

REHABILITATING KOPITAR A REVIEW ESSAY OF

Ingrid Merchiers. *Cultural Nationalism in the South Slav Habsburg Lands in the Early Nineteenth Century: The Scholarly Network of Jernej Kopitar (1780–1844)*. Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2007. 378 pp., €36.00 [= \$56.88] (paper). ISBN: 978-3-87690-985-1.

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1. Introduction

In 1836, Jacob Grimm wrote that Jernej Kopitar was the leading Slavist of the day; Leopold von Ranke wrote in 1844 that he was the best philologist in the entire Austrian Empire (Lencek 1981: 2). Kopitar wrote the first modern, scientific grammar of Slovene in 1808, and provided what was arguably the most important influence on the first generation of Pan-Slavic intellectuals in Austria (cf. Petrovsky 1906: 265–67; Lencek 1982b: 14). For these reasons alone, Kopitar has to be viewed as one of the forefathers of not only Slavic studies as an independent discipline, but also the entire Slavic Renaissance of the early 19th century, and perhaps even modern Slavic nationalism itself.

However, history has not been kind to the brilliant philologist from Repnje, Upper Carniola. Kopitar has not only often been ignored by modern scholarship (Hans Kohn, for example, granted him but a single, scant two-line reference in his famous work on Pan-Slavism¹), he has also been actively disparaged: “We have heard it said,” wrote Rado Lencek in 1982, “that Kopitar was . . . more of a publicist than a philologist, more of a politician than a scholar; a reactionary, . . . parochial, . . . selfish, temperamental, . . . intolerant and tyrannical, wicked, arrogant . . .” (1982b: 2, especially fn. 3, 20). Of those that have heard of Kopitar at all today, most probably know him as the conservative crank that tormented France Prešeren, and/or as the “Jesuitical” Russophobe that faithfully served Metternich.

¹ See Kohn (1960: 63); the reference is made solely in connection with Vuk Karadžić, who is himself mentioned only in passing, and yet it still manages to be misleading on at least two counts: Kohn refers to him as “Bartholomew” (the anglicized version of his first name, German *Bartholomäus*) and he refers to him as a great *Catholic* scholar, which implies more of a theological/denominational thrust to Kopitar’s work than is really the case. In light of all this, it is ironic that Kohn starts his history of Pan-Slavism with the “two young Lutheran Slovaks that may be regarded as the fathers of early Pan-Slavism”—Kopitar’s pupils, Kollár and Šafařík.

A slow reversal of this trend over the course of the 1960s and 1970s culminated in two new biographies by Jože Pogačnik (1977, 1978) and the major conference “To Honor Jernej Kopitar” at Northwestern University in 1980.² Then another international symposium on the scholar was held in Ljubljana in 1994, with the proceedings published two years later in the impressive *Kopitarjev zbornik* (Toporišič 1996). 1995 saw the appearance of yet another important collection of “new studies and materials” (Lukan 1995). In both of these anthologies, the older generation of “Kopitarists” that had collaborated on the 1980 conference were joined by a significant cadre of younger scholars—surely a most encouraging sign that the Slovene philologist is finally starting to receive the recognition he has always deserved.

Recent doctoral dissertations on Kopitar by promising young western European scholars perhaps provide even more grounds for optimism. *Cultural Nationalism in the South Slav Habsburg Lands in the Early Nineteenth Century* is one such work.³ Its author, Ingrid Merchiers, is from Belgium and received her doctorate from Ghent University in 2005. What is more, she produced this book in conjunction with the “Balkan Project,” an ambitious endeavor based at the University of Amsterdam devoted to the study of nationalism in southeastern Europe from a region-wide perspective (more on the Balkan Project below). Thus, Kopitar’s international profile has been, as it were, doubly enhanced. Indeed, in many ways, this work is a welcome addition to Kopitar scholarship: Merchiers approaches her subject from a fresh perspective, incorporates all the most recent scholarship into her work, and strives throughout to put Kopitar’s career into the broadest possible context. Alas, *Cultural Nationalism* is also a seriously flawed book that other scholars will find difficult to use. Although Merchiers’ approach presents its own problems and she herself commits a number of avoidable errors, the most egregious faults must be laid at the feet of her editors. The vices and virtues of this tome are discussed at some length in the following section. However, there is a third set of problems here that I feel have been endemic to the genre—approaches and assumptions that crop up again and again in Kopitar research, and that Merchiers herself has not been able to avoid. (Indeed, how could she?) I discuss these issues in part three of this article and offer tentative suggestions on how we can finally move beyond them.

² The proceedings of this conference were published by Lencek and Cooper (1982); see the preface (Cooper 1982), especially its list of important scholarship published on Kopitar between 1960 and 1980 (viii–ix).

³ Another is by Antonia Grobelnik Bernard (1992), a work I have not had the opportunity to consult.

2. Ingrid Merchiers on Jernej Kopitar

Cultural Nationalism is divided into six substantive chapters (chapter 7 is a brief conclusion), plus a few prefatory notes, a bibliography, and a four-page biographical timeline. Chapter 1 lays out Merchiers' complex theoretical framework; chapter 2 is a fairly conventional "life-and-works" sketch; chapters 3 and 4 cover various aspects of Kopitar's (pre-)nationalist ideology; and chapters 5 and 6 offer case studies of his academic networking.

Merchiers' theoretical approach is guided by the Balkan Project, which "attempts to gain a clear understanding of the role that intellectuals and philologists played in the development of . . . nationalism in the early nineteenth century" (1); it focuses in particular on "the life, work, correspondence and . . . international contacts of . . . key intellectuals from the region" (Balkan Project website).⁴ The intellectual pillars of this superstructure are provided by Miroslav Hroch, Dan Sperber, and Jürgen Habermas. Hroch, of course, is highly regarded as a theorist of small-nation nationalism, treating the phenomenon in terms of three phases of development (A–C); Sperber and Habermas are important contemporary philosophers. Merchiers and her colleagues orient their own work toward Hroch's "Phase A" (the earliest, purely cultural stage), asserting that this provides a valuable corrective to what they see as the "socio-political perspective of most histories of nationalism" (10). From Sperber's work, she takes the notion of the "epidemiology of ideas"—that is, the view that ideas spread much as diseases do. Finally, Habermas provides the concept of *Öffentlichkeit*, translated by Joep Leerssen and others as "the public sphere," and here understood as an "increased need for a public expression of opinion" in early nineteenth-century Europe precipitated by the rise of coffee houses and other public gathering places where ideas could be discussed (21).⁵

⁴ The Balkan project is one facet of a larger initiative at the University of Amsterdam; the "Philology and National Culture" website can be found at <http://cf.hum.uva.nl/natlearn/>; to access the Balkan Project site, click on "Projects" in the menu on the left side of the screen, then on "Balkan Project" on the next page that appears. It perhaps goes without saying that both of Merchiers' dissertation supervisors are affiliated with the Balkan Project: Raymond Detrez of Ghent University, and Joep Leerssen of the University of Amsterdam, who, in fact, is the initiator of the entire "Philology and National Culture" enterprise.

⁵ For Merchiers' discussion of these three thinkers, see pp. 15–22 et passim, as well as her references in the footnotes. A succinct summary of Hroch's Phases A–C (with approving commentary) can be found in Hobsbawm (1990: 11–12, 104). Sperber's and Habermas' contributions to contemporary philosophical discourse, of course, range far wider than their use in *Cultural Nationalism* would suggest; the reader is referred to Sperber's website

Any one of these theoretical perspectives would provide a superb vehicle for studying Kopitar: after all, he was a philologist that aggressively proselytized Slavic cultural nationalism through a variety of public forums in Vienna, and he “infected” intellectuals throughout Central Europe with his ideas. However, taking all of them together proves to be rather overwhelming—both for the reader not already conversant with them and for the author herself: Merchiers’ engagement with these weighty thinkers feels superficial at times (this is especially true with Sperber and Habermas), and Kopitar’s unique voice tends to get lost in the mix. It is a classic case of trying to do too much in too short a space—and one of the telltale signs of a converted dissertation.⁶

Chapter 2 is a 52-page biographical sketch that, although it breaks no new ground, contains much useful information for those readers unfamiliar with Kopitar’s life and work. An effort is made to incorporate new material into the basic story—the section on Kopitar’s personal library (38–41) is particularly interesting and makes good use of Walter Lukan’s recent work.⁷ However, it does not seem that Merchiers has made the best possible use of some of the more basic secondary literature—Petrovsky (1906), for instance, a massive opus on the Carniolan scholar’s early career, is conspicuously absent from her notes here; and she certainly could have tightened up her diffuse, repetitive organization: material on Žiga Zois and his circle, for example, is scattered throughout the chapter instead of being presented concisely in a separate section.⁸ There are errors of fact: for instance, it was not Kopitar that founded the Slovene chair at Graz in 1812 (27). At times, the author indulges in controversy where, in fact, there is

(<http://www.dan.sperber.com/>) and to the entry for Habermas at the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy site (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/habermas/>). Both sites contain valuable introductory material, thorough bibliographies, and helpful links.

⁶ One must also dispute the Balkan Project’s claim that the cultural aspects of nineteenth-century nationalism have been largely viewed as “an incidental side influence in larger political developments” (11): in my experience, this is simply not true. Kohn (1960), to take but one example, treats cultural issues in depth throughout, even into the post-WWII era. Furthermore, *Imagined Communities*, one of the works specifically cited in the discussion on page 11, defines both nation and nationalism as “*cultural* artifacts of a particular kind” (Anderson 1983: 13, my emphasis), and goes on to treat them as such. If the Balkan Project wishes to announce its interest in the cultural side of nationalism as opposed to the political, that is fine—but they should not claim a particular uniqueness in doing so!

⁷ See Lukan (1995b), as well as the illustrated guide he produced for the 2000 exhibit of Kopitar’s library at the National University Library in Ljubljana (Lukan 2000).

⁸ Furthermore, almost every time Zois comes up in *Cultural Nationalism* he is irritatingly referred to as “Kopitar’s Maecenas”!

none: the rumor that it was really Zois that wrote Kopitar's grammar most certainly says nothing whatsoever about "the intense collaboration between" the two men (33)—it came from French speculation about who the author might be because Kopitar had signed it with only his initials (cf. Pogačnik 1977: 46; Petrovsky 1906: 198–99). Moreover, do we really need two full pages (55–57) to ponder why Kopitar wrote letters in German instead of his native Slovene? What else would an Austrian Slav intellectual do in the first half of the nineteenth century if he wished to reach out to non-Slovene intellectuals?

Chapters 3 through 6 represent the core of *Cultural Nationalism*. Chapters 3 and 4 cover two aspects of Kopitar's nationalist (pre-nationalist?) ideology—Slovene cultural nationalism and Austro-Slavism, respectively—and chapters 5 and 6 discuss different instances of academic networking on behalf of students (for Vuk Karadžić and Franc Miklošič, respectively). All four of these chapters contain valuable material not often gathered together in one place (not in English, at least) as well as particularly solid individual sections: pages 84–95, for instance, in chapter 3, is a very serviceable general introduction to Slovenia's place in Napoleon's ill-starred Illyrian Provinces. Overall, at their best, these four chapters provide an intriguing overview of Kopitar's career, and point to a variety of possibilities for future research.

However, readers will not find this long, important part of *Cultural Nationalism* very user-friendly. First, there is a frustrating sense of constant repetition—phrases like "as discussed above" occur much too frequently, and personages already discussed at length will be mentioned as if for the first time, with full name and dates; some sections feel like an endless introduction, as basic facts are repeated over and over with no details forthcoming (see especially the first several pages of chapter 5, concerning Vuk). Second, Merchiers constantly interrupts her discussion of Kopitar's work with long excurses on a variety of subjects, not all of which are entirely relevant to the subject at hand; as a result, the reader often loses any sense of narrative flow. Of course, in order to understand Kopitar's thought, one needs to know something about, say, Johann Gottfried von Herder and August Schözer (chapter 3), and no discussion of his correspondence would make sense without a digression on Josef Dobrovský (chapter 4). However, often Merchiers simply drifts too far afield, and we lose sight of Kopitar's networks: see, for instance, the section in chapter 5 on the "Serbian Standardization process of 1848–1850" (i.e., several years after Kopitar's death) and much of Chapter 6, which covers Miklošič's later career.

I suspect that both of these problems are genre-related (extensive digressions are a standard feature of many doctoral dissertations, as is frequent repetition), but such generic problems are exacerbated by others for which the author must bear more personal responsibility. For example,

Cultural Nationalism is plagued throughout by problems of chronology. Merchiers regularly discusses events in reverse order: for example, she brings up the Slovene Society of Graz only *after* discussing the creation of the Slovene chair at the local seminary that can be seen as its crowning achievement (see especially 121–23); and this episode from 1810–12 *follows* a long section on the Slovene “ABC War” of the 1830s (112–18)! Elsewhere, passages are written with a careless ahistoricism, so that the reader may be confused about who lived when and who influenced whom: cf. 103, where Schlözer, Dobrovský, and Kopitar are invoked together as the first modern historians “to consider the Slavs as a unity,” even though Schlözer influenced Dobrovský’s thinking in this regard, and Kopitar was influenced by both of them. Finally, as mentioned above, too much attention is paid to events that either precede or follow Kopitar’s professional life; these sections should have been eliminated, or else reworked to make them more directly relevant.

The book is marred by even more serious problems. I have already noted factual errors in the biographical section; others just as striking are scattered throughout the text (e.g., 215: the Croatian priest Juraj Križanić was exiled to *Siberia* in 1661, not *Serbia*; and on 135: Russian troops quelled unrest after 1848 in Hungary, not Prague). Ironically, given all the extensive digressions, Merchiers neglects to adequately explain several concepts that are actually crucial to her analysis. Josephinism (Germ. *Josephinismus*)—the thinking connected with the extensive reforms of the Austrian rulers Maria Theresa and her son Joseph II in the second half of the 18th century—informed the views of all important Austrian Slavs of the period, yet the closest we come to a definition is a single inadequate line buried in the middle of a long paragraph on 143.⁹ Similarly, *Illyrian* was a loaded term in the early nineteenth century: it could refer to the Slovenes, to the Croats, or to all speakers of štokavian (Napoleon used the term in a strictly geographical sense in his Illyrian Provinces); what is more, these contemporary usages had nothing to do with the original inhabitants of the Roman province of Illyricum—a non-Slavic Indo-European people whose present-day descendents are most likely the Albanians. None of this rich complexity is captured by Merchiers’ cavalier use of the term, especially in chapter 4.

By far the most serious deficiency of this type is the author’s treatment of Pan-Slavism and Austro-Slavism in Chapter 4. Hans Kohn clearly defines the former as “a movement . . . [that] proclaimed the affinity of various peoples . . . solely on the strength of an affinity of language” (1960: ix), and then demonstrates how this basic idea became transformed

⁹ In contrast, see the excellent description of Josephinism in Braunbehrens (1989: 215–25), the opening paragraph of which would have served Merchiers quite nicely.

within each individual Slavic “tribe.” In this scheme, “Austro-Slavism” can be seen as one of the variants of Pan-Slavism: the idea that this single Slavic nation could best flourish within a liberalized/federalized Austria (again, different variations on this theme are then discussed on subsequent pages).¹⁰ In *Cultural Nationalism*, the title of chapter 4 is “Jernej Kopitar and his Austro-Slav Ideology” but Merchiers starts out defining the concept essentially in terms of the 1848 Prague Pan-Slav Congress and the ideology of František Palacký (132, 135–36, et passim.). This then forces her to characterize Kopitar’s views as “the pre-Austro-Slav idea” (133), but she does not consistently follow through on the distinction, and we are left in confusion. At least part of the problem could be her reliance on Hroch (see especially 131–32)—indeed, she herself suggests that his framework is not flexible enough to handle a phenomenon this complex. In any event, there is scant mention of all the many other Austrian Slavic intellectuals that proclaimed some form of Austro-Slavism (Kohn 1960 asserts that most Czechs [25], Croats [62], and Slovenes [63] adhered to the doctrine); no effort to connect it to Josephinism; and indeed no hint of how we might have gotten from Kopitar’s “point A” in the 1810s to Palacký’s “point B” in 1848.¹¹ As for Pan-Slavism, Merchiers’ treatment is particularly garbled (214–18): nowhere does she offer a clear, concise definition, and her chronology is, again, skewed: if, as she says, Pan-Slavism “can be considered . . . an umbrella movement under which smaller-scale movements . . . can be categorized” (214), she would do better to discuss it first, and then deal with these “smaller-scale” movements such as Austro-Slavism and Illyrism later. Overall, the sections on these early nationalist or quasi-nationalist movements are the weakest in the book. Ironically, Merchiers thus missed a golden opportunity to discuss Kopitar’s work in a variety of meaningful contexts.

Now, as serious as all these problems are, I would say that most of them could have been caught by a conscientious editor. This brings us to the biggest problem with *Cultural Nationalism*: the editing is not just poor, it is virtually non-existent. Page after page, one encounters misspellings, typos, and faulty punctuation. Foreign terms appear randomly in different English translations, and Merchiers’ own translations from various Slavic languages have not been checked for accuracy; no one seems to have proofread the manuscript. All parts of the scholarly apparatus are damaged by such

¹⁰ The clearest formulation of the basic Austro-Slav idea in Kohn (1960) comes from the Czech journalist Karel Havlíček on page 25.

¹¹ We *do* get a misleading equation of “Austro-Slavism” with “anti-Russianism,” with all the resultant baggage hung on Kopitar (132–33). See below for a discussion of the fraught question of Kopitar’s attitude toward Russia. Kohn, for his part, makes it clear that several prominent “Austro-Slavs” harbored concerns about Russian ambitions in Central Europe; see, e.g., Kohn (1960) on Havlíček (24–25) and on Palacký (75–81).

carelessness: on 71, there is a reference to a section 2.2.2.1 that does not exist; several of the footnotes could have been eliminated entirely, and others should have been worked into the body of the text; and note 235 on page 198 sends the reader through the looking glass by quoting the very text in which it is embedded on the page—and in a different format, no less. And poor Kohn! His *Pan-Slavism* is listed differently in three citations: in note 128 on page 112 the place of publication is “Indiana, 1953” (this is the first edition, published by the University of Notre Dame Press), in note 17 on page 135 the second edition is inexplicably cited instead (“New York, 1960”), and in the bibliography the listing is “Paris (!), 1953”—perhaps a misunderstanding prompted by the Gallic name of the famous Catholic university in South Bend, Indiana? Such gaffs might be forgivable for a European graduate student struggling to meet a deadline; they are decidedly *not* excusable for an important scholarly publishing house.

Far worse, however, is the fact that somebody encouraged, or at least allowed, Merchiers to write her first book in English when her abilities in that language are simply not adequate to the task. She herself declares that to enable “transnational research [on nationalism] . . . [scholarly] findings require publication in the modern *lingua franca*, which is English” (8). It is not clear whether this position is her professors’, the publisher’s, or her own; in any case, it is fair enough. However, scholarly discourse is by no means enhanced when published research becomes simply incomprehensible in places. Again, one wonders what the editors were thinking. Verlag Otto Sagner has done this young scholar a grave disservice by allowing her book to appear in so shoddy a form.

3. Taking Kopitar to the Next Stage: An Excursus

For all these serious shortcomings, *Cultural Nationalism* has to be viewed as an important step forward in the belated rehabilitation of Jernej Kopitar: as already mentioned, the very fact that a promising young Western scholar chose to write her dissertation on him is significant in and of itself, but her general approach—striving to fix Kopitar into a myriad of general cultural matrices—is also noteworthy. The single greatest virtue of this work is that it suggests so many different, promising avenues for future research. Nonetheless, Merchiers has also stumbled against certain sticking points that have persisted for some time in Kopitar studies and need to be overcome before we can return to him the prestige that is his due. These three points, which I will deal with in turn below, all have to do with humanizing the irascible scholar and situating him properly in his milieu. The first is connected with his position in the intellectual continuum between the Enlightenment and Romanticism, the second concerns his relationship toward Russia and her scholars, and the third is the need for a more rounded biography.

3.1. “A Pivot . . . between Enlightenment and Romanticism”

Early on in her study, Merchiers describes Kopitar standing “as a pivot [in] the transition between old-fashioned and innovative scholarship, between Enlightenment and Romanticism” (9). Anyone that has studied Kopitar’s thought would immediately agree with this statement and, indeed, this position is encountered throughout the scholarly literature. Pogačnik uses the term “pre-Romantic” to characterize him, and repeatedly describes him as a man straddling two epochs: Kopitar “. . . lives in the transition from the rationalist to the romantic structural design” (1977: 50), and his ideas combine “enlightenment philosophy . . . and the romantic sense for individuality” (1977: 166). Lencek takes the same basic stance in his own work: “By nature and inclination a rationalist, by disposition and temper a Romantic . . .” (1982b: 19).¹²

However, investigators have never really followed through on this observation, and indeed seem more comfortable putting Kopitar firmly into either the Enlightenment or the Romantic camp: Lencek, for example, tends to stress more the revolutionary (i.e., Romantic) aspect of Kopitar’s work, whereas Herry (1983) emphasizes throughout his “eighteenth-century” nature in an effort to heighten the contrast between him and the Ljubljana Romantics. Although Pogačnik more consistently stresses the duality of Kopitar’s thought, he too seems more comfortable orienting him toward the eighteenth century: see, for instance, his discussion of Kopitar’s influences (1977: 61–66)—all of them good “Men of the Enlightenment”¹³—and his telling use of the term “geometric” at one point to describe his intellect (1977: 91). For her part, Merchiers seems more inclined to view Kopitar as a Romantic (cf. 48, 95–97), although the question is, in the end, peripheral to her analysis.

Or is it? How Kopitar fits in vis-à-vis the Enlightenment and Romanticism clearly has some bearing on any analysis of him within Hroch’s framework: the argument could even be made that he was the first to take the step from the 18th-century universalist scholarly mission into

¹² Interestingly, the Slovene translation of this article inserts the word *postklasicistični* into Lencek’s discussion of Kopitar’s attitude toward language; see Lencek (1982a: 59), which corresponds to the opening of the last paragraph on 10 in the original.

¹³ However, let us remind ourselves that there is also disagreement about where to fit some of these people into the historical continuum: for instance, Barzun includes Herder among the early Romantics (1961: 92, 212 [note]), Berlin views him one of the “true fathers of romanticism” (1999: 57–67), and Kohn considers him an 18th-century thinker to whom he juxtaposes the Romantic Pan-Slavists (1960: ix, 10); there are similar debates about the true provenance of Goethe and Rousseau as well.

Hroch's "Phase A" of cultural nationalism. The question has interesting implications for his networking, and for the "epidemiology" of his ideas as well: How is his eagerness to exploit *Öffentlichkeit* connected with his position in European intellectual history? How difficult was it for him to connect with people more firmly planted in one school or the other? What does it mean for his ability—or inability—to spread his ideas?

Thus the question arises: what would Kopitar studies look like if we followed through on the observation that he is a man trapped, as it were, between two very different *Weltanschauungen*? If nothing else, we might certainly get a better idea of who he was: how truly revolutionary his work is, and even to what extent his notorious difficulty of character might, in fact, be due to his being out of sync with his contemporaries. For one does detect in his correspondence and all the anecdotes that he was perhaps too "romantic" for the older generation, and too old-fashioned for the younger—his frustration trying to convince Dobrovský to support some of his schemes (Slavic alphabet reform, for instance), his titanic impatience with Izmail I. Sreznevskij, his clashes with the Prague and Ljubljana Romantics—all of this might have been exacerbated by *two* "generation gaps." Even more importantly, however, investigating this aspect of Kopitar's thought more thoroughly would be a boon to our understanding of European intellectual history—after all, Romanticism marks "the greatest single shift in the consciousness of the West that has occurred" (Berlin 1999: 1), and this was a man working at the heart of this sea change.

3.2. "Kopitar's Hatred of Orthodox Russia"

At the beginning of chapter 4, Merchiers touches upon one of the biggest ongoing controversies connected with Jernej Kopitar: Was he actively prejudiced against Russia and its scholars? She herself acknowledges that this dispute does not fall within the purview of her book, and indeed she hardly discusses it, although she does cite some useful sources by Churkina and Pogačnik.¹⁴ For the most part, she approaches this loaded topic with caution. Following Pogačnik's lead, she frequently makes the point that any negative feelings Kopitar might have had for Russia were political, rather than personal (cf., *inter alia*, 143, 144, 160, 163, 186) and she cites the fact that there were people in the Austrian government that suspected him of being a Russian agent because of his work with Orthodox Slavs (144).

¹⁴ See 132–33, including note 9. In the interest of full disclosure, one of the sources Merchiers cites in this footnote is the working draft of my own study of this subject, which I sent her by e-mail in spring 2005. Although oblique references to my work crop up from time to time in *Cultural Nationalism*, Merchiers neither adopts nor polemicizes with my conclusions. Again, the subject is tangential to her own study.

However, all too often the Belgian scholar employs inflammatory language connected with only one side of the controversy. Thus we read of Kopitar's "strong aversion" to the Russians (105, 122), of his "hatred of Orthodox Russia" (194), and that his brand of Austro-Slavism equals anti-Russianism (48, 133, 144, 160). In the end, she can only express bafflement that Kopitar would support Vuk in his advances toward the Russians: "Taking into account Kopitar's hatred toward Russia, it is almost unbelievable that [he] was willing to help Vuk acquire a Russian passport (267; cf. also 265, 268). At times like this, one feels that the young scholar does not fully realize that strong words like "hatred" in this context come out of a particular point of view that has been vigorously challenged by others.

Lencek cites Vatroslav Jagić's "well-known aversion to the scholar" as the ultimate source for many "cliches about Kopitar's 'anti-Russian' dispositions" (Lencek 1988: 91.). Indeed, the largely negative portrayal of Kopitar in Churkina (1986, primarily Chapters 2 and 3) owes much to the views of Jagić.¹⁵ Churkina frequently speaks of the Slovene's "prejudice [*predvzjatost*]" toward all things Russian" (e.g., Churkina 1986: 32) and, following Jagić, concludes that "the Austrophile Kopitar envied Russia's successes in scholarship and politics" (1986: 19). The account is spiced throughout with examples of Kopitar's verbal mauling of various Russian scholars.¹⁶

However, Churkina's study itself offers several instances of cordiality and mutual respect in the philologist's dealings with Russians that belie any charge of "prejudice."¹⁷ Clearly, other issues are at play and need to be clarified in this context. For instance, the historian Mikhail Petrovich Pogodin, who visited Kopitar twice in the 1830s, suggests that the frequent harshness of his judgments stems "from his [brusque] character and his convictions, not from bad intentions [*iz umyslov*]" (quoted in Churkina 1986: 33–34). We can also add that Kopitar had lofty professional standards and did not suffer fools gladly. Thus much of the verbal aggression quoted in Churkina (1986) and elsewhere merely reflects impatience with what he saw as the inexperience of Russian philologists: to him, "the Russians are still children in scientific criticism" (Jagić 1885: 509, cf. also 539) and he called for the founding of an Old Church Slavic chair in Vienna, to keep

¹⁵ Her treatment in Churkina (1995), which is essentially a Slovene-language revision of Churkina (1986), is more balanced; see also Miller (1996).

¹⁶ Anecdotes of this source have become a staple of the literature: "ambitious ignoramus," "regular liar," and "barbarian" are but three of the colorful epithets to be found in Kopitar's correspondence.

¹⁷ For instance, with Nikolai I. Nadezhdin (Churkina 1986: 40–41), Aleksander Kh. Vostokov (*pace* Jagić 1885: 20, 24, 29, 30), and Petr I. Preis, who is discussed below.

study of this important language away from “the *depraved* hands of the Russians.”¹⁸ Yet when Russian philology came of age in the person of Alexander Kh. Vostokov, Kopitar did not hesitate to lavish praise: “With joyful enthusiasm we . . . receive the long-wished-for dawn of genuine Slavic philology on the eastern horizon of the Slavic land, and cordially salute . . . Vostokov for [his] results . . .”¹⁹ Pogačnik reminds us that “the researcher must not give into [Kopitar’s] ironic and aggressive exterior” (Pogačnik 1977: 9), a sentiment echoed throughout Lencek and Cooper (1982), and nowhere is this more true than in studying his feelings about Russian scholars.

Pogačnik states toward the end of his 1977 biography that it is “Czech and Russian Slavists [that] have made Kopitar unpopular in Slavic studies” (209). Indeed, charges of Kopitar’s “hatred” and “prejudice” are to a certain extent connected with the deep aversion felt toward him by the Romantic Jungmann circle in Prague, who could not forgive him for publicly questioning the authenticity of the Old Czech manuscripts “discovered” by Václav Hanka starting in the 1810s.²⁰ (Hanka, in particular, loathed the philologist, calling him the “Slavic Mephistopheles” and “the enemy of all Slavdom,”²¹ among other things). When Russian visitors to Austria stopped in Prague, this group would actively work to turn them against Kopitar before they moved on to Vienna. Petr Ivanovich Preis is an interesting case in point. Vostokov’s prize pupil, Preis came to Austria eager to work with Kopitar, but felt he would now have to abandon his study plan after meeting with the Prague activists: “I can see pretty clearly that, on the eve of my long-anticipated meeting with Kopitar, I have to bury him in my heart. Lo, this is bitter [*se gor’ko!*]” (Churkina 1986: 39). Yet, when he finally met the man himself, all these negative impressions

¹⁸ Kopitar ([1810] 1982), from the facsimile in Lencek and Cooper (1982: 221). At Dobrovský’s insistence, this comment was removed from the revised version of this article (Kopitar [1813] 1982); cf. Jagić (1885: xvi, 157).

¹⁹ From his review of Dobrovský’s “*Institutiones linguae Slavicae dialecti veteris*,” published in *Wiener Jahrbücher für Literatur* (January–March 1822); quoted in Churkina (1986: 20).

²⁰ See Petrovsky (1906: vi), Pogačnik (1977: 36, 78–79), and especially Fryščák (1982: 49–52), who points out that even Dobrovský, the spiritual father of all the younger Czech “patriots,” felt their wrath for the same reason; they even sank to the level of deriding the old man as an unpatriotic “Slavicizing German” (Fryščák 1982: 50). On Hanka’s notorious forgeries, see Jakobson (1987).

²¹ In a letter to the Russian Minister of Education Sergey S. Uvarov written after Kopitar’s death, reprinted in Francev (1905: 1, 142); see also Hanka’s letter to Vostokov of 14 March 1845, which repeats the same insults verbatim (Francev 1905: 178–79). Incidentally, the title of Chapter 2 in Churkina (1986) is “The Slavic Mephistopheles and the First Efforts of Russian Slavic Studies;” this invective is eliminated in Churkina (1995).

vanished—two months later, he was able to write a friend about how “very pleasant it is for me” in Kopitar’s company (Churkina 1986: 39). Clearly, the complicated interrelations among the Slavs in Austria have to be fully elucidated in order to understand the exact nature of Kopitar’s dealings with Russians.

There are several other facets to this question that should be studied more thoroughly, including:

International relations in the early nineteenth century. Despite dynastic ties and a host of common interests, relations between Austria and Russia were often strained, especially between the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1814 and Tsar Alexander’s death in 1825.²² How would all of this have affected Kopitar’s views and his personal interactions?

Serfdom. Kopitar had been born a peasant, was proud of his background, and fondly remembered his childhood in the fields (Pogačnik 1977: 15; Kopitar [1839] 1857: 2). What is more, he specifically based his theories of language and literature on the primacy of peasant speech.²³ Therefore, it is not surprising that he had strong feelings about the Russian institution of serfdom, by which millions of fellow Slavic peasants were enslaved (see, e.g., Petrovsky 1906: 126). Did Kopitar ever let his feelings about serfdom get in the way of his personal dealings with individual Russians? Churkina specifically rejects the idea (1986: 19, following Petrovsky 1906: 744), but this question should be explored more thoroughly.

Kopitar’s Thought vs. Russian Thought. Pogačnik has shown that the sources of Kopitar’s thought come directly out of the late Central European Enlightenment; similarly, his early Romantic connections (direct and indirect) come from the German sources of the movement—Goethe and Herder, Grimm and Schlegel. To a large extent, the Slovene is himself an active player in this culture, and personally in contact with many of these figures.²⁴ The history of the transition from Enlightenment to Romanticism in Russia is much less straightforward and direct: relative to Central Europe, both movements begin late, and have been viewed as “foreign imports” grafted onto a much different base culture. What is more, despite indubitable German connections in both science and art, the Russian Enlightenment was aggressively French, at least after the ascension of

²² On various aspects of Russophobic public opinion in Europe around the time of the Vienna Congress, see Nicolson ([1946] 1961: 70–78, 119–21, et passim) as well as Kohn (1960: 102–21), covering a broader time period in the 19th century.

²³ For a detailed discussion of Kopitar’s linguistic views, see Pogačnik (1977: 130–71); on his views on the function of literature, see Lencek (1984: 298–99).

²⁴ On Kopitar’s influences, see especially the second chapters in both works by Pogačnik (1977, 1978).

Catherine II in 1762.²⁵ How much would these historical differences have affected communication between Kopitar and Russian intellectuals? Surely, core views of language in Russia in the first decades of the 19th century were very different from Kopitar's: to the latter, the grammarian was "neither a lawgiver nor a reformer,"²⁶ whereas Russian linguists of all stripes sought to prescribe some kind of "arranged, selected language;"²⁷ Kopitar based his theories of language and literature on the primacy of peasant speech, whereas for Russian theorists "the expressions of the common people must not serve as a rule for writers,"²⁸ to take but two examples. How did Kopitar and his Russian visitors negotiate such fundamental differences in linguistic philosophy? Could all this be one of the sources of Kopitar's impatience with Russian scholarship?

3.3. Jernej Kopitar's "External Biography"

Ingrid Merchiers did not set out to write a full-fledged biography of Jernej Kopitar, yet it is striking how similar the general structure of *Cultural Nationalism* is to Pogačnik (1977, 1978): just as she prefaces the intellectual heart of her work with a relatively brief biographical sketch, so too does Pogačnik isolate the "life" (the chapters "Osebnost" in Pogačnik 1977, and "Persönlichkeit" in Pogačnik 1978) from the "work" (the several subsequent chapters in both books devoted to various aspects of Kopitar's oeuvre). Pogačnik makes a revelatory statement in both books that captures the essence of his approach: "After 1810, Kopitar's *external biography* (*äußere Lebensgeschichte*) did not change very much" (Pogačnik 1978: 36, my emphasis; cf. also Pogačnik 1977: 35). Now, what he means to say here is obvious: Kopitar stayed put, and he did not change jobs;²⁹ however, it also suggests a kind of disconnect between the man's life and his thought, an impression that is reinforced by the overall structure of the books. This is reiterated—albeit unconsciously—in *Cultural Nationalism*.

²⁵ According to Billington (1966: 213), the Russian Enlightenment "began late" and "proceeded fitfully;" Barzun (1961: 97–98) contends that Romanticism in Russia was "a trifle lagging" behind France, where its "incubating time" was between 1820 and 1830. On the French nature of the late Enlightenment in Russia, see Billington (1966: 213–68).

²⁶ From the introduction to Vuk's Serbian dictionary of 1818; quoted in Lencek (1982b: 11).

²⁷ Pushkin, in reference to the views of Karamzin, quoted in Uspenskij (1984: 278); on Russian linguistic prescriptivism, also see Uspenskij (1984: 237, 269, 273, et passim).

²⁸ According to the Karamzinian Petr I. Makarov, quoted in Uspenskij (1984: 248).

²⁹ The rest of the paragraph in both books lists his promotions at the Imperial Library, and briefly discusses his foreign travel in the 1810s.

I do not mean to suggest that there is anything wrong with this approach: after all, the most important parts of thinkers' lives are their ideas, and Pogačnik need not defend himself for choosing to focus his works the way he has. Subsequent researchers, too, including Merchiers, are well within their rights when they concentrate on the importance of Kopitar's thought, especially in order to restore him to his proper place in European cultural history. However, for all of that, I would contend that something has been lost here, as well, a sense of Jernej Kopitar as a real person living in a particular place at a particular time. True, scores of scholars, with Merchiers the latest among them, dutifully note Kopitar's influences, mention his working conditions at the library, include a *de rigueur* paragraph or two on his favorite inn *Zum weißen Wolf*, and so on, but we still really have little sense of what it was like for *this* Carniolan peasant to be living in Vienna and engaging with Central Europe's intellectual elite at *this* time.

The list of questions that arise when one reads the available literature is long: What was Ljubljana like when Kopitar first arrived in 1790? How would it have welcomed a young peasant from an Upper Carniolan village? How did glittering Vienna strike him as a man of 29? How do we reconcile the conventional image we have of Habsburg Vienna—full of music, salons, and intrigue—with Kopitar's proclamation of the city as *the* Slavic cultural center? How do *Zum weißen Wolf* and the various publications Kopitar wrote for fit into the intricate fabric of Viennese life? And what was Kopitar doing during the Congress of Vienna?³⁰ One could go on. Yes, these subjects are raised from time to time, but it would be satisfying to at last have all of them treated together in one work.

It would, in fact, be fascinating to have something along the lines of Volkmar Braubehrens' marvelous *Mozart in Vienna*,³¹ which combines biographical material, musicology, and cultural history to bring its celebrated subject to life. The preface offers the following rationale for this approach, which is as applicable to the eccentric Slovene philologist as it is to the dynamic composer from Salzburg:

To understand the outward circumstances of an individual's life requires a knowledge of his everyday environment as well as the historical processes that condition it. To put it plainly, what was happening outside of Mozart's house while he was

³⁰ For the first crucial months of the Congress, which opened in October, 1814, Kopitar was on a diplomatic assignment to Paris to retrieve library materials looted by the French army. I have seen nothing to suggest that there is any significance to this overlap, although the possibility should be explored.

³¹ Originally published by R. Piper in 1986; I refer to the 1989 English translation by Timothy Bell, published by Grove Weidenfeld.

composing inside? What did Mozart hear discussed in the taverns, the salons, or at lodge meetings? To write a biography one must also write cultural history . . . (Braubehrens 1989: 3–4)

First and foremost, a new biography would place Kopitar more firmly within the matrix of Central European cultural life at this volatile point in history, would declare once and for all that he is not just a Slavic philologist reaching out to other Slavs and leaving a legacy for future Slavic specialists, but also a citizen of the mighty Habsburg Empire, a resident of one of Europe's great cities, and heir to a rich intellectual tradition. No less important, it would more fully humanize this man, and thus hopefully deflate the defamatory myths that still surround him.

Merchiers herself seems to sense this: she inserts various "human interest" items in her account. However, in the context of her book, with its ambitious theoretical goals, these efforts feel forced, awkward—a work on Kopitar's pre-nationalist ideology really need not speculate on his sex life (or lack thereof; see 49, 58–59). Still, I believe this only further points up the need for a biography that fully integrates the "external" and the "internal." Perhaps, now that so much work has been done to reestablish the significance of Kopitar's thought, the time is ripe for just such an endeavor. Maybe we ought to simply "declare victory" and move on to the next stage in Kopitar studies.

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