

*The “Erased” between the Politics of Denial and the Exemplarity
of the Contemporary Slovenian Novel*

Summary

Soon after Slovenia’s proclamation of independence in 1991, the Slovenian authorities removed about 25,000 people (designated the “erased”) from the registry of permanent residents. They thus disenfranchised and turned this group into illegal aliens reduced to “bare existence” (Agamben). The removal resulted from the ethno-nationalist concept of the Slovenian state and became an instrument of its biopolitical governmentality. The powers that be sought to minimize the size of the ethnically non-Slovenian population, suspecting it of disloyalty and stamping it with the Balkanist stereotypes typical of “nesting Orientalism” (Bakić-Hayden). The distancing from the “Southerners” allowed the Slovenians to perceive themselves as holders of a pristine work ethic and the (central) European democratic culture, suitable for entry into the global empire of late capitalism. After a decade of silence, the topic of the “erased” flooded the media as a response to verdicts by the Slovenian Constitutional Court and the European Court of Human Rights, which demanded that the state correct the injustice done to them. The political debate on their removal from the registry (the “erasure”) reached its peak during the 2004 referendum on this problem. Moreover, those that were “erased” organized themselves to fight for their rights in 2002 and their campaigns were supported by the international leftist activists and civil society. However, a discourse of “organized innocence” (Jalušič) prevails in relation to this group, similar to the denial of war crimes in the post-Yugoslav countries.

Literature started to resist the politics of denial rather late and within the limits of the mimetic aesthetic representation. Although they addressed the wars in the Balkans in a timely manner, the Slovenian writers risk breaking their traditional ideological bond with the nation if they criticize the nationalist violence in their own country and compel their readers to play the role of accomplices instead of that of external arbitrators. Published in 2014 and 2015, three novels about the “erased” touched on the social processing of the trauma. With their exemplary narratives, they sought to evoke the sympathy for the group: they metonymically replace the dehumanized crowd managed by biopolitics with the humanized individual victims. In Miha Mazzini’s *The Erased*, however, the appropriation of the global genre of the noir thriller ideologically constricts the critique of biopolitics of the “erasure.” Polona Glavan, in her social novel *Anyway* represents the sociolectal differentiation of the perspectives on the group through the pattern of the modern tragedy, replacing conciliatory closure with a troubled scene of historical contingency. Dino Bauk’s novel *The End*. Again depicts how ordinary people (friends from a multicultural neighborhood) deal with their sense of guilt for not helping the “erased”. Using the elements of the fantastic genre, the author evokes how helpless literature is in healing the trauma of the removal, notwithstanding its mnemonic capability and virtuality.

Keywords: biopolitics, ethnonationalism, trauma, denial of guilt, Slovenian novel, exemplarity

Предео са словеначког Иван Антић