

SLOVENE ÉMIGRÉ LITERATURE AS PART OF SLOVENE NATIONAL LITERATURE

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Abstract

Just two decades ago, still relatively little was known in Slovenia about the literary work of Slovene emigrants. The overviews and lexicons of the national literature at that time listed only a handful of the several hundred émigré writers' names. There was an equally negligible level of interest in émigré literature on the part of the mainstream cultural media, while primary and secondary schools entirely ignored this potentially important component of the national literature.

In the nineties, within the general framework of Slovene literary scholarship and the humanities, and especially within the framework of the arts, the attitude towards neglected creative figures in the Slovene diaspora changed radically. This paper comprises—following introductory data—a brief overview of the most important writers and consideration of the main issues of emigrant literature: its scope, quality and language, and its level of integration into Slovene national literature and culture.

1. Outline

The beginnings of literary creativity among those that emigrated from Slovenia date back to the first half of the eighteenth century. In the decades following, émigré literature was dominated by semi-literary forms. The most typical form was the letter, especially the missionary letter,¹ while the other main forms included travelogues, autobiographies, polemics, religious instruction, and popular scientific works, as well as some poetry (Stanonik 1995). In the 1920s and 1930s, Slovene emigrants made bolder strides in developing their literary activity, especially in the two Americas, but less so in Europe; in the U.S., their efforts were in all genres of literature.

In the second half of the twentieth century, Slovene émigré literature began to flourish in Australia as well. Lyrical works represented the most popular literary genre among Slovene authors in Australia. In the

¹ Slovene missionaries had already started publishing their letters much earlier; between 1642 and 1849 they were published in Latin and German in various publications in Augsburg, Graz and Vienna, and they were published in Slovene from 1833 onwards, after 1841 chiefly in *Zgodnja danica* (Stanonik 1999).

two Americas and Europe, reinforced with new writers from the ranks of the post-war emigrants, Slovene émigré literature approached the quality of the average level of literature in the Slovene homeland, and in many cases exceeded it. In all periods, Slovene émigré writers—approximately 300 have been recorded—published a little over 500 books and countless literary pieces in periodicals. Their contributions to the Slovene language represented a major expansion of the thematic and experiential range of Slovenia's national literature. At the same time their works published in other languages contributed to the literatures and cultures of their new homelands those characteristics that derived distinctly from the Slovene literary tradition.

The first generation of emigrants, both pre-war and post-war, were and are more active in literature than later ones. The reason for this is not just the dramatic strokes of fate in the separation from their homeland and the encounter with a foreign land. The immigrant community also had an existential need to develop and cultivate original literary creativity in the native tongue as well as other forms of artistic and folk traditions so as to protect themselves as much as possible from assimilative forces in the new homeland. The question of who wrote and who did not among emigrants was therefore decided more often by circumstances than talent. But those who wrote found it easier to publish their works than their numerous counterparts in Slovenia. Emigrants themselves provided relatively favorable publishing conditions, devoting great attention to publishing, in terms of both financing and voluntary work. In addition to this, approximately one-sixth of their works have been self-published.

There were relatively many émigré periodicals before and after the Second World War, although contributions were not always in abundance and therefore a high quality of editorial selection was the exception rather than the rule. In his bibliography, Bajec (1980) lists 128 titles of émigré periodicals before 1945 alone, while Pertot (1991) lists seventy-four titles of post-war émigré publications published (and some still being produced) by Slovenes in Argentina alone. According to a recent estimate, there are 50–60 titles of printed and/or online periodicals being published today by Slovene emigrants and their descendants,² which is an almost unbelievable figure when compared with the number of émigré publications still being produced by other European national groups. People of Danish descent in the U.S., for instance, in 1999 produced only two ethnic newspapers out of an earlier total of several hundred (Bender et al. 1999, 157). The editorial criteria in book publishing were also frequently less demanding than in Slovenia. Yet gifted writers among the emigrants raised the quality of

² Letter from Rozina Švent to Janja Žitnik, 25 September 2006.

émigré writing to such a degree that its place in the national literature and culture is no longer debatable.

2. Literary periodicals, genres, and writers

Émigré literature achieved its first high point in the 1920s and 1930s, when the number of Slovene periodicals in the U.S. exploded. Alongside certain “main” newspapers (e.g., *Prosveta*, *Ameriška domovina*, *Glas naroda*, *Enakopravnost*), magazines (*Cankarjev glasnik*), and annual publications (*Slovensko-ameriški koledar*, *Ameriški družinski koledar*, *Ave Maria koledar*) there was a veritable profusion of others. Prose, for the most part realist, evolved in terms of substance in various directions (social criticism, proletarian, autobiographical, travelogue, psychological, documentary, youth, and humorous). In poetry, the lyric was the dominant genre. In terms of its content this poetry, too, can be categorized as social criticism, proletarian poetry, confessional and love poems, nostalgic and patriotic poems about Slovenia, didactic, satirical and comic verse, and reflective lyricism. In its substance, motifs, and concepts, dramatic works resembled poetry and prose. During this period it is possible to find social criticism and proletarian drama, historical drama, “folk” plays, comedy, satire, farce, and youth plays (Petrič 1999).

The leading pre-war émigré authors in the U.S. who wrote mainly in Slovene included the following, for the most part prose writers: Jože Grdina, Ivan Jontez, Jurij M. Trunk, Kazimir Zakrajšek, Ivan Molek, Zvonko A. Novak, Andrej Kobal, Anna Praček Krasna, and Janko N. Rogelj. As an emigrant, Grdina wrote four narrative literary works—a book of memoirs and three travelogues, while Jontez published three books (a story and two novels). A year before his first departure for the U.S., Trunk published a travel book, and after his departure three narrative works. The wealth of historical detail evidenced in his works *Amerika in Amerikanci* (*America and the Americans*) and *Spomini* (*Memories*) offer a major resource for researchers in the area of emigrant history.

Alongside non-literary works, the poet, storyteller, and dramatist Zakrajšek published three dramatic texts in books in the thirties, and his narrative work during the war. As an emigrant, Molek wrote six narrative and dramatic works, which he published in book form. He was also important as a translator and editor. In his three books, Novak published two stories and a collection of sketches, while the storyteller and dramatist Kobal produced three narrative and two dramatic works. Krasna, who up until 1975 alone had more than 200 poems published in magazines, was the author of two poetry and three prose collections; Rogelj published one collection of poetry and prose and also two prose collections (Maver 1992).

As an émigré the popular poet Tomšič self-published two anthologies of simple poems, some set to music. Zorman, who also self-published as many as six anthologies of poetry, is undoubtedly the most popular Slovenian émigré poet. Much of his work has been set to music by renowned Slovene composers both in Slovenia and among the emigrant communities.

In Western Europe, the period between the wars saw the production of ten “Yugoslav” émigré periodicals and around twenty communist or left-leaning, labor periodicals on which Slovenes collaborated; some even had Slovene supplements. Of the five Catholic publications for Slovene emigrants, two were produced in Slovenia and three in Western Europe. In terms of literature, the most interesting publications were the monthlies *Naš zvon* (1925–27) and *Rafael* (1931–35), also published as *Izseljenski vestnik – Rafael* (1936–37) and as *Izseljenski vestnik* (1938–40). Literary texts in these publications do not yet represent any noted artistic endeavor, and they are of interest primarily as a historical record that colorfully reflects the experiences and feelings of Slovene emigrants, especially in the mining districts of Western Europe. The better-quality pre-war writers of Slovene literature would include primarily the poet and art historian Vojeslav Molè, who lived for thirty-three years in Krakow and his last eight in the U.S., and the narrative writer, poet and literary historian Janko Lavrin in Britain, although their main narrative works were only published in 1970 and 1987, respectively (Žitnik 1996). Mention should also be made of the work of two Slovenes in France, specifically the literary and translation work of the painter Veno Pilon and the poetry (twelve anthologies published in French) and several translations of Jean Vodain. Both rank—as do Molè and Lavrin—among what are termed the “old” or pre-war emigrants, although the main body of their literary and translation work extends into the period following the Second World War (Žitnik 1999a).

The Slovene papers and magazines in South America that were published between the wars and offer the greatest number of literary contributions (they were established in Argentina at the end of the 1920s and in the 1930s) were *Slovenski tednik*, *Duhovno življenje*, *Novi list*, and *Njiva*. Alongside Argentinian Slovenes, these publications carried the work of writers from other countries of South America. Indeed they published the four leading authors of the pre-war period: the poet and writer David Fortunat Doktorič of Uruguay, Ivan (Jan) Kacin of Argentina (he published a series of poems, narratives and essays, and two dramatic texts), the writer Gvidon Jug, also of Argentina (known primarily for his travel book *Izseljenec: Vtisi mojega potovanja v Argentino*, Buenos Aires, 1931), and the poet and writer Bogomil Trampuž Bratina of Ecuador, who alongside a book in Spanish published several Slovene poems in *Duhovno življenje*,

while the major portion of his literary estate remained in manuscript (Mislej and Tavčar 1999).

First generation post-war emigrant writers included the conservatively oriented spiritual core of Slovenian Catholicism with a range of poets, writers, dramatists, essayists, critics, literary historians, journalists, scientists, political, religious and economic writers already established in their homeland, the majority of whom—prior to this great exodus—had a wider scope of opportunities in Slovenia for their public activities (Detela 1999a: 122).

Many of them continued writing and publishing in the refugee period of 1945–49, primarily in the Austrian camps of Peggez near Lienz, Vetrinj, Spittal, and others (Švent 2006), and in the Italian camps of Servigliano, Eboli, and elsewhere. Among those who—either directly from their homeland or after living in the camps—retreated into emigrant lives in Europe, the literary field was dominated by Vinko Beličič, Stanko Janežič, and Franc Jeza, who wrote in Trieste; Vladimir Truhlar and Rafko Vodeb, who worked in Rome; Metod Turnšek, who moved from Trieste to Carinthia in 1956, and Dimitrij Oton Jeruc, who made several stops in Europe before settling in Belgium. At the beginning of the fifties the successful prose writer Igor Šentjerc emigrated to Germany and published twenty-three novels in German. Some have been translated into a wide variety of European languages (Detela 1999a). Both Slovene and German are used in particular by the writers Venčeslav Šprager and Maruša Kresè in Germany and Tea Rovšek-Witzemann, Milena Merlak Detela and Lev Detela in Vienna. As a poet, writer, dramatist, translator, editor, journalist and literary critic, Detela is one of the most prolific of the post-war émigré authors, and recently he has also become well established figure in the cultural landscape of Slovenia (Žitnik 1999b).

The writers who settled in Argentina and other South American countries at the end of the forties were published partly in the magazine *Duhovno življenje* (*Spiritual Life*), which had already been coming out for a number of years prior to their arrival, but very soon they also established their “own” periodicals. These now represent an important source in researching émigré literary history. The main post-war periodical publications are *Zbornik – Koledar Svobodne Slovenije* (est. 1949) and the magazine *Meddobje*, which started coming out soon after the establishment of the Slovenian Cultural Action (SKA) in Buenos Aires in 1954 and which enjoyed the cooperation of émigré authors from various parts of the world. The establishment of individual émigré writers was helped significantly by the dynamic activity of the SKA in the area of literary publishing.

The most prominent names of the first post-war generation include primarily Tine Debeljak, the writer, translator, editor, and literary historian. Together with France Papež, Vinko Žitnik, Vinko Rode, Tine Debeljak, Jr. and Tone Rode, he also ranks as one of the leading Argentinian-Slovenian poets. Prominent dramatists include Joža Vombregar, the returnee Zorko Simčič, and Marjan Willenpart. Producing a fair and reliable selection of the best-quality authors from among the numerous Slovene prose writers from South America is a difficult task, however. The most established are Zorko Simčič (especially with the novel *Človek na obeh straneh stene* (*The Man on Both Sides of the Wall*) and Ruda Jurčec, who gained a wide readership both with his *Ljubljanski triptih* (*Ljubljana Triptych*) and with his memoirs in three parts. Among the approximately twenty other, more prominent writers, one cannot overlook Franc Sodja, Tone Brulc, and Stanko Kociper, who as an emigrant also tried his hand once more as a dramatist; Lojze Ilija of Venezuela, whose work has been collected in five books; the prolific Ivan Korošec; the popular youth writer Mirko Kunčič; Pavel Šimac, who from Bolivia produced several books and occasionally published short prose pieces in publications of the organization *Slovenska izseljenska matica*; and the leading exponent of rather comprehensive literature on mountaineering, Vojko Arko (Jevnikar, Glušič, and Kermauner 1999).

The post-war immigrants in the U.S. also partly relied on the periodical and book publishing of the SKA. The extremely prolific and well-received Karel Mauser figures prominently among prose writers. After his departure from Slovenia, he published as many as nineteen books. Frank Bükvič wrote four literary works in immigration. As for poetry, the leading position belongs to Milena Šoukal (Glušič 1996). After her first, well-received anthology (1969) and right up until 1999 she was published only in magazines and collections, but in that year an exhaustively annotated anthology of her work was published in Celje. As an emigrant, Marjan Jakopič wrote two anthologies of poetry, while Mirko Javornik, who had already become established as a writer prior to his departure for the U.S. in 1960, wrote only the last of his five books as an emigrant (Glušič 1999).

As in the U.S., in Canada after the Second World War there were fewer émigré writers than in Argentina. Of greatest interest in literary terms is the writer and painter Ted Kramolc, whose narrative works were published in three books. In the nineties Irma Marinčič Ožbalt put her short prose works together in two collections, Ivan Dolenc did pioneering work among the Slovenes in Canada with his writing and editing (Jurak 1990), and so did Cvetka Kocjančič, with her biographical work and organizational efforts. In the eighties, the most prolific Slovene-Canadian poet, Zdravko Jelinčič, presented to the public a selection of his poetry in three anthologies, and together with his magazine pieces more than 300 of his

poems were published (Jurak 1999). Other more prominent Slovene-Canadian writers will be mentioned later.

The Slovenes in Australia began establishing themselves in the literary arena by setting up the newspaper *Misli (Thoughts)* in 1952, which in the beginning carried short prose pieces written primarily by priests, for the most part along the lines of the Mohorjeva publishers' religious educational materials. Along with other non-literary publications, *Misli* was followed by the newspaper *Vestnik*, with occasional short prose pieces on love themes and emotional descriptions of emigrants' departure from their homeland. In the first decade—up until the publication of the first Slovene book in Australia, Bert Pribac's anthology in 1962—poetry did not evince any serious literary attention. The second anthology of Pribac's poetry was published in 1973, and 1979 saw the opening of *Avstralski Slovenec (The Australian Slovene)*, which began publishing the work of Jože Žohar and Danijela Hliš. On the initiative of the poet and editor Pavla Gruden, the literary magazine *Svobodni razgovori (Free Conversations)* was launched in 1982, and a few years later it became the mouthpiece of the Slovene-Australian Literary and Artistic Circle (SALUK). In this the aforementioned poets were joined by Cilka Žagar and Peter Košak. All of them also offered their work to readers in independent anthologies, Košak in the eighties, and Pribac (with his third anthology), Gruden, Hliš, Žagar, and Žohar (with two anthologies) in the nineties (Maver 1995; 1996; 1997). Their lyrics constitute the core, in qualitative terms, of the literary efforts of Slovenes in Australia, who in their new homeland before 1996 alone published more than seventy books (Suša 1999).

In Asia and Africa there were no major Slovene communities, and from there and Papua-New Guinea it was chiefly missionaries that produced anything of note. Most of their contributions can be found in the magazines *Katoliški misijoni*, *Duhovno življenje* and *Misijonska obzorja*. From the aesthetic point of view, Jože Cukale in India and the renowned poet Vladimir Kos in Japan, who published his work in ten independent anthologies (Detela 1999b), deserve attention.

Up until Slovenia's independence, emigrant writers as a rule brought out their work either through the main emigrant publishing houses and magazines or under the aegis of Slovene media organizations just across Slovenia's borders in Klagenfurt, Gorizia, and Trieste. They were rarely published in their mother country. Importing political émigrés' works into Slovenia—even individual copies for private use—constituted a criminal offence. Over the last decade and a half, a range of publishing houses within Slovenia proper have welcomed new émigré works or reprints of some fairly successful, older vintage books that were hitherto barely accessible to readers in Slovenia.

3. Scope and quality of émigré literature

It would be difficult to conclude that the number of émigré literary works published in book form constitutes a significant part of Slovene literature as a whole. Slovene emigrants, as has been mentioned previously, from their early literary beginnings to the present day have published altogether just a little over 500 books. A different proportion might, however, result by looking at the record of all their literary work published in magazines. There are several hundred émigré writers who published their poems and short prose pieces primarily in émigré periodicals, almanachs, and collections. The authors of the synthetic overview *Slovenska izseljenska književnost* (Žitnik and Glušič 1999) have recorded approximately 300 such writers, while many names have probably remained unrecorded, partly because, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s, they frequently published their work anonymously.

Slovene émigré prose writers, poets, and dramatists who also published their work as independent books numbered just over a hundred. A comparison with the number of entries in the latest edition of the Cankarjeva založba lexicon *Slovenska književnost* (Kos, Dolinar and Blatnik 1996)—the book deals with approximately 1,300 writers—would show that the number of émigré authors of independent books of literature represents one-thirteenth of all Slovene writers from Trubar on. Such an assessment would be extremely unreliable, however, since we must take into account the fact that on the one hand this lexicon also includes leading Slovene literary historians and authors of certain other scholarly and professional texts, while on the other hand in all periods up to the present a mass of more “fringe” homeland and expatriate writers are not included in the lexicon.³ Such comparisons are therefore of little use in determining the quantitative contribution of émigré literature to the whole body of Slovene literature. What is important is that the latest edition of the Slovene literary lexicon includes as many as half of the more noteworthy émigré authors, and this also represents one of the main new features of that publication.

The importance of émigré literature and its place in the treasury of Slovene literature and culture cannot, of course, be evaluated on the basis of volume, although this is in no way negligible. I believe that the writings of Slovene emigrants are an important and still vital part of Slovene literature primarily because they enrich it with new and different literary impulses, themes, and points of view. As Helga Glušič (1999b: 358) has noted, through their artistic efforts in the Slovene language, emigrant writers are a

³ The lexicon's editors write in their introduction that they include only those more recent authors that had already become strongly established and attracted public attention, as the number of printed literary texts since the publication of the first edition of the lexicon (1982) had grown unusually large.

spiritual and cultural link for the mother country with the world and the world with the mother country. Naturally, this observation also applies to the younger emigrant generations, who for the most part are writing in foreign languages. Through original works written in Slovene, émigré writers bring to Slovene literature their intimate experience of the foreign land that has become their home. On the other hand, those who write in foreign languages and whose works have become a constituent part of the literature of other nations bring to foreign literature the elements of Slovene literary and cultural traditions.

Understandably the literature of Slovene emigrants cannot be evaluated in general terms. The literary value of individual works covers almost the kind of range seen in literature in Slovenia proper. The sole indisputable general finding is that the literary work of Slovene emigrants did not produce the kind of great names that can be found among émigré writers from some other European countries. Yet whether the literary value of work by Slovene emigrants viewed in a cross-section of their entire opus is indeed lower than that of literature in Slovenia proper, as general evaluations frequently have it, is hard to say. No one has yet calculated the proportion of "relevant" literature produced within the homeland (for instance, works included in basic literary histories and lexicons, collections of Slovene classics, and compulsory school texts) in relation to the entire literary production in the homeland over the last century. If we were to agree that the quality of Slovene émigré literature is lower, it would mean that its average literary works meet lower criteria than the average works of writers in Slovenia, while its best works do not attain the level of contemporary works within Slovenia.

Before accepting such an assessment it is worth considering the entire range of special circumstances that until recently facilitated such general impressions and conclusions in Slovenia. Among them—besides the difficulty of access and the poorer familiarity with émigré literature compared to that published in Slovenia—just one telling fact may be noted: it was only for the first time in 1993 that an émigré writer (Zorko Simčič) received the Prešeren Prize for his work. Before that it was hard even to contemplate the notion of literary judges devoting equal attention to native and émigré writers.

4. The question of language use

Up until the end of the nineteenth century, émigré—primarily missionary—texts were written for the most part in Latin, German, and other leading European languages, some even in aboriginal American languages, and only a small portion of these texts were published in Slovene. After the founding of the first Slovene émigré newspaper, *Amerikanski Slovenec*, in Chicago in 1891, signaling the beginnings of an

independent Slovene émigré culture and in particular of literary work, the Slovene language was predominant in émigré literature. Between the two world wars and soon after the Second World War, the great majority of Slovene émigré authors still wrote and published in Slovene. In these periods it was for the most part the first generation of Slovene immigrants who were writing, and in general they had a poorer mastery of the majority language in their new countries than subsequent generations. There were very few first-generation immigrants who were able soon after their arrival to create works of literature in the majority language. Another very important factor in this relationship is the fact that their literary works addressed primarily their own ethnic community, since—together with those responsible for educational, religious, and various cultural activities—writers took on the mission of preserving and strengthening the emigrant Slovene ethnic identity.

The proportion of writers of Slovene descent born within emigrant communities has grown in recent times, and almost every year some new name joins their ranks. Yet since their ties to the emigrant community and also to Slovenia are increasingly tenuous, it is getting more and more difficult to trace entirely the path by which these writers in foreign languages are transferring the Slovene literary tradition, mentality, spiritual values, and other characteristics to the foreign culture. Already less than half of Slovene émigré literature is being published in Slovene. This means that the proportion of work being published in the majority language of the receiving countries is growing, despite the fact that just before independence in 1991 Slovenia opened up its main magazines and publishing houses to émigré works in Slovene. Many émigré writers of the second and third generation list the majority language of the country as their native language on census forms, although on the other hand at least some still cultivate ties to their country of origin and the culture of their forebears. They seem increasingly more inclined to enrich the culture of their multicultural homelands with elements of Slovene culture than interested in fortifying Slovene ethnic identity in emigration.

Of the first generation of pre-war emigrants in the U.S. who wrote in English, the most outstanding are Louis Adamic (with his twenty, for the most part highly acclaimed books) and Paul Laric. Prominent among the second generation of pre-war emigrants are Mary Jugg Molek (Milanič 1999), Frank Mlakar, and Rose Mary Prosen, who published five high-quality anthologies of English poetry. Laric and Mlakar are much less prolific authors than Adamic, yet their most important books (*Maribor Remembered* and *He, the Father*) rank them among the finest of Slovene-American prose writers (Petrič 1999).

In Australia, the most notable authors in English include the poets Michelle Leber and Danijela Hliš and the writers Ivan Kobal and Janko

Majnik. In the German-speaking areas the most highly recognized émigré writers after the Second World War were Igor Šentjurc and Lev Detela. A number of émigré authors are published in French (in addition to the pre-war emigrants already mentioned) and these include the poet Evgen Bavčar; a most provocative Slovene author in Britain is Ifigenija Simonovič, while the Spanish-speaking world is more or less familiar with the writer of Slovene descent Vlady Kociancich, author of a whole series of successful novels. The success and note achieved by Louis Adamic in American literature, ethnic studies, and journalism have not been approached by any Slovene émigré writer (Christian 1996; Shiffman 2003; Žitnik 2005), although some have gained recognition in the culture of their new countries. The Canadian dramatist of Slovene descent, John Krizanc, for instance, who has been much less prolific than Adamic, received for his English dramatic work *Prague* (1983) the Governor General's Award, the highest literary prize in Canada (Jurak 1990).

Comparing the writers of the first generation of pre-war Slovene immigrants in other European countries and Canada with writers of the first generation of post-war emigrants, an interesting contrast may be observed: the former for the most part wrote in Slovene, while the post-war writers increasingly used their mother tongue and the majority language of the new country, and more recently both languages in approximately equal measure. The first emigrant generations writing also or only in the language of the receiving country were generally more educated than those using only Slovene.⁴ And since the educational level of the pre-war emigrants is lower than that of the post-war emigrants, this factor also explains the more distinct literary bilingualism of the latter.

The fact that successful literary bilingualism is closely connected to the author's education is clearly illustrated by the example of eight most prominent Slovene-Canadian writers. These are Ludve Potokar, Ted Kramolc, Irma Marinčič Ožbalt, Ivan Dolenc, Tom Ložar, Franc Šehovic, Cvetka Kocjančič, and Danica Dolenc, Jr.⁵ All of them are (were) part of the first post-war emigrant generation, and their age on arrival varied greatly. The quantity and intensity of their links with the Slovene community in Canada also varies notably. All of these Slovene-Canadian

⁴ This does not apply to Slovene writers in Argentina, where the majority of intellectuals of the first post-war generation of Slovene political émigrés in effect renounced any attempt to make headway in Argentinean culture and focused on consolidating their own national culture within their emigrant community.

⁵ Franc Sodja, who also lived most of his life in Canada, is not discussed in this group, since all his literary work was published in Argentina, where he lived for seventeen years.

writers graduated from a university. Ludve Potokar received a degree in Cleveland, Ivan Dolenc in Ljubljana, and all the others in Canada. Apart from three of them, all also earned master's degrees, doctorates, or art specializations, one in the U.S. and the rest in Canada. All except for three studied languages and literature. And all except for one, who writes only in English, are known both for their Slovene and English publications. Although they were all born in Slovenia (just one was born in an Austrian refugee camp), it is clear to at least some of them that their mastery of English is now much better than their knowledge of Slovene, which they use with less and less frequency in their everyday lives. For this reason some of these writers need the assistance of Slovene editors for work published in Slovene.⁶

Whenever the subject and message of their work is aimed at a Slovene readership, they write in their native language, but whenever they wish to reach the wider Canadian society, to which the Canadian-born children and grandchildren of the Slovene writers belong, they write in English. Often they then translate their work themselves into the other language. The majority are also involved in translating the work of other authors, whereby they successfully supplement their mission as cultural intermediaries. The fact that the Canadian government has financially supported the production of but one Slovene-Canadian work of literature is telling evidence that Slovenes in Canada have been forced both to seek independent ways of promoting creative writing in their native language and of communicating Slovene culture to the Anglophone majority.

In the second generation of Slovene writers in Canada (which includes, for instance, the dramatist John Krizanc) there is for the most part no such dual mission. Their literary ambitions are geared towards the Anglophone audience and literary critics. They appear before this audience as Canadians and not as immigrants to Canada who might in the publication and promotion of their work at least occasionally expect the support of their ethnic community or the support of government funds aimed at implementing a multicultural policy.

The conditions for *émigré* writers to produce bilingual literature differ greatly from country to country. The multicultural policies and practices of distinctly ethnically mixed countries do not in themselves ensure equal opportunities for the development and growth of all cultures in

⁶ Other authors have come to similar conclusions. Lenček (1990: 218; 1992: 21–22), for example, explains the ambivalent influence of education on the cultural identity of Slovene intellectuals in the U.S.: “The higher the education that Slovene emigrants brought to the USA, the longer they cling to the Slovene language and ethnic identity. The higher their level of education attained in English, the more easily and rapidly they are Americanized.”

the multiethnic societies (Žitnik 2004). An individual émigré writer's success in a new country frequently depends less on the literary value of his or her work and more on individual enterprise. The writer's ideological orientation can also open doors at politically inclined publishing houses and magazines. Those that acquire the status of writer-in-exile are also even regarded by certain media in the new country as more interesting than the country's native writers.

In order to get a foothold in the majority culture and gain the widest possible readership, some writers have renounced writing in their mother tongue and have devoted themselves entirely (and some very successfully) to writing in the majority language. Those that became expressly bilingual writers have chosen a more difficult path. In the majority language, owing to poorer personal connections with the main publishers and editors, many have found it harder to get published than their fellow writers from the majority national group. The most enterprising ones have set up their own literary magazines or even their own publishing companies in the new country (Detela, Dolenc, Pribac). And if their publications produced by these companies were sufficiently well received, they then found it easier to break into the main cultural media of their new country. Yet owing to their monolingualism, a certain number of high-quality émigré writers remain accessible only to members of their original native people/language. Their literary work actually represents a characteristic and very important, albeit isolated and unintegrated part of the diverse culture in a multiethnic country that has accepted them into its economic, political and legal system, but not into its culture.

5. The “return” of emigrant literature to the original homeland

In the first decades after the Second World War, cultural and political conditions in Slovenia served to prevent rather than encourage the integration of émigré literature into the culture. In the seventies, slightly more opportunities were opened up to start this process (e.g. Pogačnik 1972a and 1972b, 70–79), which until 1990 remained within the framework of individual research interests, personal contacts with expatriate writers, and occasional expatriate literary publications in certain Slovene literary magazines or with certain publishers in Slovenia. After Slovene independence, it became a general feature of contemporary Slovene culture within Slovenia proper.

For Slovene culture to be more coherent in terms of the connection of all of its constituent parts—within Slovenia proper, in neighboring countries, and within emigrant communities—its various parts and the links between them must be further strengthened. At the same time, preserving Slovene identity anywhere, regardless of map coordinates, constitutes a natural imperative for a nation that in demographic terms is in gradual

decline. Yet conditions for preserving and further developing literary and journalistic (as well as any other kind of artistic and cultural) activities on the part of Slovene emigrants are becoming increasingly difficult. This problem has been discussed in a profusion of articles in emigrant periodicals. Irrespective of the examples of individual emigrant cultural societies and institutions that are still active and resilient, we might state in general that the cultural core of Slovene emigrant communities is no longer being regenerated sufficiently by new generations. Fewer and fewer young people are interested in working for emigrant organizations, although the languages of these new generations are gradually supplanting Slovene in emigrant organizations as well. It is understandable, therefore, that the number of emigrant magazines continues to decline (Horvat 2000), as does the volume of emigrant literary publishing. Nevertheless, new Slovene literary works are still appearing abroad. In order to publish their work émigré writers are turning increasingly to publishers and magazines in Slovenia. The reason for this is not just the greater openness there to émigré culture, but also the reduced opportunities for publishing Slovene literary works in the diaspora.

The “return” of expatriate literature to Slovenia is particularly evident in three areas: in the arts, in literary scholarship, and in education. A clearer picture of the radically accelerated tempo and the dramatically increased dimensions of this process since 1990 is afforded by very telling data. In the first eight years of the past decade alone, more emigrant books of literature were produced in Slovenia than in all previous periods together—since 1836, that is, when the first emigrant book was published in Slovenia.⁷ Moreover, of the nine publications in Slovenia to date of group anthologies of expatriate poetry and prose, only the first was published in the eighties, and the last two after 2000, while the remaining six were published in the condensed period of 1990–93.

A similarly radical change can be observed within Slovene literary scholarship. The first comprehensive overview of this literature was published in Ljubljana in 1999 (Žitnik and Glušič 1999), while émigré literature enjoyed greater inclusion in the Cankarjeva založba lexicon *Slovenska književnost* and in *Pregled književnosti V: Slovenska književnost 20. stoletja* by Andrijan Lah in 1996, and in the main literary history review of the recent period, *Slovenska književnost III* (Pogačnik et al. 2001) only in 2001. In these books, émigré literature is presented much more thoroughly

⁷ This was a book by Franc Pirc entitled *Franz Pirz, misijonar v polnozhni Ameriki: Podbreshanom, svojim nekdanjim farmanom is Noviga Jorka v spomin (Franc Pirc, missionary in North America: to the people of Podbrežje, his former parishioners, as a memento from New York)*, N. od Kleinmayr, Ljubljana 1836.

than in all previous studies of Slovene literary history. The number of domestic researchers of expatriate literature and their monographs, conference papers, and other publications in this field rose dramatically in the first half of the nineties, and the same period saw an equally marked increase in the number of cultural magazines in Slovenia showing a distinct interest in émigré literature.

In schools, émigré literature is rarely mentioned, except at the university level. Primary school syllabi for Slovene studies include no discussion at all of émigré literature, although its inclusion in the fundamental works of Slovene literary history serves to fulfil the basic condition for its integration into both primary and secondary school syllabi. Yet even in secondary school textbooks and reading matter for the study of Slovene literature, Slovene émigré literature is sadly still not represented with sufficient balance. Here, for comparison, the main Slovene writers from autochthonous minorities in neighboring countries are relatively well presented, while in the more extensive selection of secondary school readers, textbooks, workbooks, and reading lists for compulsory and additional home reading assignments there are no émigré authors at all, except in the previously mentioned review by Andrijan Lah of 1996, which is not one of the government approved secondary school textbooks, however.

An attempt to compensate for this lack is the relatively recent textbook for the fourth (final) year of grammar schools and four-year professional schools, *Branja 4* (Ambrož et al. 2003). Apart from this Slovene secondary school students can familiarize themselves with a brief overview of émigré literature by means of a video on the preservation of Slovene in neighboring countries and among emigrant communities, and this is a component part of the textbook set *Na pragu besedila* (2001) for third-year secondary students. The issue of more integrated involvement of expatriate literature in the study of Slovene literature has for the moment been left entirely to the interest and resourcefulness of the individual teacher.

At the University of Ljubljana, some of the literary works by Slovene émigré authors are included in the under- or post-graduate study program at the following departments of the Faculty of Arts: the Department of English and American Studies, the Department of Slovene Language and Literature, the Department of Slavonic Languages and Literature, and the Department of Romance Languages and Literature.

Increased interest in expatriate culture and literature is one of the reasons why in recent times several acknowledged émigré writers have returned to Slovenia. Owing to the changed cultural and political conditions following Slovenia's independence, and partly also owing to the economic crisis in Argentina, over the last decade and a half even some writers and

other artists born abroad have settled back in their parents' country. A typical example is the writer, journalist, and former president of the Slovenian Cultural Action, Andrej Rot, who upon his arrival in 1991 took the position of editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Slovenec*, and in 1993 assumed a top position on national radio. Of the writers from the first generation of post-war emigrants the greatest stir was caused by the return of Zorko Simčič, while numerous authors, including Bert Pribac, Lev Detela, Venčeslav Šprager and Ifigenija Simonovič were from Slovene independence until recently living more or less alternately in their two countries, affording them closer contacts with the two cultures and easing fulfillment of their role as cultural intermediaries.⁸ All these examples of course involve bilingual writers.

Among the eloquent indicators of the return of émigré literature is the fact that the number of expatriate authors who are members of the Society of Slovene writers is gradually increasing. Those Slovene writers who continue to live and write within émigré communities have "returned" to the mother country culture only in the transposed sense of the word, but for that reason their return is no less secure and far-reaching. The literary "return" of authors writing in Slovene is now beyond dispute. A much harder job in making literary inroads in their native land has awaited those Slovene émigré authors who write mainly or solely in other languages. Considerable effort is required to put together the funds for Slovene translations of their best works, not to mention the polemic in connection with the integration of their works into the discussion of Slovene émigré literature (Lah 1999). It would appear that the issue of integrating Slovene émigré literature into the body of national literature is closely connected to the issue of its scope, and this is linked to the issue of its language.

Since the purpose and consequence of the current process of the "return" of émigré literature is the permanent integration of expatriate writing into the national literature and culture, a key question becomes the scope or boundaries of national literature as such: which literary works of Slovene emigrants and their descendants belong to Slovene literature? The critical dividing line in categorizing individual literary works into one or the other national literature is—according to the criterion most generally applied—the language used for such literature or for its first publication. If in a simplified definition we therefore followed strictly this one criterion, we would assert that Slovene literature refers to Slovene-language literary works. By this definition we might also include by way of exceptions foreign-language texts by those writers whose main works have otherwise

⁸ This was also the subject of a discussion with Zorko Simčič, Bert Pribac and Ifigenija Simonovič as part of an Evening of Expatriate Literature (Ljubljana, KUD France Prešeren) on 2 July 2002, moderated by this author.

been written in Slovene (Kos 1991). On the other hand, the main comprehensive overviews of Slovene literature include in their discussion certain writers who wrote exclusively in foreign languages (such as Louis Adamic), whereby the criteria for such inclusion are extremely vague.

It is only dawning on us tortuously and extremely slowly that the boundaries of national culture and literature are wider than those we acknowledge. If in their famous works the founding fathers of the Slovene literary language and the national “awakeners” addressed their compatriots in Latin and German (Bohorič, Pohlin, Linhart and so forth), we are also today being addressed by many noted Slovene émigré writers in different languages. Yet this circumstance—just as in earlier times—cannot today justify excluding their contributions from Slovene literary history.

If we regard national literature as the literature of a nation with one native language, then its determination through the national language is, of course, beyond dispute. Yet since the concept of the nation is not ethnically, culturally, and linguistically homogeneous, national culture, national literature, and even the national language(s) cannot be homogeneous concepts. In the European nation-state mentality this is probably much more difficult to conceive of than in the traditionally multiethnic American, Canadian, or Australian mentalities. In the modern social reality the nation exists on several different levels in terms of its ethnic, linguistic, and cultural aspects. In this way the national culture also exists on several levels, and if we are prepared to view national literature from a broader perspective, that too exists on different levels. The issue of integrating the “foreign-language” literary work of autochthonous and immigrant minorities in Slovenia into the Slovene national culture represents merely the other side of the issue of integrating foreign-language literature by emigrants and Slovenes in neighboring countries into the culture of Slovenia proper.

The proposed version of the Slovene national cultural program (2000) identifies the Slovene language as a vital element of cultural identity and the foundation of the national identity, and this of course expressly relates to ethnic Slovenes. Such a role of the Slovene language indeed does not even relate to those citizens of Slovenia that are members of autochthonous and much larger immigrant minorities and whose non-Slovene ethnic and linguistic affiliation in no way precludes their Slovene national and frequently also cultural identity. Nor does it relate to those Slovenes that emigrated abroad or are members of Slovene minorities in neighboring countries and whose foreign national and linguistic identity equally does not exclude their Slovene ethnic and their at least partial Slovene cultural affiliation. Cultural integration and assimilation are processes that can involve several generations and cover many intervening levels, whereby language is not always the most crucial factor. In the

European context, the concept of national literature may therefore have a dual meaning: 1. the literary works of a nation irrespective of language; 2. literary works in the majority national language. Just as in the modern concept of the nation, ethnic dividing lines are increasingly disappearing, in the modern concept of national literature, linguistic dividing lines are becoming more blurred.

The majority language in Slovenia is in no respect under threat if—as many other nations have done—we too appropriately expand our concept of the Slovene identity (and with it the conditioned concept of national culture and literature) and align it with the polyvalent linguistic and cultural relations in modern Slovene society, which are the consequence of the members of this society going abroad and of its former and new members returning or arriving from abroad. The geographic mobility and changing ethnic and language make-up of those who belong to it does not impoverish Slovene culture. Indeed within the continuous transformation of the world's ethnic and linguistic composition it merely updates Slovene culture and in this way at a given moment even strengthens it. Many cultures have, by opening up their linguistic boundaries, outlived their languages through the art of writing in other languages as well, and their most outstanding achievements have secured for them a permanent place in world literature.

By removing unnecessary ideological and linguistic barriers Slovenia can support a more durable and comprehensive return of expatriate (including foreign-language) literature to a newly defined arena of national culture. A return with a multitude of reservations, questions, and arguments on both sides does not just critically shake up and spiritually enliven the national culture, but can also to a significant degree contribute to a balancing of its all too often contradictory self-images. On the other hand, the work of foreign-language émigré authors can grow into a bridge between Slovene and world culture only if the mother country ensures accessibility on its own side of that bridge.

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POVZETEK

SLOVENSKA IZSELJENSKA KNJIŽEVNOST KOT DEL SLOVENSKE NACIONALNE KNJIŽEVNOSTI

Literarno delo slovenskih izseljencev je bilo v matični domovini še pred dvema desetletjema sorazmerno malo poznano. Tedanji sintetični pregledi in leksikoni nacionalne književnosti navajajo od več sto izseljenskih piscev le peščico imen. Prav tako neznatno je bilo zanimanje osrednjih kulturnih medijev za izseljensko književnost, medtem ko je osnovno in srednje šolstvo ta pomembni sestavni del nacionalne literature v celoti ignoriralo. V devetdesetih letih se je v okviru slovenske literarne znanosti in humanistike nasploh, predvsem pa tudi v okviru matične kulture odnos do spregledanih ustvarjalcev v diaspori bistveno spremenil. Izseljenska književnost je na tem mestu obravnavana z vidikov, ki omogočajo kar najbolj zgoščeno predstavitev osnovnih podatkov, hkrati pa nudijo dovolj širok vpogled v problematiko nastajanja, uveljavljanja in pomena tega dela narodne

književnosti. Prispevek torej – po uvodnih podatkih – vključuje kratek pregled najpomembnejših piscev in se v nadaljevanju dotakne osrednjih vprašanj zdomske književnosti: njenega obsega, kakovosti in jezika ter njene integriranosti v nacionalno literaturo in kulturo.