the Tyrol and Bavaria, along the Isar River to the Danube (9–10).

Checking a map, we see that Venelin thus claims most of Austria, a large portion of western Hungary, and a generous chunk of southern Germany for the Slovenes.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See Lencek 1990B on the history of Slovene nomenclature. He discusses, *inter alia*, the sources from which Venelin was likely to have gotten his information. For more on Kopitar’s views on the subject, see Petrovskij 119–20, 193, et passim.

<sup>26</sup> As Čurkina points out on 36, this toponym did not come into circulation in the Slovene provinces themselves before 1844; she does not suggest that Venelin’s neologism of the 1830s had anything to do with this.

<sup>27</sup> Kopitar himself extended Slovene territory into the Tyrol and Bavaria (Čurkina 29). Lencek (1982, 27–30) summarizes the current consensus about the historical dimensions of the Slovene language area, and includes further references. This putative scheme does not extend nearly as far north or west as Venelin’s. We must always bear in mind, however, that Venelin and modern Slavists start from very different assumptions, and such direct comparisons are not helpful without the proper caveats.



### The Slovenes in Antiquity: their Relationship to Non-Slavic Peoples in Central Europe

According to the theory now most widely accepted, Slavs did not penetrate the Eastern Alpine region until the sixth century A. D., when they arrived with the Avars; and even then, their settlement was sparse (Lencek 1982, 27–30). By contrast, Venelin held that they were already well-established in their homeland at the start of the Christian era. He is, in fact, greatly incensed at the very notion of a migration of peoples in the Dark Ages, and uses unscholarly language when discussing it:

... so that this could give grounds to enthusiasts for migration of peoples for fancied reasoning (“*vyčurnym rezonnementam*”) about the departure, God knows where, of the Lord Norici, and the arrival in their place in the sixth century of the Slovenes, God knows whence! (31).

(He returns to this favorite theme frequently in *Slovenes*, where he calls those who like to “daydream about whence, when, and how this or that language originated or arrived” “theorioniacs” [e.g., 47, 57]).

Insisting that the Slovenes were autochthonous to such an extensive *prarodina* forced Venelin to confront the record of the many Classical writers who described the population of the region: if his view is correct, then all these various tribes must perforce be Slovene (or pre-Slovene Slavic?), and, indeed, much of the volume is taken up with such arguments. Notwithstanding his genuine knowledge of ancient Greek and Roman literature, his standard methodology here is a leap of faith, followed by circular reasoning, and supported by some truly stunning etymologies. Among the peoples thus “slavonicized” are the Veneti, the Norici, the Raeti, the Vindelici, and, amazingly, the Franks. (The Etruscans, as well, but they are a special case which we shall consider below in the discussion of Slavic alphabets.)

Once again, it is likely that here, too, Venelin is taking a cue from no less an authority than Kopitar: basing himself on Schlözer, the Viennese Slavist suggested that “Norici” was the original name of the Slavs, and that therefore Slovene territory might be the original Slavic homeland (Petrovskij 124). Schlözer and others also viewed the Slovenes as indigenous to their present territory (Čurkina 10). Venelin, however, goes much further than his sources, and we need consider



only a few cases to get a feel for what he is up to. For instance, like some modern observers (see note 51 below), Venelin assumes that the Veneti, an obscure Indo-European people of northeastern Italy, were Slovene. He derives their name from the Greek word *heneti*, which he translates as the equivalent of Russian *slavnye* “glorious (ones)”; hence, by his reasoning, “Veneti” is a synonym of *slavjane*. The Graeco-Latin name Venetiae came to be applied to the country—and the people in it—after “Slovenes” christened some islands “Benetci” (11–12). Later, these same Slavs founded Venice, after fleeing to the site from the Huns.<sup>28</sup> Later, he traces “Pannonia” to the Slavic term *župan* “chieftan,” by way of the Polish word *pan* “nobleman” (14–21): the Romans allegedly named the province after the people they would have had the most contact with, the *župani* (15).<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, he analyzes the ethnonym “Rhaeti” or “Raeti” as the Greek version of the name Slovene, a calque: *Slovene/Slovenia* is to *slov-o* “word,” what *Rhaeti/Rhaetia* is to Greek *rhē-* “word” (39; without further etymological comment, he relates “Rhaeti” to Slavic *rěč*, as well). Venelin argues that the Romans used this allegedly Greek form of “Slovenia” for their Alpine province because of “Greek superiority in geography”—Greek nomenclature was in common usage (40). As to why the Greeks would bother to calque native ethnonyms in the first place, he asserts that the cluster s-l was hard for them to pronounce, and, in any event, “the ancients loved etymology” (41).

Several pages later, in a very confusing section (58–63), Venelin establishes the Slavic pedigree of a different group, the

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<sup>28</sup> On the Veneti, see the entry in the *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture* and Lencek 1990B. Curiously, given Venelin’s predilection for seeing Slavic etymologies everywhere, he rejects the connection between *Veneti* and *Winde/Wende* (11), although this is assumed by Indo-Europeanists today: the root means, roughly, “beloved (people),” and ethnonyms based on it are common in the Indo-European world. (This root is also found in “Venus” and the English words “wish,” “win,” and “winsome”; see the IE appendix in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 1970 ed.)

<sup>29</sup> Vasmer derives *župan* and *pan* from different grades of the same Common Slavic root: e-grade *\*geŭpanŭ-* and Ó-grade *\*gŭpanŭ*, respectively. In neither entry does he mention the place name Pannonia, and he does not have a separate entry for it. According to the *Harper’s Dictionary of Classical Literature and Antiquities* (hereafter HDCLA), the Pannonii were probably an Illyrian tribe.



Vindelici, by arguing that they were *different* from the Rhaeti.<sup>30</sup> He concludes an analysis of Roman gravestones in the area with the words:

This, it seems, is sufficiently convincing that the differences made in the Kingdom of Inscriptions ["*v Carstve Nadpisej*"] between *natione Rhetus* and *natione Vindelicus* is based on a *real* distinction between these two Slavic tribes, relevant both to their dialect and to their names...

While it may be pardonable to indulge in rampant speculation about little-known tribes who spoke ill-attested languages, it certainly is not to do the same with peoples who left a major mark in history. Jurij Venelin crosses this line repeatedly in *Slovenes*,<sup>31</sup> nowhere more spectacularly than in his discussion of the Franks. Nineteenth-century Germanists were no doubt startled to read that the latter were not West Germanic, but, in fact, Slavic (53, 71); that they spoke a dialect of Slovene (54); that they and the Vindelici were one and the same tribe (51–52); that Schlözer took the Vindelici's own name for themselves, *Franki*, and gave it to the Schwabians (63); and that the Germania of the classical writers was really a Slavic country, the home of Slavic tribes living between the Rhine and the Vistula Rivers, and the Danube River and Baltic Sea (68–69).<sup>32</sup> Venelin's argumentation here is typical

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<sup>30</sup> HDCLA tells us (1369) that Vindelicia was north of Rhaetia, and was added to that province by the Romans toward the end of the first century A.D. It adds that at this time in expanded Rhaetia "the preponderant race was the Kelts."

<sup>31</sup> And in *Bulgarians*, as well, in which he declared that the Scythians, the original Bulgarians, the Khazars, and Attila and the Huns were all Russian Slavic tribes: Molnar XVII–XXIV. One unintentionally hilarious passage deserves to be quoted here: "The Huns (Bulgars) were devoted to the Gothic language ... and were passionately partial to wine ... All this *points a finger* at the *Russian* origin of the Huns [Venelin's italics]. Really, after this description, a natural-born Russian man could hardly say that the Huns were Mongols" (XIX; but in *Slovenes*, he equates Gothic with Serbian! See below). See also the notes in "Otryvok," which continue the same argument. In the later book, the time during which the ancient Slovenes (as Venelin defines them) were ruled by Attila is called the "Russian Period" of Slovene history.

<sup>32</sup> In Venelin's view, the only truly Germanic tribes of antiquity are the Schwabians and the Saxons; Schwabia and Saxony are the true ancient



of his methodology, as he assumes the people of ancient Europe would view issues of language and culture the same way that nineteenth-century Romantics do: we know the Franks were Christian; we know the Saxons were German, and did not accept Christianity from the Franks; ergo, the Franks could not have been German (71).

### The Slovenes and Other Slavic "Tribes"

Romantic Pan-Slavism took as an article of faith that the Slavs were one nation, speaking dialects of one language. This premise informs all scholarship of the period to varying degrees, although it eventually breaks down under the weight of all its inherent contradictions.<sup>33</sup>

Venelin, too, is eager to stress organic relationships based on the slightest evidence. As we have already mentioned, he argued in *Bulgarians* that this eastern Balkan people was, in fact, the third major branch of the Russian nation: the "Volgo-Russians"<sup>34</sup> (as opposed to the "Great Russians" and the "Little Russians," i.e., the Ukrainians [Molnar XII]). By also arguing for a close affinity between the Bulgarians and Serbs (Molnar XII), he implicitly joins the latter group to the Russians, as well.

In his second volume of *Historical-Critical Investigations*, Venelin also insists on close historical ties amongst different Slavic

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German homeland, which he dubs "Teutonia." On 74, in a related discussion, he derives the name of the German warrior Ariovistus from Jarovit, the name of a Baltic Slav deity.

<sup>33</sup> The chapters of Kohn referred to in note 15 contain numerous examples of all of this. The idea that the Slavs comprise one nation by no means started with the Romantics: it is assumed by Dobrovský and Kopitar, who got the notion from Schlözer and Herder. See Pogačnik 54, 142, and Herrity 153–54; on Kopitar's "Greek dialect" theory, which is founded on this premise, see Pogačnik 166ff, and Lencek 1971/1996. Kohn briefly characterizes other early Pan-Slavist theories on ix–xiv.

<sup>34</sup> Venelin also derives the ethnonym from this waterway (Molnar XII), an etymology specifically rejected by Vasmer. In general, Venelin went by Dobrovský's division of the Slavs into two branches: the southeastern (Russians, Bulgarians, Serbs, Dalmatians, Slavonians, Croats, Slovenes), and a northwestern (Czechs, Moravians, Slovaks, "German Serbs" [i.e., the Lusatian Sorbs], Poles, with the Silesians); see Bajcura 1971, 180.



nations. As we have already seen, he calls the Slovaks the “second branch” of the Slovene “tribe.” He does not belabor this point, but does declare subsequently that the Slovaks were forced to move across the Danube from “Slovenia,” and settle among the Czechs and Moravians, due to Caesar Augustus’s invasion in the first century A. D. (101–102).

Along with his etymological connection between Carniola and Ukraine (see above), Venelin also declares that the original (Slavic) Dalmatians were Slovenes, not Serbs or Croats, noting that the people of Dubrovnik called themselves “slovinski” even in the nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup> He then notes that there are a lot of “Slovenianisms” in the variant of Croatian spoken near Carniola, namely the dialect we call Kajkavian (42–43). Later, however, Venelin identifies both the Serbs and the Croats with the Goths (218, 224, et passim.). At this point, even the most intrepid reader is likely to collapse in total confusion, for the author has already identified one Gothic people, the Gepids, with the Slovenes; and he has called Theophilus de Gotthis a *Russian* delegate to the Nicaean council (214). Typically, he does not follow up on the implications of these various statements.<sup>36</sup>

### Venelin on the Slavic Alphabets

Venelin devoted a number of works to one of the most controversial topics in nineteenth-century Slavistics: the history of Slavic writing systems, and the relative ages of the Glagolitic and Cyrillic alphabets (Bajcura 1968, 182–83); and in *Slovenes*, too, he discusses the topic extensively. This, of course, is not the place for a lengthy discussion of the issue; in very general terms, the dispute was between the position of Kopitar, who held Glagolitic to be the older of the two, and that of his mentor Dobrovský, who argued for the primacy of Cyrillic. Russian scholars of the day were divided on the question.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Venelin 42–43. Surprisingly, he makes no mention of the East Slavic Slovene of northern Russia, centered around Novgorod.

<sup>36</sup> Venelin here utilizes another stunning etymology: “Gepid” is alleged to be the Greek calque of *krainec*! For the accepted scholarly classification of the various Gothic tribes and related peoples, see Wolfram 7–8, 20, 23, 26, 28–29, 57, and 76; on Theophilus, see Wolfram 78, and footnote 274.

<sup>37</sup> Čurkina 29–31, contains a useful brief account of the debate up to the 1850s; Venelin himself (174–77) quotes extensively from Šafařík’s 1826 *Geschichte der Slavische Sprache und Literatur nach allem Mundarten*, which



In the main, Venelin supported Kopitar's position, as expounded in his 1836 edition of the Old Church Slavonic Glagolitic manuscript Clozianus, that the Glagolitic alphabet was a pre-Christian Slavic writing system. (He refers to this volume directly on 180, calling its author the "learned Slovene B. Kopytar' [sic].") However, he does not leave the point at that; he states that Glagolitic is none other than the *Etruscan* alphabet of ancient Italy.

One impetus for this hypothesis is his assertion, already mentioned above, that the ancient Rhaeti were Slovenes; he discusses ancient writers who equated the Rhaeti with a wandering Etruscan tribe (76–77).<sup>38</sup> The only logical conclusion he can draw from this is that the Etruscans were Slovenes; again, the modern reader cannot help but smile at his expression of ingenuous wonder: "I fear falling into Slavomania, but, on the other hand, it is more dangerous not to believe *an eyewitness*" (i.e., the Roman historian Livy; Venelin's italics; 79). Later, he further cements the Slovene identity of the Etruscans by reiterating the "relationship" among the Rhaeti, the Norici, the Pannonians, and the Dalmatians, again basing himself on Livy (179).

From here, it is but a short step to the argument that the Etruscan alphabet is the pre-Christian Slavic writing system Kopitar sees in Glagolitic, which he makes in §11, "Slavic Letters." For Venelin, the crucial passage from Livy reads: "From *Etruria* also emerged Mountain dwellers, predominantly *Rhaeti*, who grew so wild in the mountains that they retained nothing of their glorious antiquity *except their language*, and that not without corruption" (from Venelin's translation, and his italics; 171). This leads him to conclude on the following page: "And so, while the so-called *Etruscan* alphabet was yielding to the Greek [alphabet; see below] in Italy, it was maintained in the Slovenian mountains among independent dwellers." Thus, to

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nicely details earlier opinions. The current view, as expressed in Lunt 14–15 (with comparative tables on 16–17), is that Glagolitic was invented by SS Cyril and Methodius for the Moravian Slavs in the 860s, while the Cyrillic alphabet was adapted from the Greek (with individual Glagolitic figures added) by their followers in Bulgaria in the tenth century. Both Kopitar and Dobrovský credited the brothers from Salonika with inventing Cyrillic. On Kopitar's early views on Slavic orthographic disputes, see Petrovskij 129 ff.

<sup>38</sup> HDCLA, in the article on "Rhaetia," states, in fact, that "down to a late date, a dialect of Etruscan was spoken in parts of the country."



summarize Venelin's position: the Glagolitic alphabet flourished in ancient "Slovenia" after being brought there by (pre-Slovene) Etruscans moving up from central Italy.

Note that when Venelin writes of the "Greek alphabet" in Italy in the above quote, he is, in fact, referring to the *Latin* alphabet. For reasons he never makes explicit, he views the Latin writing system as nothing more than a variant of the Greek (162, and 168, where he says: "The so-called Latin alphabet ... is properly Greek"). There follows, on 166, the rather astounding claim that "... since in Europe there were only two ancient alphabets, namely the Greek and the Etruscan, the Slovene [i.e., Glagolitic] had to belong to one of them."

As if all this were not enough, Venelin goes on to reject the entire story of Cyril and Methodius as a "fairy tale" (178), on the grounds that for a person to invent an alphabet is "morally and physically impossible" (179)! In his typical way, he rails against "enthusiasts for discovering inventors" (187), and eventually reveals his real reason for taking this stand: it goes against the Pan-Slavist view that the Slavs were already Christianized and highly cultured in Roman times:

Thus Cyril and Methodius complicate not only the history of Slavic letters, but also the genuine epoch of the Christianization of the Slovenes themselves ... The conversion of Pannonia and the first introduction of the Slavic liturgy is also actually unjustly attributed by later [historians] to St. Methodius, as the invention [sic] of Greek uncial writing and a few Glagolitic letters, by which the Greek alphabet was supplemented, is ascribed to St. Cyril.<sup>39</sup>

He again insists that the Slovenes are the autochthonous inhabitants (*starožily*) of their country (once more fulminating at the "... fictional migration of peoples"), and accepted Christianity "with the Latins" (204); he goes on to develop this argument throughout the next several pages (205–57).

The author continues his harangue about alphabets in a section that retains some interest for the modern Slovenist: a review and

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<sup>39</sup> Venelin 203; again, though I do not wish to offer myself up as a faultless translator, I must point out that the awkwardness in this passage is also in the original Russian.



critique of the great variety of orthographies then competing amongst the South Slavs. On 269, there is a comparison of Kopitar's proposals with the *metelčica* and *danjčica*, which, despite a certain naïvete in tone, a contemporary Russian lay reader would have probably found informative.<sup>40</sup> (He does not delve very deeply into the background of the issues under dispute, however.) He concludes with an observation that is actually no less trenchant for all its ingenuousness: "Thus, now, the Slovenes have three different alphabets! A great benefit for a people who, not knowing whom to follow, will have to learn to read three times, or else give up books."

What follows this is an excursus on the orthographic controversies then raging among the Croats and Serbs. By his count, there are twenty-one different alphabets in use in the Serbo-Croatian language zone as of 1833 (276), and he laments that when Gundulić's *Osman* was published in Dubrovnik in 1826, "the publisher compiled his own orthography" (271): the Croatian poet's masterpiece thus remains unintelligible to other Slavs, among whom it could have prompted a renaissance of belles-lettres similar to what Tasso accomplished in the west (273).

In this section, Venelin returns to the theme of the impossibility of inventing an alphabet: he attributes the unfortunate situation in the Balkans to "an *evil genius* innate in the Slavic person *to correct and perfect letters*" (270–71), his "simple passion ... to *perfect* (i.e., to ruin [*terzat*]) the shape of letters" (269). "The Slavic tribes are *tangling their written language* [*pis'mennost*] in a net of their own devising" (275), and this sad tendency is the reason why the Slavs did not retain the "ancient Slovene alphabet."<sup>41</sup>

The author's solution is that put forward by a number of conservative Russian linguistic nationalists of the time:<sup>42</sup> all the

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<sup>40</sup> For a concise account of the work of Franc Metelko and Peter Danjko, and of Slovene orthographic controversies in general, see Pogačnik 159–63.

<sup>41</sup> See Francev 37–46, on the issue of Slavic orthographic reform in the first half of the nineteenth century. The many futile attempts to devise a common alphabet for all the South and West Slavs frustrated better scholars than Venelin: Šafařík once exclaimed: "If we continue [any] further along this path, we will soon be called incurable philological lunatics!" (Francev 45).

<sup>42</sup> Šiškov, for instance, once wrote Kopitar: "Why are you wracking your brains—adopt our alphabet"; and to Dobrovský's suggestion that there are



western Slavs should stop trying to reform the Latin alphabet for their use, and adopt Cyrillic, which is perfectly suited to Slavic phonology: "... the Russian [sic] alphabet is fuller and more perfect than the Latin, because it includes signs for all the possible sounds which exist in all the Slavic dialects" (270).<sup>43</sup> Who knows what benefits could have accrued to Slavic literature if Gundulić had been published in Cyrillic (274)? In his spirited defense of Cyrillic, he even quotes an exchange he had with a "Polish philologue" regarding the Cyrillic letter ж (275): "'What kind of ugly figure is this?' [said the Pole]. 'Oh, please,' I retorted, 'look at what a fluffy farthingale she has on! What a waist she has—as if invented to express the word žena!'" Any further comment on my part would be superfluous.<sup>44</sup>

The putative perfection of the "Russian alphabet" as it is, and the alleged folly of orthographic reform in general, lead Venelin to disparage the accomplishment of the legendary Vuk Karadžić (270): "... the Serbs and Croats [sic] of the Greek confession accepted the Russian [sic] script; despite this, there appeared among them sages who didn't like (!) certain letters ... Vuk Stefanovič exerted himself [*umudrilsja*], and, in order to express the sound [ja] (я) put into the Russian alphabet five new signs (ѧа, ѧа, ја, ѧа, ѡа) ... Instead of Ъ he introduced е, је, ње, and in his dictionary writes in triplicate, for example, the word belyj: bel, bjel, bijel! Why did Vuk trouble himself without any need? Of

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Russians ready to adopt the Latin alphabet, Šiškov retorted: "Such people ought to be beheaded!" See Francev 39.

<sup>43</sup> Some western Slavists, too, acknowledged the superiority of the Cyrillic alphabet for capturing Slavic phonological nuances: for instance, Šafařík (Francev 44), although he still preferred the Latin-based Czech alphabet because it showed vowel length (Francev 46). For his part, Kopitar felt that the Cyrillic alphabet was more "internally logical linguistically," but that the Latin alphabet brought the Slavs closer to Europe (Pogačnik 167); as is well known, he urged Dobrovský to become the "new Cyril" by devising a common Slavic Latin-based alphabet that could combine "Western elegance with Cyrillic simplicity" (Pogačnik 168–69).

<sup>44</sup> For some reason, the Cyrillic letter ж seems to have offended sensibilities in some western Slavistic circles: Francev (46) reports that one I. Gerkeľ' (Herkeľ'?), who put forward his own proposal for a universal Slavic alphabet in 1826, wished to ban the letter: "russicum ж discrepat a litteris cultioribus Europais." I have not been able to ascertain what relationship, if any, this Gerkeľ' might have had with Venelin's "Polish philologue."



course, to achieve fame as a reformer. A sad fame!" Again, no further comment is necessary.

### Venelin's Place in Slovene Studies

*The Ancient and Present-Day Slovenes* seems to have made no mark on Slavic studies in Russia, save for introducing some readers to Slovene geography and literature (Čurkina 37). It is not hard to understand why. By the time it came out in the early 1840s, Russian Slavistics had come into its own; four chairs in the new discipline had been established, and the dynamic young men hired to fill them were embarking on field trips to acquaint themselves first-hand with the Habsburg and Ottoman Slavs. Two of them (P. I. Prejs of St. Petersburg and I. I. Sreznevskij of Xar'kov) were actually in Austria when Venelin's book came out; and a third, O. M. Bodjanskij of Moscow, had already become acquainted with Stanko Vraz, and started corresponding with him. (The fourth, V. I. Grigorovič of Kazan', started on his expedition in 1844, spending twenty days in Ljubljana, visiting many other Slovene towns, and meeting almost the same circle of luminaries as had Sreznevskij);<sup>45</sup> these people were actually meeting Kopitar, and other Slovene scholars and writers, and collecting ethnographic and linguistic data. They were starting to write down these first-hand observations, if only in letters home. Why would the Russian intellectual community care about Jurij Venelin's ruminations on the Slovenes under these circumstances?<sup>46</sup>

For, by 1841, the late Transcarpathian scholar's reputation would have preceded him. As indicated above, he was already regarded by a good portion of thinking Russia as a laughable eccentric; *Slovenes* no doubt would have been dismissed as "more of the same." The only

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<sup>45</sup> Čurkina devotes chapter 3 of her book to this memorable episode in Russian Slavic studies. (Of particular interest are the pages on Sreznevskij [41–50] and Grigorovič [52–54].) The reader is also referred to Francev (especially 104ff.) and Sreznevskij (especially the latter's correspondence from Inner Austria 198–213). Incidentally, Šumada (73) briefly mentions Venelin's acquaintance with Sreznevskij in the 1830s, a subject I intend to explore more fully in the future.

<sup>46</sup> Other important Russian intellectuals had visited the Slovene provinces by this time, as well, including the journalists M. P. Pogodin and N. I. Nadeždin; see Čurkina 27–28, 30, 31, 33–34, 39–41.



element of the later volume of *Historical-Critical Investigations* that seems to have made an impression is his attempt to “slavonicize” several European peoples, most notably the Franks.<sup>47</sup>

In this connection, I would contend that Venelin was a man in the wrong place, at the wrong time. Although his brand of Romantic Pan-Slavist scholarship was by no means non-existent in Russia, it did not occupy as prominent a place there as it did among the West and South Slavs.<sup>48</sup> Venelin was schooled in Hungary and the (relatively new) Austrian province of West Galicia, where he was able to imbibe Austrian Pan-Slavism almost directly from the source. The Russian culture he encountered when he arrived in 1823 was still steeped in the *Weltanschauung* of the French Enlightenment, shifting to a different strain of German Romanticism in the early 1830s. He strikes me as being out of step with his mainstream Russian contemporaries from the outset.<sup>49</sup>

Finally, as Čurkina points out (35), the Slovenes were *not* the Bulgarians: in spite of their small numbers and inferior position within the Austrian empire, they were culturally active, and quite self-consciously part of Europe. By this time, there were a number of significant Slovene cultural figures, the most notable being Kopitar and Prešeren. Although they were not widely known in Russia, educated Russians had been aware of the Slovenes since the end of the previous century, and several intellectuals had been in active contact with Kopitar since the 1820s. What Jurij Venelin had to say about the Slovenes in 1841 could in no way have created the same sensation as

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<sup>47</sup> Bajcura herself uses the term *oslavjanit*, (cf. 1971, 183), and quotes a number of critics and historians who focus on this issue: Belinskij (11–12; the great critic referred to this aspect of Venelin’s scholarship as “donkixotstvo,” and his creative etymologies as “philological torture”), Xomjakov (20–21), and a series of anonymous reviews (9–10, 21–22).

<sup>48</sup> Bajcura 1968 makes essentially the same point on 277.

<sup>49</sup> On the influence of eighteenth-century French thought on the Russian culture of the 1810s and 1820s, see, for example, Mirsky 20–24, 27–30; on the important later role of German Romanticism, see 73, 107, 121, and, especially, Berlin. (On the subject of the great poet Aleksandr Puškin, Venelin seems to have known him, too! See Bajcura 1968, 35–36, 92, 93.) It is significant to note here that even *Bulgarians* sold very poorly: Francev (222) quotes Pogodin as saying at one point: “This publication was not successful.”



had his monograph on the Bulgarians in 1829; and the Slovenes had no need for the kind of moral support someone like he could give them. As Čurkina laconically writes: "... they did not know about Venelin's work, and it received no response from Slovenia."<sup>50</sup>

It is interesting to see that, whether Venelin is known among Slovenists or not, his approach to Slovene history is by no means extinct. We see it, for instance, in recent attempts to "slovenicize" the Veneti.<sup>51</sup> Seeing what Jurij Venelin did 170 years ago gives us insight into the underpinnings of such recent scholarship. Nor should we forget that his ideas are not really all that far removed from those of his more illustrious contemporaries; after all, Venelin took his ideas about Glagolitic and Kajkavian from Kopitar, and the latter's controversial "Pannonian theory" about the origins of Old Church Slavonic differs from some of the younger scholar's ideas merely in degree of audacity.<sup>52</sup>

Jurij Venelin is a product of his times, times that were intellectually alive, and vitally important to the development of Slavic culture in general. He is freely acknowledged in his adopted homeland as one of Russia's pioneer Slavists. For these reasons, his life still deserves our attention, even if his scholarship does not.

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<sup>50</sup> Although Čurkina herself (64) mentions that Sreznevskij had apparently sent Franc Miklošič a copy of Venelin's work in 1858.

<sup>51</sup> See Savlji and Bor, *Unsere Vorfahren die Veneten*, and Bor, Savlji and Tomazic, *Veneti naši davni predniki*, both of which are reviewed in Lencek 1990A. Also see the curious *Adieu to Brittany*. Of course, I by no means wish to imply that such scholarly Romanticism is confined to Slovene studies.

<sup>52</sup> On Kopitar's Pannonian theory, which asserts, *inter alia*, that Old Church Slavonic originated in Pannonia on the basis of ancient Slovene dialects, see Pogačnik, 173–95; on the ferocious opposition this theory generated, and Kopitar's own irrationally ferocious defense of it, see Pogačnik 174, 192, et passim. Some details of the Pannonian theory might have inspired Venelin directly: see Pogačnik 177 (on the identity of the Slovaks and Slovenes), and 188 (on the Slavic character of ancient Noricum and Pannonia, and on ancient Slovenes accepting Christianity from the Romans). Kopitar's influence on Venelin is yet another subject I hope to explore in more depth.



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**POVZETEK****VENELIN IN SLOVENC**

*Leto 2002 zaznamuje 200. obletnico rojstva Jurija Venelina (1802-1839), zakarpatskega Ukrajinca, ki je kot prvi znanstvenik uporabil ime Slovenija v strokovnem delu. Njegova posmrtno objavljena monografija Stari in današnji Slovenci v političnem, etnografskem, zgodovinskem in verskem razmerju do Rusov (Moskva, 1841) je bila prva monografska obravnava Slovencev v ruščini. Venelin je emigriral iz Madžarske v Rusijo v zgodnjih 20. letih 19. stoletja. Najprej je v Moskvi študiral medicino, kasneje pa se posvetil študiju slovanske zgodovine in jezika. Posebno so ga zanimala manj znana slovanska "plemena", zlasti Bolgari in Slovenci. Čeprav je njegovo delo po svoje zanimivo, pa ga kvari pretirana nacionaistična pristranskost: med drugimi pomanjkljivostmi so njegovi poskusi "slavizacije" takih dobro znanih starodavnih ljudstev, kot so Huni, Goti in celo Franki. Venelinov romantični panslavizem ni bil tako na široko sprejet v Rusiji kot v Habsburški monarhiji in njegovo pisanje je bilo v njegovi novi domovini deležno hude kritike. Venelin tako ostaja osebnost, čigar delo zanimivo osvetljuje med slovanske odnose v prvi polovici 19. stoletja.*