

Janja Žitnik & Helga Glušič, eds. *Slovenska izseljenska književnost 3, Južna Amerika* Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU, Založba ZRC Rokus, 1999. 407 pp. (cloth). ISBN: 9616182765.

The third volume of *Slovenska izseljenska književnost* addresses the literary material of Slovene emigrants to South America. The book is organized both chronologically and thematically. The works are first divided into pre-World War II literature and postwar literature. Within these broad categories are smaller sections addressing prose and poetry, as well as postwar drama.

Distance alters the image of the longed-for or the lost, and it is the embellished and complemented image that becomes the aim of any longing. The homesickness of emigrant literature reveals such an image of the homeland. Basic motifs and similar fragmented ideas confirm the intensely longed-for image of the homeland through the nostalgic and stereotyped theme of voluntarily and involuntarily parting. The researchers of *Slovenska izseljenska književnost* were aware of this, and their selection of emigrant literature did not overlook the special position that emigrant literature has in keeping and revealing its own identity under altered (often unwillingly so) life conditions. The sensitive avoidance of deep literary-theoretical appreciation is based on the following “non-literary” criteria: the genuineness of the writer’s feelings, the convictions of his works, and their approachability for a wide range of readers.

The reason for such an approach was explained several times in the trilogy itself, and was even more explicitly stated by Helga Glušič in the conclusion (358):

Raziskava književnosti slovenskih izseljencev ni le izraz znanstvene zagnanosti in potrebe po strokovni informacij, temveč *odraz spoštovanja* do vsega v izseljenstvu ustvarjenega kulturnega in predvsem knjižnjega bogatstva. *Strožje vrednotenje kulturne dejavnosti* in posebej književnosti, ki nastaja v izseljenstvu, je zaradi tega mnogo *tečje* in *zahtevnejše*, čeprav je iz obsežnega gradiva mogoče in potrebno poudariti tiste izstopajoče dogodke in osebnosti, ki sodijo v vrhove slovenskega izseljenskega literarnega ustvarjanja. (358, emphasis A. Z. S.)

As the result of the changed political situation in the 1990s, Slovene emigrant literature, in the context of world literature, is being accepted into the established canon, along with the literature of recently recognized countries, black literature, South American literature, women's literature, and so on. While it is gradually taking an appropriate place in the broader field of Slovene literature, the history of emigrant literature can perhaps be better appreciated from the perspective of "minority literature."¹ First issues of magazines, reviews, and literary editions of quality minority literature that has attracted attention through being provocative have all been recognized as rather documentary in nature, primarily expressing different social and political convictions.

This third volume of *Slovenska izseljenska književnost* begins with literary works of South American Slovenes on the eve of World War II. Irene Mislej addresses prewar prose, while prewar poetry is reviewed by Zora Tavčar. In their model definitions, both researchers state similar reasons for the lack of originality in these literary works: the writer's social status (mostly lower social class) resulted in a lower literary consciousness, while the shortage of regular newspapers (particularly, more demanding literary reviews) and the lack of real opportunities obstructed the development of a rich cultural life. Mislej most closely reviews the prose of David Fortunat Doktorič, Gvidon (Zlatko) Jožef Jug, Ivan (Jan) Kacin, and Bogomil Trampuš Bratina. Because all these authors (with the exception of Gvidon Jug) wrote poetry as well, they have been included in Tavčar's chapter on poetry. In Tavčar's chapter on other authors and poets, she quite thoroughly and informatively fleshes out the image of the earliest endeavors of these poets in emigration.

¹ The current concept of "minority literature" includes groups of writers that are in a subordinate position because of linguistic, racial, sexual, political, geographic, or other differences. The following scholars have written about the relationship between the literature of the majority and minority literature: Rada Ivekovič, "Sudbina 'slabog' subjekta i kritika 'nastajanja ženske'" *Književnost* 41(1986): 8–9, 1403; Nina Pelikan Strauss, "Rethinking Feminist Humanism," *Philosophy and Literature* 14.2 (October 1990): 284–303; and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, "Sexual Linguistics, Gender, Language, Sexuality," *New Literary History* 16.3 (Spring 1985): 515–43.

The greater part of the book, addressing postwar Slovene literature in South America, is literarily richer and more diverse, as it includes the postwar generation that has considerably enriched Slovene cultural life. Similar to the research on the literature of the older generation, it interweaves various types of emigrant activity: from missionary work to social work by cultural and political organizations, as well as religious groups, to the organization of periodicals and independent publishing.

Martin Jevnikar has classified emigrant prose into three generations: the first generation, which left Slovenia in May 1945; the second, approximately ten years younger; and the third, which began its creative work only in camps or in Argentina because its representatives were born after 1920. Rather than addressing their writings, he offers a comprehensive review of editorial work and publishing based on the following publications: *Svobodna Slovenija* (1941), *Koledar Svobodne Slovenije za leto 1949 Meddobje* and *Glas Slovenske kulturne akcije*. In addition to this focus on non-literary activity, he also focuses on the following sixteen writers: Mirko Kunčič, Marijan Marolt, Ruda Jurčec, Lojze Ilija, Andrej Prebil, Franc Sodja, Jože Krivec, Stanko Kociper, Ludvik Ceglar, Vojko Arko, Zorko Simčič, Ivan Korošec, Tone Brulc, Marko Kremžar, Tinko Bertonec, and Andrej Rot.

The section on poetry by Helga Glušič arranges material with regard to collections of poetry, poets' important periods (exile, employment, visits, and journeys), and, most of all, by themes. The author concludes that the poets of the oldest generation in emigration influenced the youngest generation, who responded to the changed geographical environment with new motifs, becoming more refined and, due to social and existential factors, more sophisticated.

In the last chapter, on drama, Taras Kermauner compares emigrant dramas with dramas of the National-Liberation War. Both types of drama differ only in their chronological setting, because the dramas of the Slovene political emigration were written only after the war. Therefore, their settings have been transposed. This comparison makes the discussion more complex, but the discussion, with a combination of technical and non-technical language, sometimes becomes unclear and fragmentary because of the many digressions.

Helga Glušič's conclusion (357–60), which includes photographs of publications and their authors, focuses on the most

interesting and valuable literary works. Among the writers of the first generation, the contributions of David Fortunat Doktorič to poetry are singled out. Within the cultural activity of the second generation, she highlights the publishing, poetical, and organizational activity of the literary historian Tine Debeljak. From among the narrators that belong to this generation, she especially praises Rudi Jurčec, among the dramatists Zorko Simčič, and among the poets France Papež, Vinko Žitnik, and Vinko Rode.

The longing expressed by the older generation has also taken root in the lives of the youngest generation of emigrants, who have written down their feelings in Slovene and Spanish. The distance from the historic trauma has resulted in a fertile combination of both the cultural and geographic environments, and produced unusual and high-quality literary works. All three books of *Slovenska izseljenska književnost* have introduced these works to the Slovene public in detail and have considerably accelerated the process of their integration into the Slovene literary tradition.

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