
on. This does not mean that the 19th century model of national identities should be nullified. However, by researching the untold stories a process of the pluralisation of memory can be launched. This process is a necessary condition for breaking through the fences of imagined communities and reformulating the relation between territory and identity, which will give more flexibility when it comes to defining our belongings.

As Vidmar Horvat acknowledges in the Conclusion, European identity does not exist, European cultural politics are soaked in specific European nationalism, chauvinism and exclusion when it seems that European institutions speak in the most general terms. Instead of relying on its own historical multiculturalism and hybridity, calling attention to arbitrary selected legacies and “roots”, Europe is closing access to symbolic belonging and stopping the processes of the democratisation of space on its borders and inside Europe. We should break this cycle of seeing EU identity by introducing the concept of “in-betweenness” into it (a term used in postcolonial theory to describe the position of immigrants), emphasising its openness and fluidity instead of its essentialisation. A switch in imagining European identity is a theoretical and social need; it is, as the author claims, a conceptual basis for building social cohesion, solidarity and the ethics of coexistence in the changed conditions of European integration and global flows.

As long as it is promoted and im-

plemented from the top down, and exclusively draws and emphasises Judeo-Christian “heritage”, ancient Greek democracy and Roman law, the European project will never reach out to all Europeans. European identity will never be among the primary identifications for Europeans if millions of European Roma, immigrants, peoples of the Balkans, and European Muslims are excluded. Europe must learn from best multicultural practices and some good examples of peaceful coexistence in past multinational and multiethnic “empires” like the Hapsburg, Ottoman and, conditionally, Yugoslav empire. Only then will Europe breathe with both of its lungs, the Eastern, the Western, and everything in between.

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Vlado Kotnik
**Opera, Power and Ideology:
Anthropological Study of a National
Art in Slovenia**

Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main,
Berlin, Bruxelles, New York,
Oxford, Wien 2011, pp. 210, 54.95
(ISBN 978-3-631-59628-9)

Opera, Power and Ideology by Vlado Kotnik represents a courageous methodological suggestion, advocating an anthropological approach for researching the academic field of opera studies, which is still dominated by musicology. The book

successfully integrates attention to both theory and practice in an intelligent and self-reflective analysis of the case study of opera in Slovenia which guides the reader through current academic debates. Following the “performing turn”, here opera is conceptualised as “social” performance: the stress on “social” means that the focus is not on the world of divas on stage or on opera production, but on different cultural agents, namely audiences, sponsors, media, academics, ministries and civil servants, opera performers, and operatic venues. Social and cultural structures underpinning operatic culture in Slovenia are explored with the help of the sharp tools of cultural studies. For instance, Kotnik investigates the archaeology of knowledge (Foucault) of the operatic discourse in Slovenia, and applies Bourdieu’s concepts of social capital and habitus. The latter is further developed by the author in the new discursive concept of “national operatic habitus” defined as a “socially-constructed space of creation of a particular cultural activity within a particular national territory” (p. 61) where “*social representations of opera are produced and reproduced and at the same time imagined by different social agents and actors*” (p. 28).

The account of the significance of opera in Slovenia is fascinating, encompassing the nationalist significance of the German Landestheater and of the Slovenian Deželno gledališče, the lack of relevance of opera during the socialist period because of the understanding of opera as bourgeois

art, but also the flourishing of opera during this period; and the lack of funding experienced after the end of the Cold War during what Kotnik defines as the *European turn*. It is at this time that opera regained prominence in the discourse for the construction of the cultural identity of the Slovenian nation. Opera has always been conceived of as elitist in Slovenia, and it is currently understood by the author as a peripheral elitist cultural practice without metropolitan references.

Opera in Slovenia is dealt with in the third part of the book, while the first two parts are mainly concerned with methodological and epistemological preoccupations in considering the “odd couple” of opera and anthropology. The titles of these three parts are structured around the paradigm of “opera as”, namely “opera as a challenge for anthropology”, as “ethnographic experience” and as “peripheral universe”. Opera is seen, as in the titles of different chapters, as a “site of social and cultural anthropology”, “source of historical anthropology”, “cultural self” and “demanding fieldwork”. The idea of opera is also associated with cultural theories, and opera becomes a “habitus”, “hegemony of musicological canon”, “idealized vision of nationhood”. In reference to the specificity of Slovenia, opera is conceived as an “invented tradition”, a “provincial order or things”, a “media representation”, a “postsocialist calculation”, a “product of consumption” and a “transnational promenade”. Overall, Kotnik shows how anthropo-

logy can provide a tool of analysis for opera as a performance.

The author's intention is to position his work at the intersection between two strands of thoughts on opera, history and anthropology, which are dealt with in the first part of the book entitled *Opera as a challenge for anthropology*. The first corpus of literature Kotnik refers to is the field of the anthropology of music. The presented overview begins with the founders of ethnomusicology and ends with the more recent "*ethnomusicological concern with performance*" (p. 20). Anthropology was always concerned with fieldwork "other" than art music; however, in the last three decades some anthropologists have explored this terrain. Kotnik reviews the work of the two most prominent scholars, namely the French musical anthropologist Denis Laborde and the British social anthropologist Paul Atkinson, whose main focus is on operatic companies. The second corpus of literature considered by the author focuses on the tradition of historical anthropology; its birth in the 1960s is related to the development of the French Annalists who revolutionised the writing of history with the concepts of *long durée* and "history from below". This has generated an interdisciplinary turn, which has more recently influenced the study of opera. Following these disciplinary routes, the author calls for the development of an interdisciplinary study of opera for the Slovenian case, highlighting its peculiarity against the mainstream "operatic canon".

In addition, this first part introduces the work of another important reference for the attention of Kotnik to "national habitus", namely Philippe-Joseph Salazar's *Idéologies de l'opéra*, where the author proposes a reading of opera as a form of bourgeois culture of the European West. According to Salazar, the ideology of opera is the ideology of Europe that sings. Due to this relevance of opera for European identity, Kotnik claims that in the Slovenian case, after the end of the Cold War, opera was "*a kind of entrance ticket for the Slovenians to the association of the cultural nations of Europe*" (p. 144). Opera is important in Slovenian nationalism, as "*the March revolution of 1848 on Slovenian soil clearly addressed opera as one of the most preeminent elements*" (p. 49) for the construction of Slovenian national identity. Kotnik argues that opera continued to be relevant for nationalism in Slovenia well into the 20th century, during the different political transformations of the country during this period from the State of Slovenians, Croats and Serbs (1918) that later became the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929), through to its participation in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1945). The role of opera was not especially prominent in the symbolic imaginary of these societies, but it gained special relevance after the so-called "ten-day independence war" in 1991 as part of reshaping the image of the new nation-state.

The second part of the book, *Opera as ethnographic experience*, encompasses a brief introduction to

Slovenian history and also presents the main musical institutions operating in the country in the 19th century, namely the aristocratic *Academia Philharmonicorum* of Ljubljana, founded in 1701 on Italian models, the bourgeois institutions founded in the second half of the 18th century, the German *Ständisches Theater*, and the *Dramatično Društvo* (Dramatic Society), which gave rise to the Slovenian Opera, housed from 1892 in the Regional Theatre of Ljubljana. However, this part focuses on the field of opera from the point of view of the researcher. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is applied to the researcher's work. This self-reflective methodological account addresses the question of how an anthropologist as an ethnographer can approach operatic settings, with particular reference to Kotnik's experience in conducting fieldwork in Slovenia. The "juiciest" part is the third, entitled *Opera in Slovenia as a peripheral universe*, which presents the empirical findings regarding opera in Slovenia. This refers to the fieldwork undertaken by Kotnik at Slovenian national opera houses in the cities of Ljubljana and Maribor. This is enriched by the encounter with academic or administrative institutions, namely the Slovenian cultural centre Cankarjev dom, the Slovenian Philharmonic, the Slovenian National Radio and Television, the Ministry of Culture and the Academy of Music, as well as by analyses of academic discourses and media representations of opera, the most frequently staged operas, opera programmes, and surveys te-

sting reception. This is, indeed, a great deal of empirical research published in a single book, research which contributes to the deconstruction of the national operatic habitus in Slovenia.

Legal-regulatory discourse and academic discourse form the normative structure of opera in Slovenia. Kotnik identifies a dominant discourse and analyses the "hegemony of musicological canon". His argument starts from the observation that the field of musicology is a relatively new profession which came into being and became dominant in the 19th century. Originally, opera was defined as *dramma per musica* and therefore studied as literature, like theatre. The predominance of musicology as the hegemonic discourse on opera is therefore a recent phenomenon; yet this powerful canon presents a dogmatic vision of opera which is worth studying. In this vision, other viewpoints are marginalised. Against this epistemological background, the author suggests an inclusive perspective in which all ideas about opera are pertinent for investigation and problematisation. In Slovenia, this corpus of hegemonic perspectives on opera, embodied in the act of writing musical history, has been incorporated in the life of the opera houses considered by the study, as academics were often hired as advisers or external experts by the Ministry of Culture "to frame legitimate political guidelines and aspirations" (p. 69). In addition, academics were involved in the production of opera at different levels, also holding positions as members of

company boards and writing music reviews or preparing essays for opera programmes. The musicological canon considers that opera belongs to music history, musicology and musical scholarship, and its representatives have the power to produce and reproduce hegemonic perspectives. Its fieldwork is concerned with “*gossip and scandals*” (p. 69).

Interestingly, this canon is based on dogmatic perspectives and inspired by various ideologies identified by the author as essentialism, autochthonism and nationalism, which are related to the “*authentic*” and “*autochthonous*” (p. 69) character of Slovenian music, culture and nationhood. Compared with the neighbouring countries of Austria and Italy, Slovenia does not have a strong articulated musical tradition. According to Kotnik, the function of the musicological canon is precisely to address this weakness. And in its habitus there is a strong component of discourses about the Slovenian nation, which is documented in the study on the press Kotnik carried out from 1991 to 2009, and in an attempt to gain further governmental financial support for the Maribor opera house, not on the grounds of the quality of its performances, but due to its “national” relevance, to be granted a “national” status. This pervasive notion of “national” in the case of Slovenian opera is relevant even for public expenditure, the allocation of funding and (lack of) search for sponsorship.

This is an original study of opera in Slovenia. However, Kotnik’s book

is not only about the history of opera as it has a great deal to say about methodology. By making a link between the anthropology of knowledge and the notion of habitus, Kotnik connects Bourdieu to Foucault in an interesting way, providing a methodological tool for cultural studies of opera. The reflection on how knowledge about opera is constructed is necessary to understand the habitus as, according to Bourdieu, habitus is itself the product of history. In addition, it suggests a perspective of cultural analysis which could be fruitfully applied to the study of “national operatic habitus”, “canons” and operatic “peripheries” in other cultural contexts. The book engages with contemporary debates on the study of opera providing intelligent epistemological suggestions, and it is indeed a must read for academics interested in opera, music and cultural studies.

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Mojca Doupona Topič
**Objektivnost v športnem
novinarstvu**
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pp. 175, EUR 12.44
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In her scientific monograph *Objektivnost v športnem novinarstvu* (*Objectivity in Sport Journalism*) Moj-