Who Chooses and Who Offers Texts for Selection?

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When faced with the question "Who chooses?" one usually thinks of readers facing a large corpus of highly diverse texts, trying to reconstruct, understand, or explain their internal mechanisms and selection procedures as well as external instances that are more or less involved. However, this selection takes place not only in the area covered by reception theory and reader-response criticism, but also, in various ways, throughout the entire literary communication cycle, from production to distribution and reception. This paper illustrates some key aspects of this issue, especially the intermediary function between supply and selection, by giving typical examples of Slovenian publishing and bookselling practices during recent decades and the "transition" into a capitalist market economy. It mainly focuses on examples that far exceed the average volume of reception and sales numbers

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The answer – or at least the beginning of an answer – to the question posed by the title does not seem difficult: the reader, of course, is the one that selects the text.[1] Imagine the reader in a typical situation; for example, when he goes to the Frankfurt book fair, or to a national or university library, or when he accesses the website of a large online bookstore: all of these situations offer a wide range of various reading materials. At first glance it may seem that he enjoys the complete freedom to choose from among a multitude of available texts. However, exactly the opposite effect can often be observed: this broad extent of available texts is practically unmanageable for individual readers; they are practically buried beneath the multitude of texts. The opportunity to independently and freely choose the texts turns into strain and torment,[2] forcing him to seek some sort of assistance.

In this apparently paradoxical situation, my initial notion of the reader's choice was overly simplified. It is necessary to take into account that

both readers and reading material are very different from one another. Experienced and professional readers that are clearly aware of what they need will seek and select the right book from among those in their area of interest with much more accuracy and effectiveness than non-professionals. This is most obvious with scholarly and technical literature; however, the difference between higher or lower levels of competence in better informed or more naive readers is very important even in the case of *belles lettres*, although here the motifs and mechanisms of choice differ considerably from those applied to nonfiction. In both areas and in both groups of readers there is thus a similar need for assisting, guiding, and advising the selection. This is, however, delivered in various ways. Informed readers rely upon information on the authors, book reviews, and papers, and their familiarity with the publishers' profiles and book collections. An opposite opportunity is illustrated by a typical situation often encountered in public libraries: many visitors would like "something nice to read," but they cannot say what that might be. Thus, they do not exercise their right to free choice on their own, but leave it to someone else – in this case, the librarian – or, putting it more generally, to an expert or authority that knows more about the matter. The act of choice, which was first assumed to be something individual, and independent in this individualism, becomes multi-layered and more complex.

This is a good moment to remember that the reader's choice is only the last act among an entire series of previous and similar acts; that the process of choice takes place in a diachronic sequence and synchronic mixture of a multitude of individual and group acts of selection, and that selection is present in the entire course of communication, from the author's production of texts, through various ways of their transmission and distribution, to various modes of reception. However, there is no selection without supply; they always go together. Simplifying the matter in the extreme yields a basic model: the authors offer their products to the readers, who choose among them. However, this only occurs in exceptional cases in which direct contact is established between them; normally an intermediary provides the most obvious link between the functions of selection and supply.

In its basic form, intermediation existed even in oral cultures; it has become more important since texts began to be written down and reproduced. Since the time that books began to be produced and distributed as market goods, intermediation has grown into the complex forms known today, which are divided among various institutions. In modern times, intermediation is a permanent and indispensable component in the operation of the entire literary system, especially in publishing and bookselling;

however, it is also complex and internally inconsistent. Several external circumstances are relevant to its course and results, including the scope and structure of literary or linguistic and cultural space, and the related but not completely equivalent scope and structure of the book market. However, its structure is decisively influenced by a combination of economic, ideological, cultural, and artistic lines of force functioning in this space.

It is generally held that economic principles are universally valid. However, in large language areas, including English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Russian, and probably also Arabic and Chinese, which extend beyond the boundaries of individual national literatures, cultures, and states, these principles undoubtedly have different impacts than in small language and cultural spaces, which are the domiciles of literatures of small and politically non-independent nations. In centralized planned economies, the relation between the impacts of ideological and economic factors on the selection of book production is completely different than in market economies; in authoritarian societies with a pronounced role of the ruling political ideology, this relation is different than in democratic societies.

The selection process connected with the intermediary function is concentrated in publishers and specialized publications, and in part also in the mass media (if they publish literary texts); in addition, this process is also influenced by various external factors. As a rule, a number of protagonists are involved in it, including editors, internal reviewers, literary advisors, economists, marketers, sellers, librarians, censors, critics, and educators, all of whom follow various and sometimes even contradictory criteria. The most evident contrast here is that between the logic of the operation and goals of economic capital on the one hand, and symbolic (cultural, artistic, ideological, or ethical) capital on the other. This complex interactive process ends in the joint formation of the reading material supply that seeks to convince the readers to accept it to the greatest extent possible. Intermediation thus fulfills its purpose, with greater or lesser success.

In publishing and bookselling, success is usually measured using information on book printings, reprints, print runs, and sales, although this narrows the concept of reception down to the single dimension of goods production and distribution. A more appropriate criterion for measuring reception success would be the actual readership; the first step to an approximate estimation of this can be made by at least taking library circulation in account, in addition to sales. However, all of these data can only become informative when their normal values and exceptional deviations from them are identified, when they are placed in a chronological sequence, and a broader referential framework is outlined for them as a starting point, including some relevant aspects such as the size of the potential reading

population, the range of the overall book production (by the number of titles and copies printed), and the ratios between original and translated books. In addition to these general features, the following two aspects are relevant to literature in particular: the share of art literature in overall book production and the ratio between individual literary genres.

The basic quantitative descriptions are mainly already available in public statistics. They can be further developed and improved using data on actual readership structure broken down by age, sex, education, occupation, reading habits, taste, preferences according to various literary areas, genres, and so on. These types of data can be gathered through empirical studies, such as surveys using representative samples of (actual or potential) readers, various case studies, and so on. Their findings must of course be critically confronted with reception theory, literary system, and sociologically principled views. However, this already leads to a more thorough study of reception. This is why I will stop here and return to the intermediary formation of the reading supply; I will discuss it using a few typical examples illustrating the operation of the Slovenian literary system from the end of the Second World War until the present.

This chronological restriction is justified for several reasons. War and revolution caused such a shakeup that the literary system valid until then was considerably transformed, forcing its institutions (i.e., publishers, literary and cultural magazines, and mass media) to be established completely anew. The following decades saw gradual ideological and aesthetic changes that brought Slovenian culture closer to (western) Europe once again; in addition, economic, social, and political processes also took place during these decades and led to Slovenia's economic and social transition, and political independence. All of this directed the operation of the literary system from the outside.

The literary system's fixed features also include the fact that it is relatively small. Slovenia's population has grown (in rough numbers) from 1,450,000 in 1945 to its current 2,000,000. During this period, its occupational and educational structure changed so much that the number of potential readers increased considerably faster than the population itself.

The number of books published annually grew from an initial 550 to nearly 3,500 in 1970, and then began falling considerably until 1990, when it again grew to over 6,300 (the latest data released refer to 2008).[3] Among them, original Slovenian books predominate. The share of translated books in overall production varies between 20 and 30%; the lowest share was around 14% (in 1950 and 1980), and the highest was just over 40% (in 1970).

Such an increase in book production draws attention to great changes in the publishing industry. From the fewer than 10 state or nationalized

publishers at the start of this period, the number has grown to approximately 500 legal entities registered under publishing, of which over 160 issue books. Major shifts began with the economic and social transition towards the late 1980s, when large publishers began to be privatized, merge, take over smaller publishers, change their focus, and close down, and a number of new publishers arose next to them, including some that only publish one title a year. Today approximately 50 professional publishers, institutions, and societies can be considered part of the Slovenian publishing core; together they publish more than half of the annual book production. Similar growth, although with some typical differences, could also be established in other methods of publishing literature, especially literary journals, and the mass media or their literary sections.

The average share of original and translated art literature in overall book production is slightly above 20%, the lowest being 15% (in 1950) and the highest 29% (in 1960). In terms of absolute figures, this means approximately 100 titles a year in the late 1940s and slightly fewer than 1,300 titles today (in 2008). Here as well, the numbers reached their first peak in 1970 (628 titles), falling thereafter and again reaching a higher level only towards the end of the 1990s. It is interesting that the average share of literary books is smaller among all Slovenian books (i.e., below 20%, the extremes being 9 and 24%), and higher among the translated ones (the average varying between 25 and 42%, the extremes being 13% in 1970 and 56% in 1950).

Among literary books, the ratio between Slovenian and translated works is of course in favor of the Slovenian ones. The average share of translations among all literary books has been 38%, varying unevenly between 29 and 50% (the second percentage refers to 1950, which was obviously critical for original production); the latest data cite 762 Slovenian and 512 translated literary books (in 2008). In the last decade, the number of translations has been increasing dramatically; considerably faster than the number of original Slovenian editions.

Supply and choices

Based on everything established so far, several conclusions can be reached about the formation of the supply of reading material and the choices made available through it.

In the past decades, book production has made great progress since its modest beginnings in terms of range and content diversity. During the overall deprivation after the war, after many old public and private book collections were also ruined on top of everything else, and readers tended

to accept, read, and buy practically all new books. Only when increasingly more books were published year after year could readers begin choosing between them; however, when the supply exceeded a certain threshold size, which was difficult to establish, choice became inevitable because it is practically impossible even for professional readers to read everything that is published in Slovenian.

The increase in the number of book titles published was accompanied by a decline in the number of copies printed. Some of the first postwar editions exceeded 10,000 copies; in the first decade the following print runs printed began to be considered normal: 3,000 to 6,000 for novels, and 800 to 1,500 for poetry; after that they gradually declined (most dramatically during the economic transition in the 1980s), and since then have only reached a third of the previous levels. This limits the distribution of individual literary genres, but does not have a significant negative impact on the actual reading results because lower sales are compensated by increasing library circulation.

The scope of library circulation is naturally largely determined in advance by the supply (i.e., the available library stocks), and the number of library visitors. However, even if the gradual increase in both of these factors is taken into account, it turns out that the actual scope of library circulation is increasing considerably faster than the supply and the number of visitors. Among other things, this is clearly testified to by the latest statistical data on general libraries. To illustrate this, some data on the number of registered members, the number of visits, and the number of books borrowed (provided in thousands; cf. *Statistični letopis* 2009, online edition) are provided in Table 1.

Year	No. of members	Membership index	No. of visits	Index of no. of visits	Books borrowed	Index of books borrowed
1995	427	100	5.352	100	12.812	100
2005	515	121	8.925	167	20.888	163
2007	526	123	9.572	179	25.644	200

Table 1: Library members, visits, and books borrowed

The number of visits increased much faster than the number of members, and the number of books borrowed increased the fastest. In other words, an average library visitor borrowed 30 books in 1995, slightly over 40 books in 2005, and nearly 49 books in 2007, which clearly testifies to a reading increase.

With regard to the content structure of the book production, it can be claimed with a considerable generalization and simplification that it has been formed through the interaction between artistic, aesthetic, ideological, and economic criteria. The ideological aspect, supported by state policy actions, predominated in shaping publishers' agendas in the first postwar decade. The economic and commercial aspect began to be placed at the forefront after the economic reforms in the second half of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, assuming one of the main roles during the reestablishment of the capitalist market economy (at the expense of the political-ideological aspect, which lost its main role). Despite all this, the policy was to maintain a system of state subsidies to preserve at least a minimal opportunity to influence the content of publishers' agendas, although this opportunity is taken advantage of on fairly rare occasions.

The play between these conflicting lines of force had a slightly different impact on the publication of Slovenian literature than on the publication of translations. Publishers felt more committed to domestic literature and, for aesthetic, artistic, cultural, political, and nationalistic reasons, mitigated the commercially substantiated tendencies of their marketing and sales departments towards a different design of their book lines. They found it more difficult to resist internal and external ideological pressures, especially in the first postwar decades. Irrespective of all of this, nearly all of the old Slovenian literary classics and important works from the first half of the twentieth century (except for the ideologically most controversial ones, especially those written by political emigrants) were published in new editions. By taking into account these reservations, publishers issued modern literature on a continuous basis or with only short delays following the creation of texts and their publication in periodicals. If the publishers lacked planned support, it would be, for instance, difficult to explain why so many poetry collections are published in Slovenia and why poetry has been taking the lead for some time now even among the literary genres according to the annual number of titles published,[4] although the sales of the great majority of poetry books usually do not even cover the production costs.

In translated literature, the situation is slightly different. In terms of genre structure, novels absolutely predominate in it, with short prose and poetry far behind, and drama at the very end; this probably also corresponds to the interests and predominant tastes of general readers. With drama, it is vital to take into account the fact that a considerable number of plays have been translated for theaters, as well as radio and television; they have not been published in books, but reached their target audience through different channels.

With regard to the literary or linguistic and cultural origin of texts, the majority of translations published after the war were from Russian, whereas in the mid-1950s the lead was taken by translations from English, which have overwhelmingly maintained this position until the present, at which point they are far ahead of all other translations. They were first followed by translations from Serbo-Croatian or other South Slavic languages, and later the second and third places alternated between translations from French and German. This kind of structure is undoubtedly connected with the gradual conceptual, philosophical, and social reorientation that was given its initial thrust by the 1948 political conflict between Yugoslavia and the Soviet bloc. However, this is only one of the observable features. In addition, translated literature was connected to tradition through reprints of a number of older translations. Publishers and translators selected new texts to translate from major European and North American literary works, especially prominent works from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries; in addition, they also used works of small European literatures, such as Dutch or Flemish, Scandinavian, West Slavic, and Balkan literatures. These were joined by a new interest in Latin-American, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and African literature (especially works written in European languages for practical reasons – i.e., greater accessibility). A number of classic European authors from older periods ranging from Antiquity to the Renaissance and Baroque, as well as the basic works of the old orient, were translated. The majority of translations of modern literatures were made out of a desire to get to know the latest literary directions and currents, but they performed these functions in a very diverse scope and tempo and with varying success.

The features described here are revealed to an expert view from the perspective of literary criticism and literary studies. However, in this one must not neglect another perspective that shows that a number of translations have been purely commercially motivated. In their desire to achieve the best possible sales results, publishers selected appropriate texts for translation among books that were already best-sellers in their home environment; they relied most upon those books that had proved successful on the English, German, and French markets. The majority of these best-sellers are "light," popular, or trivial literature, which by definition is more easily accessible to wider circles of readers and buyers than "art literature." Even as early as the beginning of the 1950s, some Slovenian publishers experimented with the proven older, "classic" examples of trivial literature[5] such as the works of Alexandre Dumas, père, and Arthur Conan Doyle. They published and distributed them in the form of direct book peddling, getting past the conventional promotional and distribution routes used for

serious book editions, which is why this did not provoke a significant reaction in the public discourse on the literature for translation and publishing issues of that time. Best-sellers, most often contemporary ones, just became a regular component of many publishing lines and at the same time a subject of repeated polemic debates during the period of transition to a capitalist market economy.

The emergence of best-sellers raises again the question of what else, in addition to the general features of the book supply described so far, could specifically address the readers and pave the way to above-average reading and sales results for certain books. Returning to the initial premise regarding typical reader behavior, one can conclude that readers prefer to choose books about which they receive detailed information, advice, or guidance. Such incentives come from various sources, but especially the publishers themselves followed by other, primarily cultural and educational, institutions, or circulate freely in the media dealing with books and writers. For example, the publishers' editorial boards form book collections of various profiles, thus offering readers specific types of texts with regard to content and form and guaranteeing readers a certain quality level of the reading supply in advance. In general, works and authors' oeuvres that belong to the canon of domestic or world literatures and those that have recently experienced an aesthetic and literary-history revaluation provoke a stronger public reaction. In promoting books included in compulsory or recommended reading material in schools, a certain degree of official compulsion that cannot be overlooked is involved. With less compulsion, readers are encouraged and motivated more by various literary awards, ranging from the national ones to those presented by authors' associations, professional societies, companies, and newspaper publishers (which know how to turn the nomination and selection of candidates into an attractive media event or even a series of events such as the ones that have accompanied the Kresnik Award for the best Slovenian novel in recent years). With each extensive journalistic treatment of a literary work or oeuvre or its author, especially if it is considered a representative example in any way, readers' interest in it usually broadens and deepens. With regard to texts, the reason for this can be ideological or moral issues, or any kind of controversy of the topic, themes, and motifs. With regard to the life and work of authors, Russian and Eastern European dissidents and, on the other hand, Western writers that acted as opinion leaders in political and civil social matters can serve as examples. The transfer to another medium (i.e., film or television) can arouse additional interest in a book and provide new groups of readers; a good example of this is the highly professional television screenings of English literary classics produced and

successfully marketed by the BBC. Such incentives are accompanied by both traditional and new marketing methods, such as studies of the reading population, and the consequent various forms of promoting books and writers, various sales channels (e.g., advance orders, through personal contacts with agents, or by mail, telephone, or Internet), membership in publisher's clubs and literary associations, which is associated with certain benefits, and so on. All of this is part of the basic supply – that is, the selection of published books with additional emphases that try to persuade potential customers to read (or, more precisely, buy) a specific book.

Examples of practices

I will illustrate some of the practices followed to date with three examples: one is familiar and has already been mentioned a number of times, whereas the other two have probably already been forgotten. All three are taken from the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the Slovenian publishing industry was expanding and began its transformation from a planned economy to a market economy.

From 1964 to 1977, Cankarjeva Založba published the collection *Sto Romanov* (One Hundred Novels; cf. Munda and Grum). The selection of titles included a felicitous combination of the best-known classic works of international novel production as well as those less known in Slovenia, together with several representatives of non-European literatures in addition to artistically representative twentieth-century texts classified under modernism, existentialism, and the "nouveau roman," and some of the most widely read and popular novels with a more traditional structure. The selected literary works were accompanied by essays written by the leading Slovenian literature experts. The collection's chief editor was Anton Ocvirk, the founder of Slovenian comparative literature as an independent scholarly discipline. The collection, which even in its very design showed many indications of excellence, was printed in a pocket-book format with a quality layout. The publisher took special care of its promotion and offered it through advance orders for an affordable price. The general public, the critics, the mass media, and specialist publications declared the collection a cultural event of central importance. Readers also accepted it with open arms: the first volume had a print run of 24,000, which is hardly imaginable today, and sold out completely. Thirteen years later, it ended with 6,300 copies, which was still a noteworthy achievement. This was followed by two other commercial moves: soon after the collection was completed in 1977, the ten most popular works selected by the read-

ers were reprinted, and just over a decade later (from 1986 to 1989), the entire collection was reprinted in hardback with a new design; however, it no longer achieved a comparable marketing effect. The collection was considered an example of an important editorial and publishing achievement and provided the incentive for two or three later similar collections, whose content was oriented more towards the present.

At approximately the same time as the collection *Sto romanov* was issued, the novel *Ukana* (The Deception) by the Slovenian writer Tone Svetina, and the *Angelique* series of novels by Anne and Serge Golon, translated from French, were by far the most popular.

Svetina, known until then as the author of popular short stories, wrote an extensive book on the Second World War, the occupation, and the Yugoslav resistance movement. Its plot contains a number of descriptions based on historical facts. The main narrative thread presents the conflicts between the intelligence agents of the occupation army and the police on the one hand, and the resistance movement on the other. The main characters are not presented in a black-and-white manner, but in a differentiated manner; the text reflects a sense of the difficult situations of people that happened to end up between the opposing fronts in the military conflict, and an understanding for even the most negative characters. The book also discusses some delicate and taboo matters, such as treason among the partisans and massacres of captured collaborators. The extensive and gradually growing novel was published from 1965 to 1987 by Borec in various editions and reprints. In addition to its three parts, its author later wrote a book on how it had been written ("a novel on the novel"), and the text was reworked into an illustrated picture book; the only thing that was not carried out was its planned film adaptation.

Angelique, a series of historical adventure novels focusing on late-seventeenth-century topics, is a good example of trivial writing. The title heroine is a young, pretty, erotically talented, bright, and characteristically untamable French noblewoman from a country estate that experiences all kinds of adventures that drive her across at least half the known world at that time; sudden twists of fate elevate her to the highest ranks of society, where she enjoys great esteem and wealth, and then cast her down to the lowest depths of society. Her exceptional skills help her escape numerous deadly perils, and she always achieves a happy ending – until the next entanglement in the next book. The recipe is relatively simple: the story maintains a high level of narrative tension, and the social-psychological outlines of the characters and their interpersonal relationships are adjusted to modern mentality; descriptions of the developments and the environment skillfully rely on the relatively fair use of quite extensive historical

knowledge. In light of all this, the desired success was fairly well accomplished. From 1963 to 1977, Lipa published nine novels from this series, of which the first three were printed four times; the interest faded somewhat with the subsequent volumes. In spite of this, the collection experienced a new publication featuring three additional novels towards the end of the 1980s. However, all of these achievements, which were quite impressive for Slovenian publishing and bookselling circumstances, were only a small fragment in the great world bestseller business. In slightly more than fifty years since 1955, the *Angelique* books have been translated into more than thirty languages and published in more than sixty countries, with a total of more than 150 million copies sold worldwide. The book's market success was supported by a series of five movies, which were also often broadcast on television and released on DVD in addition to being screened in movie theaters. The popularity of the collection was further enhanced by the usual accompanying phenomena such as fan clubs, Internet presentations and discussions, and so on. On the other hand, public interest was also aroused by the long-lasting court dispute over the books' copyright. The case has not been resolved yet: a while ago, the eighty-eight-year-old author was reported to be preparing a reprint and even a sequel to the series (cf. "The World of Angélique").

These three examples of an exceptionally effective supply of reading material with great marketing success are based on various reasons. The collection *Sto romanov* knew how to offer elite literature and make it accessible to a wider circle of readers as an attractive opportunity to participate in "cultural capital." Many readers could associate the realistic thematic and conceptual components of Svetina's war novel, especially at the level of collective events, with their own experiences and memories; its problematic historical and political motifs belong to the early examples of a treatment that spread and became one of the central themes of public discourse in later Slovenian literature and journalism; its narrative incidents provided the pleasurable tension known to readers of action stories; all of this enthroned Svetina's novel as an original Slovenian bestseller. In turn, the trivial adventure and love story of Angelique enabled readers to accept it at a purely hedonistic and escapist level, thus producing the desired response among them, through which they participated in the simultaneous developments on the international book markets and for which the Slovenian publisher did not have to make any special effort.

The intermediary apparatus

Summing up the practices to date, the Slovenian situation also reveals that an extensive, complicated, and non-transparent intermediary apparatus stands between the author and the reader, whereby the reading supply is shaped. On the one hand, the intermediary examines the authorial production and chooses from it; on the other hand, the intermediary determines the desires and needs of readers and seeks new market niches accordingly. The intermediaries are thus active in both directions. They wish to directly or indirectly influence both the authorial production and the readers' reception, and direct them in their own way. In extreme cases, authors are even expected to write according to the intermediary's proposals or even orders, and readers and buyers are to accept this kind of supply in a relatively disciplined manner.

In light of this, it is thus not surprising that both authors and readers often perceive the intermediary apparatus as an alienated, twisted force that threatens to grow out of control, and thus try to avoid it and establish direct contact with one another. One of the traditional ways to achieve this is authors' readings at various public events. A new phenomenon with similar tendencies is online postings, in which authors offer their new works to unknown or anonymous readers without publishers' mediation. The readings cannot surpass their marginal role within the overall distribution, and the online version may have better development prospects; however, by analogy with audiovisual and electronic media, it can be presumed that the new option of publishing works will not replace the old one, but will at best establish itself alongside it.

As I have already mentioned, in modern conditions the role of intermediation is indispensable in a developed literary system. Intermediary institutions seek to operate as effectively as possible to bring the readers to the desired decisions as reliably as possible. But no matter how thoroughly they study the readers, how they work them using various sophisticated methods and try to turn them in their direction, and how successful they are in doing this, they cannot always anticipate the results of their endeavors with certainty. Despite all the attempts to program them from the outside, readers always preserve at least part of their original freedom: the final decision is theirs; they are the ones that make the ultimate choice.

Translated by Simona Lapanja (DEKS)

NOTES

[1] Even etymology testifies to this: the Slovenian words *bralec* 'reader' and *brati* 'to read' are related to *izbrati/izbirati* 'to select', *nabrati/nabirati* 'to pick', *prebrati/prebirati* 'to sort out' both in the concrete and abstract sense (cf. Snoj); a similar relationship can be found with the Latin words *legere* and *lector* and their derivatives in Romance languages, as well as in German *lesen* and *der Leser*.

[2] German, for example, has the aphorism in speech and journalism *die Qual der Wahl* 'the torment of choice'.

[3] The majority of the data listed are taken from the *Slovenian Bibliography* and the *Statistical Yearbook*, and some of them are taken from the COBISS online bibliographic information system and other sources. With all due respect to statistics as a discipline, individual data must be taken with caution because the methodology of taking inventories changed over time and the databases used were already variously defined by both the publication genre (e.g., by including or excluding semi-literary genres) and the geographic and political space (e.g., by taking into account only Slovenian books published in Slovenia, or all the books written in Slovenian regardless of their place of publication). However, I am primarily interested in ratios and development trends, and so approximate and slightly rounded-off numbers can be used here.

[4] According to the latest data available, 149 novels and 255 books of poetry were published in 2008 among 709 Slovenian *belles lettres* titles published (*Statistični letopis,* 2009).

[5] Ten thousand copies of Dumas' *The Three Musketeers* and 18,000 copies of *The Count of Monte Cristo* were published by the Slovenski Knjižni Zavod press as early as 1952 (cf. Munda and Grum 163). This was not the first time these two works were published in Slovenia and also not the last; similar books were published from about 1900 at least until the mid-1990s in various editions and reprints and also various translations (cf. Hladnik).

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