

**Janja Žitnik & Helga Glušič**, eds. *Slovenska izseljenska književnost 2, Severna Amerika* Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, Rokus. 484 pp. (cloth). ISBN: 9616182749.

The second volume of the anthology of Slovene emigrant literature is an overview of literature written by Slovenes in the U.S. and Canada. This volume was compiled by Janez Stanonik, Mirko Jurak, Jerneja Petrič, Helga Glušič, Janja Žitnik, and Mihael Kuzmič, noted Slovene authorities on emigrant literature. The book comprises all authors, regardless of their political standpoints, and their works in both Slovene and English, because the authors of the second and the third generations of emigrants still relate to their Slovene origins, but find it easier to express themselves in English. The extent of this compilation is reflected by its approximately 500 pages; 300 pages dealing with literature in the U.S., 100 pages covering literature in Canada, and the rest comprising authors' biographies and bibliographies, indices, and periodicals.

The first part, dealing with Slovene literature in the United States, is divided into three periods: the literature of Slovenes in the U.S. before 1891, the literature of Slovene immigrants and their descendants after 1891, and the literature of Slovene immigrants after 1945. A special chapter is devoted to the literary works of Slovenes from Prekmurje.

According to Janez Stanonik, the first period spans the time from the arrival of the first Slovene immigrants to 1891, when the first Slovene newspaper, *Amerikanski Slovenec* was published in Chicago. Epistolary texts were prevalent, and other literary forms included travel books, autobiographies, religious literature with pronounced didactic elements, works of popular science, and attempts of expression through poetry. The book highlights Friderik Baraga, the most prominent literary figure of that period, as well as Ivan Ratkaj, Marcus Antonius Kappus, Ferdinand Konšak, Franc Pirc, Andrej Bernard Smolnikar, Janez Čebulj, and Anton Fister.

The second period was the most productive. Jerneja Petrič writes that Slovene immigrants were simple, generally poorly-educated people, who created works of lesser quality. However, as individuals with a higher education began to emerge, they stepped to the forefront of cultural movements, journalism, and art. Their works of prose were often tinted with realism and naturalism, especially in so-called

proletarian literature, documentary prose, autobiographies, and travel books. There are some instances of humorous writings, and, more importantly, literature for younger readers, written predominantly for school-children. The poetry of the period was mostly rational, with a hint of social criticism, and a broad range of motifs was present in patriotic, reflective, and love poems. Some didactic, satirical, and humorous poems were also created. Dramatic texts began to emerge as many societies wanted to stage as many new texts as possible, but the small number of Slovene-American playwrights could hardly meet their needs. The plays dealt with contemporary or historic events, and *lustspiel* was the most popular genre. Jerneja Petrič treats the development of memoirs and autobiographies, which were among the most productive genres, in detail and categorizes thirty-seven authors in the following groups: Christian writers, authors of proletarian literature and the moderate left, ideologically neutral writers and authors of humorous literature, other well-known authors, and occasional writers. Louis Adamic, the most prominent literary figure of the time, is profiled by Janja Žitnik, a notable researcher of his work.

Helga Glušič notes that post-war emigration writers mostly created political and religious journalist texts, religious literature, travel books, and some memoirs. Well-known authors of that period were Karel Mauser, the poet Milena Šoukal, Mirko Javornik, Marjan Jakopič, Frank Bükvič, and Mara Cerar Hull.

The literature of Slovenes from Prekmurje is dealt with in a separate chapter, as they were mostly Protestants, in contrast to the Catholic Slovene majority, and wrote in a special dialect. After outlining the course of their emigration, Mihael Kuzmič writes about Aleksander Kardoš and Jožef Novak, the two most prominent authors, along with several others that wrote prose, poetry, and drama. In terms of ideas, subjects, and motifs, their work was similar to that of other Slovene emigrants. Literature in translation, especially from Hungarian, is also significant.

In the second part of the book Mirko Jurak deals with the literary work of Slovenes in Canada. The introduction gives an analysis of historical, geographical, and social circumstances triggering the emigration, which, according to Jurak, occurred in three waves, mostly after 1924. There are some 45,000 Slovenes in Canada today, and many of them are active in societies, church groups, and cultural life. The best

literary works written in the last decade are novels and short stories. Poetry varies in terms of motifs and aesthetics, and the least represented genre is drama.

Biographies and bibliographies, the last part of the book, outline the lives of seventy-one authors, twelve of them women. The biographies are interesting material, and some of them read like adventure novels, describing the obstacles these people encountered and the risks they had to take, nonetheless reaching their goals due to their enormous energy and vitality. Such were the lives of Friderik Baraga, Louis Adamic, and Fred Bahovec. Each biography is supplemented by a bibliography of published works and anthologies.

Slovene authors in the U.S. and Canada are presented in the broad cultural and historical context of their time, and their activities ranged from missionary work to publishing newspapers and books, translating, organizing sports events, and establishing Slovene radio stations and Sunday schools. Many of them were or still are active members of political, religious, and cultural groups and societies. Their literary development is illustrated with a description of their texts, especially through genre classifications, conceptual characteristics, and a short summary of the work, and texts of greater quality are followed by a style analysis and an in-depth commentary. Themes, motifs, and ideas are often connected with the perception of the promised land, tinged with feelings of loneliness and alienation. The decision to leave the homeland is a recurring motif, followed by high expectations, disappointments, guilt, and a divide between the two worlds. The writers often dwell on the past, remembering the days of their youth in the home country.

In appraising the artistic quality of emigrant literature, the researchers primarily focused on the originality of texts, underscoring those that rise above typical patterns of expression, while finding their greatest weakness to be occasional tendentiousness and propagandism, thematic conventionality, pathos, and substandard style. Nevertheless, it is noted that these texts were created in different circumstances than the bulk of Slovene literature and they serve an important role in the preservation of the emigrants' national identity, bridging the gap between the new and the old world and marking a part of the nation's history.

Volume 2 of *Slovenska izseljenska književnost* is a well-written, systematic source of reference for the broad public and scholars alike. Packed with photographs of authors, society members, newspaper covers, and important manuscripts, it also contains large amounts of previously unpublished data and material, offering them to the Slovene public in a single reference book. The volume summarizes existing research, supplementing it with new data and stating some new ideas. This work will fill a large gap not only in terms of literary history, but also in knowledge of Slovene history and culture beyond the country's boundaries. The volume serves as a stepping stone for future research, as many authors and genres deserve separate and more detailed analysis, which will give them their due place in Slovene literary history.

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