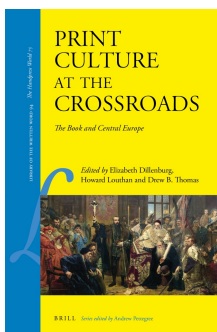


VI, 2023/1

Elizabeth Dillenburger, Howard P. Louthan, Drew B. Thomas (eds.)
Print Culture at the Crossroads

Review by: Renaud Adam



Editors: Elizabeth Dillenburger, Howard P. Louthan, Drew B. Thomas
Title: Print Culture at the Crossroads. The Book and Central Europe
Place: Leiden
Publisher: Brill
Year: 2021
ISBN: 9789004448926
URL: [link to the title](https://aro-isig.fbk.eu/issues/2023/1/print-culture-at-the-crossroads-renaud-adam/)

REVIEWER Renaud Adam - Université de Liège

Citation

R. Adam, review of Elizabeth Dillenburger, Howard P. Louthan, Drew B. Thomas (eds.), *Print Culture at the Crossroads. The Book and Central Europe*, Leiden, Brill, 2021, in: ARO, VI, 2023, 1, URL <https://aro-isig.fbk.eu/issues/2023/1/print-culture-at-the-crossroads-renaud-adam/>

This volume gathers the papers presented in June 2017 at the annual St. Andrews Book Conference, which was dedicated to the print culture in early modern Central Europe, a large territory, including, among others, the Holy Empire, the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth, Hungary, and Ukraine, and characterized by many cultures, languages, alphabets, and religions (Roman and Greek Catholics, Calvinists, Lutherans, and Jews). This is an area that has received less attention from the research community and, let us admit it, is quite unfamiliar to many of us, as the author of the introduction Howard Louthan reminds us: «Print Culture at the Crossroads [is] an opportunity to bring into clearer light a literary culture that is generally unknown even to early modern specialists» (p. 11).

Traditionally, those who study the great Eurasian plain produce works concentrated on limited enclaves, whether linguistic or frontier. Here, the editors have opted for an approach that goes against the grain of this traditional historiography. They preferred to adopt a transcultural and transnational view of this territory, considered by them as a «coherent cultural space» (p. 7). This is one of the great merits of this volume.

This book is articulated around four principal themes. The first is based on geographical and linguistic issues. The second theme is related to religious literature, which was the main product of the printing presses active in early modern Central Europe. Learning and educating constitute the third theme, mostly incarnated by the figure of

Erasmus, who appears directly or indirectly in many contributions. The last theme, and not the least, is dedicated to the problem of cultural exchanges and transfers. This dynamic process is at the center of the reflections developed in nearly all the essays of this book. These general parameters form the spine of this collection.

The volume is divided into five main parts, containing 24 contributions (plus 1 introduction and 1 epilogue) by researchers from a dozen countries. The first section deals with the print culture in Hungary and Transylvania, with a special focus on the confessional diversity and its impact on the book ecosystem; one of the major themes of this book. Graeme Murdock analyzes the «aural and symbolic» presence of the biblical culture in Calvinist churches. The contribution of Maria Crăciun is devoted to the links between the libraries of prominent Lutheran pastors and their confessional identity. Following this, Borbála Lovas presents her research on the reception of György Enyedi's anti-Trinitarian treatise *Explicationes*, which notably found its way into the library of Isaac Newton. Then, Redu Nedici demonstrates that Transylvania developed a distinctive Greek identity in the eighteenth century, through a study of Greek catholic book production from 1750 to 1780. Marie-Elisabeth Ducreux ends this section with a chapter devoted to the production of post-Tridentine liturgical books in Habsburg dominions.

The second section transports us into the Renaissance world of Central Europe, which begins with Jan Volek's analysis of the dissemination of the Czech translation of Erasmus' *Novum Instrumentum*, originally written in Latin. Martina Pranic follows with the Bohemian folly of the popular tales of the *Histories* of Brother Jan Palecek. Magdalena Herman, on her part, focuses on the cosmopolitan nature of Polish book collecting through the study of four major collections. By examining a series of pamphlets produced in Austria, Zsuzsa Barbarics-Hermanik analyzes the impact of the Ottoman expansion on propagandistic books.

The third part revolves around one of the persons who probably had the most profound impact on the book economy in Central Europe, the father of the Reformation, Martin Luther. Grażyna Jurkowlaniec looks at the adaptations of Luther's portrait by studying the woodcut illustration of his printed *Sermons on Sacraments*. Drew Thomas continues with a study of the successful book business conducted by Lotter family. Jiří Černý explores the success of an anonymous pamphlet entitled *Ein Mandat* through its first edition and its reprints. Luka Ilić and Marija Wakouning investigate the missionary zeal of a printing house in Urach, closely linked to the spread of Lutheran literature. The chapter by Maciej Ptaszyński explores the clerical identity of Pomerania.

Part 4, entitled «Local Communities and the Book», investigates the impact of book production on a specific region or city. The first two essays are dedicated to Cracow, with a study by Magdalena Komorowska on printing houses in post-Tridentine times and with another one by Katarzyna Plaszczyńska-Herman on book trade. Then, Olga Sixtová brings us to Bohemia, more precisely to Prague, with an exploration of Jewish book publication between 1590 and 1619. It is important to remember that Prague, at that time, was the only place in Europe where Jews had complete control over their book production process and maintained it until the eighteenth century. Pavel Sládek extends this case by providing a long-term analysis of Jewish reading habits, between 1510 and 1630. The final chapter of this section, by Maria Piasecka, explores the issue of occasional literature in early modern Oels, in Poland.

The last section is devoted to print culture during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with a focus on the control and use of literature in confined regions. Joshua Teplitksi analyzes the issue of approbation by rabbis within Jewish communities. Then, Veronika Čapská explores the eighteenth century and the consumption of heterodox literature in the catholic Kingdom of Bohemia. The question of the circulation of books is also at the center of Agata Paluch's contribution, dedicated to the dissemination of Jewish esoterica, in both manuscript form and print. Liudmyla Sharipova ends the fifth part of this collection with the great success achieved by Slavic translations of Thomas a Kempis' famous *Imitatio Christi*, which became very popular in Orthodox communities. James M. Brophy ends this book with an epilogue dealing with the dissemination of forbidden print in Central Europe between 1800 and 1848. As interesting as it is, this epilogue might have been better placed in a book focused on the contemporary period.

This short overview of each chapter shows clearly all the richness of this volume and opens some very interesting avenues of research, not only for Central Europe but also for early modern Europe in general. It reminds us of the importance of transnational studies and the need to study cultural transfers between regions and their complex networks. This book is certainly an incentive to deepen the subject and it contributes to a better knowledge of this «terra incognita» that is the early modern Central European book ecosystem.