

PRINT CULTURE IN CROATIA THE CANON AND THE BORDERLANDS

As this issue goes to press, let us rethink how it came about and what it means as a thematic collection in a broader context of theorizing the borderlands and historiography of the book trade. The concept of the borderlands is not new to Croatian historiography. An early articulation of this idea as applied to art of the periphery is found in the work of Ljubo Karaman, who builds on Silvio Ferri's study of provincial art of the Roman Empire.¹ Zdravko Blažeković applies the notion of periphery to his analysis of Croatian musical culture.² The concept of periphery allows for an interpretation of unique cultural forms found in provincial contexts. In these contexts, modest socio-economic means result in creativity dependent upon the imitation of dominant forms of the center and upon local innovation. Periphery implies a contradiction – being at the same time an ersatz culture, and producing works of high artistic originality. Intensification of culture at the boundaries has also been noted as belonging to the culture of peripheral systems.

Borderlands and periphery are significantly distinct in that the concept of periphery is relational while that of borderlands can be seen as affirmative and non-relational. Periphery implies a distance from the center (the core), thus carrying negative connotations of minor and marginal. The relational character of coreness and peripherality is one of the basic tenets of world-system analysis.³ Recently, a notion of semiperiphery has also become influential in positively defining and reshaping discourses of marginal regions of Europe. In her insightful analysis of the European periphery, Anna Klobucka⁴ proposes to consider a multiplicity of cultural communities in understanding world historical development. Accordingly, “multiplicity of interrelated cultural communities – language communities, religious communities, ethnic communities, races, status groups, class communities, and so forth,” can provide a more neutral understanding of cultural systems and national systems as “complex cultural artifacts, deployable in multiple and often contradictory ways in a great variety of social contexts, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political cultural manifestations”.⁵

¹ Karaman, Ljubo. *O djelovanju domaće sredine u umjetnosti hrvatskih krajeva*. Zagreb : Društvo historičara umjetnosti, 1963. P. 27.

² Blažeković, Zdravko. *Glazba osjenjena politikom*. Zagreb : Matica hrvatska, 2002. Pp. 10-13.

³ Wallerstein, Immanuel. *World-systems analysis : an introduction*. Durham : Duke University Press, 2004.; Wallerstein, Immanuel. *The modern world-system : vol. 1*. New York : Academic Press, 1974.

⁴ Klobucka, Anna. *Theorizing the European periphery*. // *Symploke* 5, 1/2(1997), 119-135.

⁵ Klobucka, Anna. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122.

Applied to national book trades, an acknowledgment of overlapping cultural systems within a national ethos produces connections outward, toward a (multi-cultural) global literature, corresponding to Goethe's notion of *Weltliteratur* (1827), in which literatures "explicitly conceive their existence and their unfolding in the framework of an incessantly intensified interaction".⁶ Such studies point to overlaps and borderline identities, in which it is then possible to re-theorize "minor and major in accounting for the respective national cultures' relationship to Europe".⁷ The influential analysis of "minor literature" proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari⁸ suggests aspirations of cultural discourses to relate itself to an outside. *Devenir-majeur* is a way that cultural minor literatures position themselves to the outside world, "while seeking expression for the zones of the minor within itself: its language, regional divisions, class and gender differences".⁹ However, the uniqueness of semiperiphery emerges through *devenir-mineur* (embracing the minor and with this, otherness) – as a way for the re-articulating centrality and marginality and establishing the significance of the peripheral in the European context.

The articles collected in this volume reflect how the notion of borderlands provides an analytical framework for the study of cultural expressions of Croatian book culture in terms of dualities and multidimensionality – of language, political frameworks, and cultures. Several contributors explore the borderlands perspective explicitly (Milan Pelc, Jelena Lakuš). Others do so implicitly by focusing upon niche publishing or by discussing the historical continuity of the Croatian book trade as a history that integrates discontinuities (such as multilingual production) within the framework of Croatian national culture. The phenomenon of the German-language press in Pula (Bruno Dobrić) and the ubiquitous presence of Italian-language publishing (Nadia Bužleta, and others) can be seen as constitutive rather than marginal aspects of the Croatian national book trade.

In the call for papers for this thematic collection, in comparison to conventional historiographies a programmatic framework for the study of the borderlands was suggested as a preferred approach for discussing dichotomies and discontinuities of the Croatian book trade. The call for papers attracted explorations of the borderlands theme through a focus on regional publishing (especially addressing North-South dichotomy) and non-vernaculars (Croatian vernacular and the circulation of print cultures in other languages), modes of literacy (textual, visual) and genres of print culture (newspapers, music), as well as cultures of exclusion (through censorship, gender, and élite collection practices). Most of the contributions

⁶ Berman, Antoine. *The experience of the foreign : culture and translation in the romantic Germany* / tr. S. Heyvaert. Albany : SUNY Press, 1992. P. 55.

⁷ Klobucka, Anna. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁸ Deleuze, Gilles; Félix Guattari. *Kafka : toward a minor literature* / trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

⁹ Klobucka, Anna. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

focus on the southern region of Croatia (encompassing the historical provinces of Dalmatia, Istria, and the Dubrovnik region). What is significant is that these contributions address networks of circulations originating from regional urban centers, reflecting that as a basic organizing principle for the Croatian book trade: Dubrovnik (Vesna Čučić), Split (Mihaela Kovačić), Šibenik (Ivana Zenić), Zadar (Mirisa Katić), Pula (Bruno Dobrić), and Varaždin (Vid Lončarić). That is apparently related to the structure of archives and the realities of production.

Nevertheless, production is just one stage in the communications circuit, an influential model developed by Robert Darnton.¹⁰ Circulation and appropriation (use) are equally constitutive for a given book trade, as demonstrated in an article published by Mihaela Kovačić, using material culture as evidence. Interpreting the cultures of circulation and reception in relation to those and beyond those centers of production is an ultimate goal of understanding the dynamics of the book trade.

The emphasis on scholarly apparatus, including lists of primary sources in many of the contributions published in this volume, arises from a desire to encourage entrants into the field of book history to go back to the sources and offer novel interpretations of the book trade. This transparency is a requirement of the historical method. Likewise, emphasis on source material as a basis for a historiography affirms the unique contribution to Croatian book scholarship of Šime Jurić to whom this collection is dedicated. Single-handedly, he has established such an apparatus for the study of early print. A combination of historical and bibliographic methodology is found in most of the articles in this volume. The bibliographic analysis of multilingual publishing in Dalmatia by Jelena Lakuš establishes an important first step in understanding the overlapping frameworks of the multilingual book trade in that region and acts as a model for research studies for those who are entering the field of book history. The bibliographic note by Ennio Stipčević, and extended lists of sources added to articles by Vid Lončarić, Mirisa Katić, Mihaela Kovačić, Nada Bezić and Vesna Čučić, are witness to this principle, presenting sources as basis for future research. Even with a double issue, an exploration of cultural borderlands remains limited in time frame and regional coverage. Slavonia and Central Croatia, and the trajectories that lead to the East and the West, are not explored in these works. Therefore, this collection can be seen as the first step in a greater research agenda.

The complexity of the history of the borderlands – originating from the complexities of the history of a book trade that evolved within several linguistic frameworks of circulation and political infrastructures – has made the study of non-canonical phenomena and the discontinuities of the Croatian book trade a difficult task. Mapping the course for a programmatic study of the Croatian border-

¹⁰ Darnton, Robert. "What is the history of books?" // *The kiss of Lamourette : reflections in cultural history*. New York ; London : W. W. Norton & Company, 1990. Pp. 107-138.

lands aims to connect the Croatian book trade to Central European and European traditions by means of these complexities. The recognition of such trajectories helps to interpret these cultures of circulation in a broader context of European traditions (*devenir-majeur* by *devenir-mineur*) as well. In this approach, it is necessary to cultivate the particular and descriptive histories of individual phenomena seen contiguously, and to frame research questions comparatively. This requires an approach that integrates empirical with theoretical perspectives, firmly rooted in transparent historical description refracted through current scholarship on the book. Needless to say, such a task is daunting – and it depends upon bibliographic control and access to sources, as well as upon familiarity with other traditions of scholarship. One such fruitful direction that I could point to would be that of the study of the overlapping circulation of manuscript and print cultures, exemplified in the literary production of Dubrovnik and constitutive for the Croatian national literary canon. Studying the scribal phenomenon in comparison to cultures of circulation in coterie circles, and related to the construction of authorship, may open new trajectories for understanding Croatian uniqueness in relation to a broader European context.

I will conclude this introduction with programmatic reflections about the book culture of the Croatian borderlands in the context of a Central European framework that arises from my own research on the diaspora almanacs¹¹ and a case study of an industrial multilingual publishing firm, J. Steinbrener, at the turn of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries¹² that is presented next.

Book history is often approached through the perspectives of national book trades, treating established print languages as coterminous with national cultures – what Benedict Anderson calls imagined communities.¹³ The paradigm that uses (national) language as the prime determinant presents difficulties in studying national book trades in the Central European context because it ignores the realities of multilingual readership. In contrast to this, national histories of the book trade deal with an idea of a more or less homogenous population. This paradigm excludes anomalous trades and those that span several linguistic spheres and multiethnic contexts for the book trade. Therefore, mapping the boundaries of various book trades is the first step toward a realization of how many parallel trades can emerge on the margins of geo-political entities, genres, and reading realms. The

¹¹ Dalbello, Marija. Croatian diaspora almanacs : a historical and cultural analysis : Ph.D. thesis. University of Toronto, 1999.; Dalbello, Marija. Architectures of knowledge and literary tradition : a history of the almanac in Croatia. // Slavic and East European information resources 4, 1(2003), 25-74.

¹² Dalbello, Marija. Franz Josef's time machine : images of modernity in the era of mechanical photoreproduction. // Book history 5(2002), 67-103.

¹³ Anderson, Benedict. Imagined communities : reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism. Rev. ed. New York : Verso, 1991.

study of book history in the Central European context (as *devenir-majeur* by *devenir-mineur*), calls for a multiplicity of approaches:

- Studying the effects of multilingual (sometimes multiscript) publishing and multilingual audiences on the growth of particular book trades;
- Examining the politics of literacy, including the role of traditional intellectuals in using literacy to build national identity, or the effects of censorship (Venetian, Habsburg, Communist) within a particular cultural realm;
- Establishing the continuity in particular national book trades through the Habsburg, Communist, and post-Communist eras;
- Examining the effects of emigration and internal migrations within the area of the book trade;
- Exploring the boundaries of diversity, cultural and linguistic translation, and reception of works;
- Identifying publishing models that evolved as a combination of patronage and purely commercial interests.

Thus, a fragmentation of Central European book histories could be turned into an opportunity to apply comprehensive and comparative approaches, using cultural area and comparing isomorphism of documentary practices rather than commonly used linguistic criteria (the national vernacular), which has been a powerful source for the exclusion of a borderlands perspective. Such studies could focus on issues relevant to particular national histories, while they assume a transnational framework that is now being explored by book historians as a new framework. European identity has been central to the Croatian construction of identity, and this can provide a broader framework for resolving the problem of *devenir-majeur*. If the European periphery is to claim its own cultural discourse, this will have to be through the controversial, ideological, and difficult task of cultural revision in which it will have to ex-territorialize itself and abandon a dream in which the national vernacular assumes a major function in language and society. In other words, it will have to seek the dream of *devenir-mineur*. This will not be possible without understanding the borderlands and an acceptance of its unique role in which dualities need to be accepted as an epistemology for boundary histories to assume significance within the dominant discourses of culture. In the dualities and multiplicities of the borderlands there arise counter-hegemonic interpretations, and the periphery can be validated by revealing the patterns of the center, connection to other traditions, and its own uniqueness at the same time. Nevertheless, the concept of boundary culture does not fit into the existing paradigms of national book trades that seek to assume the roles of dominant cultures.

In their pioneering work, Croatian scholars – notably Mladen Bošnjak, Šime Jurić, Josip Badalić, Mirko Breyer, Ivo Hergešić, Vladoje Dukat, and more recently Mirjana Gross, Radoslav Katičić, Slobodan P. Novak, Aleksandar Stipčević, Dražen Budiša, Divna Zečević, Daniela Živković and Milan Pelc as well as many others, perhaps starting with Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski – have studied the Croatian book trade in the context of library history, art history, literary

culture, literacy, orality, and the cultures of print, implicitly or explicitly also addressing the phenomena of the borderlands. The challenges for future researchers are to continue to develop this history in trans-national and connective frameworks in addition to a national one, informed through theoretical concerns of book history as an established interdisciplinary field; to choose exemplary case studies that allow for study of overlapping cultures of circulation; and to think comparatively.

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