OTHERNESS AND VICTIMHOOD IN THE TABLOID PRESS: THE CASE OF THE "REFUGEE CRISIS" IN "SLOVENSKE NOVICE"

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ABSTRACT

Otherness and Victimhood in the Tabloid Press: The Case of the "Refugee Crisis" in "Slovenske Novice"

By using critical discourse analysis, the article focuses mainly on ways in which migrants are constructed through language in the most widely-read Slovenian tabloid newspaper, *Slovenske novice* (Slovenian News). The article begins with a definition of tabloid discourse and continues with an empirical exploration of how migrants are constructed as "the other" and Slovenians as victims. The empirical material covers the period from 20 August 2015 to 31 December 2015. The author establishes that tabloid discourse mainly employs binary dichotomies between "us", who are represented as victims, heroes, and heroic victims, and "them", who embody a threat to the culture and security of the majority population.
KEY WORDS: migration, tabloid, *Slovenske novice*, othering, victim

IZVLEČEK

Drugost in žrtvenost v tabloidnem tisku: primer »begunske krize« v »Slovenskih novicah«

Članek s pomočjo kritične analize diskurza obravnava predvsem jezikovne načine, s pomočjo katerih so migranti konstruirani v osrednjem in najbolj branem slovenskem dnevniku – *Slovenskih novicah*. Ker se *Slovenske novice* žanrsko umeščajo med tabloide, članek najprej opredeli elemente tabloidov, nato pa s pomočjo empirične študije pokaže, kako so bili v obdobju med 20. 8. 2015 in 31. 12. 2015 migranti konstruirani kot »drugi«, Slovenci pa kot žrtve. S pomočjo analize avtorica ugotavlja, da tabloidni diskurz preigrava predvsem binarne dihotomije med »nami kot tistimi, ki poosebljamo žrtve, heroje in heroizirane žrtve, in »njimi«, ki za večinsko populacijo poosebljajo kulturno in varnostno grožnjo.
KLJUČNE BESEDE: migracije, tabloid, *Slovenske novice*, drugačenje, žrtev

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INTRODUCTION: FRAMING TABLOID DISCOURSE[1]

Along with the paradigmatic division between serious journalism and the tabloid press that mainly relies on the distinction between the supposed "objectivity" of hard news vs. the "non-objectivity" of tabloid news (see Jontes 2009), Luthar (1998a: 7–8), in a study of the Slovenian media, identifies some other prevalent features of tabloid discourse that are in line with other referential authors' analyses of mostly US, Australian and English tabloids (see Langer 1998; Glynn 2000; Debrix 2008; van Dijk 1992; Sparks 2000). First, Luthar finds that in tabloid discourse, providing information is a secondary matter, as tabloid news is more focused on constructing human dramas. This means that the whole iconographical look of the tabloids, the visual style, and the para-social relationship with the imaginary audience, construct a space between the tabloid producers and the audience as a social occasion whose primary function is to generate exciting gossipy small talk over human dramas. Although the tabloids still convey information, the audience views the tabloids similarly to other popular genres, whose main intention is not the provision of information, but rather of moral judgement of the world based on "common sense", sociability and routine confrontation with uncertainty (Luthar 1998a: 39).

Second, in the tabloid news a problem or event is narrated in the manner of a moral dilemma. The main task of the tabloid news is to offer a moral judgement of the world or the event described in the story. This results in constructing the story around Manichean binary oppositions between "us" as "good" and "them" as "bad". Events are presented through narrations concerning two-dimensional conflicts. They are transformed into dramatic stories, into polarized melodramas (Luthar 1998a: 10). An investigative reporter plays the central mediatory role between safety and danger, honesty and crime, individual and institution, justice and injustice. This communication satisfies the viewer's need for truth, honesty, intrigue, and secrecy (Luthar 1998a: 37).

Third, events are reported within a referential field of personal experience and common sense, with common sense being the tabloid ideology *par excellence*, instituted as natural and founded on the presumption of fundamental, undeniable, universal truths (Luthar 1998a: 7–8). Another important feature of tabloid news is the personification or subjectivisation of journalistic language, which has several aspects: the narration of events as "human interest stories", the use of individual experiences as a referential framework for the understanding of structural phenomena, focusing on individual experience and the emotional states of the victims and witnesses of an event etc. (Luthar 1998a: 10; Langer 1998).

Although the focus of tabloid news might seem of no political significance, the tabloid press is deeply political and has to be analysed as such. It is also important to point out that the use of common sense as a potential ground for legitimating power is at work in the tabloid genre, and as such is worth studying precisely because it sustains and perpetuates what is considered "normal" or "common" in a society. Furthermore, tabloid news is political because it constructs certain cultural constellations as natural while placing others outside the realm of common sense (Luthar 1998a: 10). Ideology in the tabloid news is thus not

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1 This article was partially written during the author's research stay at the University of Oslo, Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages. Part of the research results presented here were related to the project Discourses of the Nation and the National.

overt – the tabloid news does not lie to and manipulate us, it does not speak untruths, but rather it colonizes our common sense. As such, tabloid news serves generally as a conduit for the circulation of popular ways of knowing (Glynn 2000: 7).

The aim of this paper is to explore Slovenian tabloid discourse during the 2015 "refugee crisis".[2] By taking into consideration *Slovenske novice* – Slovenia's first tabloid daily, in print since 1992 – the article seeks to explore the status of Slovenians as victims, as this has proved to be an important instance of the more general process of constructing migrants as "others". *Slovenske novice* is the newspaper with the largest circulation in Slovenia, and as such has to be taken into consideration as an important creator of discourses affecting the current state of mind of the Slovenian population. For this reason, in the analysis that follows the tabloid press will be understood as a discursive formation in which relations of power are inscribed in the imagery constructed by the tabloid, affirming and reflecting the common sense of its readers. *Slovenske novice* will also be considered not only as a specific tabloid genre with a single format (see Glynn 2000) but as a part of a broader landscape of tabloid culture[3] that has become the dominant mode of communication, representation and expression as well as entertainment since the 1990s (Debrix 2008; Luthar 1998b; Glynn 2000).

In order to analyse the discursive formations, the analysis adopts an approach in line with critical discourse analysis. It mostly focuses on the level of textual analysis (see Fairclough 1992), as the aim is to explore features of tabloid discourse and show how tabloid discourses construct migrants and migration in the specific context of the refugee situation in the selected period. The analysis presented below was conducted on a sample of articles from the print edition of *Slovenske novice*, the Slovenian daily tabloid (circulation 336,000) with the highest readership amongst all Slovenian print media. 146 articles published between 20 August 2015 and 31 December 2015 were sampled by searching for the keywords migration, immigration, refugee and their derivatives.[4] Therefore, I turn to critical discourse analysis to show how discourse has to be interpreted not as mere representations but as reproducing, constructing, legitimizing and sustaining relations of power between "us" and "them" (Fairclough 1992; Machin, Myer 2012).

I empirically explore three main modes of victimization and othering. First, I explore how Slovenians were constructed as victims of migrants who represented a cultural threat. Second, I explore how Slovenians were constructed as victims of migrants who represented a security threat. Third, I explore how "genuine" refugees were constructed as victims of "fake"/economic refugees. I conclude the article with a broader contextualization of the status of victim and self-victimization in Slovenian imagery and in tabloid culture as a popular phenomenon of Western origin.

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2   For the description of the socio-political context of the "refugee crisis" in Slovenia please see the introduction to this section.

3   Many authors claim that we now live in a tabloid culture that is well palpable in both serious and tabloid media (Luthar 1998a, 1998b; Glynn 2000; Debrix 2008; Jontes 2009).

4   The press clipping was obtained from the Republic of Slovenia Government Communication Office.

"OTHERS" AND VICTIMS IN DISCOURSE

"Us" victims of a cultural threat

Constructing migrants as culturally different is the cornerstone of the process of "othering" that will be explored in this analysis. Cultural difference was the precondition for constructing migrants as a threat to the Slovenian community, which consequently was presented as threatened and victimized. In the analysed material, cultural differences were expressed mainly through descriptions of migrants' character. Food and waste were the main categories through which a clear division between the "western" and "eastern" cultural and civilizational ethos was made. Below we present two excerpts from different articles which show how cultural difference was constructed. The paragraphs describe the migrants' attitude towards the food that was given to them by humanitarian workers and towards the waste that was left behind once migrants left the places they stayed in (such as fields and stadiums) while they were waiting for transportation to registration centres. The first example describes the fields that migrants stayed in during their journey, while the second describes the reaction to migrants by the Major of Zavrč, a village where migrants were temporarily sheltered in a stadium.

> (1) In the memory of Slovenians remained scenes which in our culture are difficult to understand: piles of things thrown away by refugees while they travelled: fish cans still unopened, blankets and rolls of plastic, bags of food. Even in their camp in the middle of the fields and temporary accommodations, things were left behind and the volunteers cleaned them up. (Šuljić 2015b: 3)

> (2) […] when the buses finally drove away, it was clear what a mess they had left behind […] "You cannot imagine, where they were standing, they pissed, where they lay, they shat. For us that were building the Zavrč stadium, this stadium is for us like a Mosque for them, where they for sure do not go number two," said the mayor of Zavrč, Miran Vuk, while watching the football team during their daily practice. "The situation at this stadium is a great tragedy. There are 300 children training there and now we have to clean and disinfect everything. They went number two on the two auxiliary fields, the main field and the whole grandstand. Two of them even indulged themselves and pooped in the guest lodge. In the morning the janitor had to throw up seven times before he managed to clean the filth, even though he claims he has a strong stomach. Yesterday we prepared 1,200 meals, but only two were eaten. In our schools we have a lot of children who are hungry and the municipality has to pay for hot meals for them. These refugees have plenty of money, modern telephones and navigation devices, so that they know exactly where to go and what rights they have. In the morning there were two refugees that came for coffee in a café and they wanted to pay with banknotes of hundreds of euros and dollars," says Vuk. (Andlović 2015: 3)

In the first example the distinction between "our" culture and the migrants' culture is delimited explicitly when the journalist writes about "scenes which in our culture are difficult to understand", implying firstly that the two cultures are different and secondly that there is a gap between them. By making a reference to "Slovenian memory", the journalist is constructing what Wodak et al. (1999) define as the "collective we" – a discursive mechanism that introduces the Slovenians as a togetherness, an abstract national

and cultural community within which all the potential differences (ethnic, religious, class, lifestyle etc.) are blurred with the intent to preserve the imaginary cohesion among Slovenians. Furtherly, the reference to a common memory facilitates the reader's identification with what signifies "Slovenian" in order to delimit it from what signifies the "other"/alien. Therefore, if "Slovenian" signifies cleanness and order as well as taking care of waste left behind, "migrant" signifies irrational polluting and food wasting.

It is clear that in the first example cultural distinction is organized along the binary opposed characteristics that distinguish "us" (Slovenians) and "them" (migrants). This continues in the second example where personal pronouns "us" and "they" were used consistently throughout the example. This linguistic binarity, whose function is to align readers alongside or against certain groups or ideas (Machin, Myer 2012: 84) was narrated within the referential field of the mayor's personal experience and through a mechanism of structural contradictions that van Dijk (1998) calls "ideological squaring" – i.e., positive self-representation and negative representation of "other". Ideological squaring becomes visible when texts: (1) emphasize or express positive information/characteristics of "us"; (2) emphasize or express negative information or characteristics of "others"; (3) de-emphasise the positive characteristics of "others"; and (4) de-emphasise the negative characteristics of "us". In the two examples above, Slovenians are positively represented as clean and self-sacrificing (things were left behind and volunteers cleaned them up; In the morning the janitor had to throw up seven times), poor and victimized (in our schools we have a lot of children who are hungry and the municipality has to pay for their hot meals) while migrants were portrayed as filthy (where they were standing they pissed, where they lay they shat), ungrateful (yesterday we prepared 1,200 meals, but only two were eaten), conniving and wealthy (these refugees have money, modern telephones and navigation devices, so that they know exactly where to go and what rights they have). Especially in the second example, events were dramatized through the use of explicit words (piss, shit, throw up) and words such as "tragedy" etc.

Douglas (1984: 37) shows that objects or ideas that confuse or contradict cherished classifications provoke hostile behaviour that condemns "them". She calls these confusing or contradictory elements ambiguous, anomalous, and indefinable, "uncomfortable facts, which refuse to be fitted in," which, she claims, "we find ourselves ignoring or distorting so that they do not disturb these established assumptions". The migrants' practices are indeed constructed as such contradictory elements. Waste and excrement are described as being out of place (food strewn about the field, excrement outside the toilet). This makes the migrants symbolic of disturbing, polluting, and dirty elements unwanted in an ethnically clean environment – i.e. "our" stadium, where 300 Slovenian children train, and which has a sacral symbolic meaning to locals. The stadium is rhetorically similed – explicitly compared (Reisigl, Wodak 2001: 54) to a sacral place (a mosque), and as such presented as very important for the community. This distinction, along with the reports about cleaning up after the migrants, creates two symbolically and culturally different "spaces", clearly placing a negative value (dirt, pollution, ingratitude, conniving) on the "migrant's space" in contrast to the "Slovenian space" (clean, modest, welcoming and self-sacrificing). As Douglas would put it, migrants appear to be culturally different precisely because their culture and practices are constructed in a way that morally contradicts Slovenian codes, habits, and character. The migrant "other" with his habits and practices becomes a cultural

threat to the majority population, as it threatens Slovenian purity and homogeneity by barbarically invading their symbolic space.

"Us" victims of a security threat

However, the "othering" which took hold of the portrayal of migrants can be achieved by highlighting another aspect of migrants' cultural difference – i.e., their alleged criminality (Ibrahim 2005: 175). This aspect was especially evident in reports on migrants' connections to possible terrorist activities. An analysis of how action is represented (see Machin, Myer 2012: 104) showed that migrants were only sporadically represented as active agents, and those cases were limited to events when migrants were described as performing criminal, deviant or aggressive activity. The transitivity of sentences – i.e. studying what people are depicted as doing and referring to who does what to whom (agency), and how as well as what gets done (action) – discloses positions of power and powerlessness (Machin, Myer 2012: 104–113) and demonstrates what kind of agency is ascribed to migrants. In example 3 below, we can see that the migrants are represented as agents (pushing, setting things on fire) against the police, who are represented as passive actors. Further on we encounter reports about aggressive migrants and victimized Slovenian policemen.

> (3) Yesterday the situation at the Brežice accommodation centre was chaotic: illegal refugees were pushing against the fence that was being guarded by the special police forces […] smoke was rising in the fenced area as migrants were clearly still setting things on fire as a sign of protest […] (Šuljić 2015a: 3)

The construction of migrants as dishonest, conniving, ungrateful and criminal was in some cases radicalized by representing migrants as a terrorist threat, as demonstrated by the following two examples:

> (4) Islamic militants in Rigonce! […] we obtained the memory card from a camera which was apparently forgotten by refugees. Photos and a video show many young men, including Osama bin Laden. One of them (volunteers) found a forgotten camera and two memory cards […] One of the memory cards was useless, the other had 29 photos and a video. […] Doubts are cast by a photo of Osama bin Laden. […] So what are sympathizers of bin Laden's work doing in the river of refugees and migrants? Where are they going and what are their intentions? […] "In the context of the treatment of the refugee wave we are constantly aware of the risk that such persons can be mixed with refugees," says Drago Menegalija of the General Police Directorate. Osama bin Laden is dead, but apparently he lives in the hearts of Muslim extremists. […] The tattoo on the left arm could facilitate the search for this guy. Where in Europe is he now? (Šuljić 2015b: 3)

> (5) Migrants a potential threat even to the nuclear power plant? No wonder some Slovenian citizens and the readers of *Slovenske novice* are increasingly starting to worry whether safety is sufficiently (reliably) taken care of […] for the security of the Nuclear power plant, which, as we know, is located not very far from the Slovenian – Croatian border and not far from the opaque river of different kinds of migrants that enter the territory of our country. […] "There are almost certainly fighters from the Islamic State among the refugees, and they can have the exact location

of our nuclear power plant on their smart mobile phones," said an outspoken reader from Ptuj. (Vatovec 2015a: 4)

The article from which the fourth example is taken starts with the headline "Islamic militants in Rigonce!" This claim, emphasized with an exclamation point, is supported in the story by "evidence" collected by the journalist who at the same time adopts the role of guardian of moral order, that of a detective or investigative journalist. The reader is presented with evidence the journalist found on the camera. The story shows several photos from the camera – amongst them a photo of Osama bin Laden and a portrait of a man with a criminalizing black strip over his eyes, implicitly suggesting that the migrant who forgot the camera has connections to terrorists. The potential threat to Slovenians is emphasized through explicit intertextuality, i.e. a direct quotation from Drago Menegalija, the police's public relations officer for crime. Explicit intertextuality is commonly used in journalism when the quoted source is an important authority and when the information given by the source is dramatic and important (Fairclough 1992: 55). Although Mr. Menegalija was not explicitly referring to the story covered by the newspaper, his quote was recontextualized and presented in the story in order to ascribe it a new meaning. By putting together fragments such as the quotation from Menegalija, a photo of a man with a black strip over his eyes, and a photo of Osama bin Laden, the journalist creates a sequence that narrows down possible interpretations when the reader combines these elements (Barthes 1966: 203–204). The connotation of such syntax is quite unambiguous – the migrants in the pictures from the forgotten camera had links to terrorism. In order to further frame the reader's interpretation, the text poses rhetorical questions that appeared under the photos: "What are sympathizers of Bin Laden doing amongst the refugees?"; "Where are they going and what are their intentions?"; "Where in Europe are they now?" presupposing (see van Dijk 1993: 276) that the man who lost the camera was a sympathizer of Bin Laden, that he was with the refugees who crossed Slovenia, and that he has potentially dangerous plans which could possibly be implemented somewhere in Europe. Posing such rhetorical questions with these implicit presuppositions allows the journalist to direct the readers towards preferred meanings without explicitly claiming that migrants are terrorists, but at the same time allowing the readers to think of possible scenarios within the provided syntax.

A similar rhetorical question is evident also in the title of the fifth example presented above – "Migrants a potential threat even to the nuclear power plant?" The word "even" discloses the implicit meaning hiding behind the supposedly explicit sentence (Richardson 2007: 63), suggesting that migrants are firstly constructed as a generally supposed potential threat and secondly a threat to the nuclear plant located near the migration route. The construction of migrants as a general threat is also evident in the naturalization of worries where the journalist is referring to worried Slovenian citizens and readers. Although the quotation expressing concern was expressed by only one reader, the journalist generalizes the act of worrying to all readers by metonymically replacing "a reader" with "the readers", thereby constructing the idea that migrants are a general concern to the Slovenian population. This operation of genericization is used to create a specific type – the reader of *Slovenske novice* – that other readers of the newspaper can easily relate to, and to create specific imagery related to the type as well as to ascribe the type specific characteristics (Machin, Myer 2012: 80–88). Furthermore, the opinion of the reader from Ptuj may also

function to create a space for the facilitation of the audience's identification with the reader's position, and therefore further legitimize his fears and views.

"Genuine" refugees as victims of "fake" refugees

Apart from the majority population, to whom migrants represent a security and cultural threat, migrants too can sporadically be constructed as victims, however, only if they fit into a clearly defined category. Example six clearly shows how Syrian families are constructed as "genuine" victims, while other categories such as single men (sometimes referred to as economic migrants) are supposed to be "fake" victims and victimizers.

> (6) It is now clear that only one third of all refugees are coming and fleeing from an unhappy Syria, this Middle East hub, where the war took everything they had, a roof over their head, and the future. In fact, as we learn from our official institutions, only this third of refugees run openly, with their name and surname, with their own identity. It was possible to find out about the unequal situation of these needy Syrian families in contrast to economic migrants (stowaways) from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and elsewhere, who have taken advantage of the distress of others and jumped on the first train that goes through Slovenia to northern Europe. Without documents, these mostly young men pretending to be Syrians are ignoring Syrian families who should have priority. They are taking their seats on the way to a brighter future. (Kastelic 2015: 6)

The example begins with the construction of genuine victims by dramatically describing the situation in their country of provenience and clearly positioning this group of migrants as victimized subjects that readers are allowed to pity. They are described as honest, as they travel with documents and do not hide their identity. They are also described as consisting of normal families, which along with their honesty provides a mechanism to reference one of the most universal western qualities readers can identify with – motherhood and family life (Chouliaraki 2006: 124). Their victimhood gives them the legitimacy to become a refugee whom we should help and protect. Syrian families are therefore symbolically positioned "on our side" of the binary dichotomy that delimit "us" from "them". This also becomes explicit in example 7.

> (7) Sad stories take place among immigrants, including the story of a father of a two-month old baby, who had to take his child to the hospital at three in the morning. His other four children were left behind at the collection centre in Pomurje, luckily with their mother. (O. B.; S. I., STA 2015: 6)

Stories of "genuine" refugees are described with adjectives such as "sad", and with occurrences a normal Slovenian family could easily encounter in their daily life – a father taking a baby to the emergency room in the middle of the night – call for the reader's compassion. Therefore, "genuine" refugees wanting to be categorized as victims would have to adopt specific features and proper behaviour in order to become objects of compassion and pity. They have to be a family (or a woman with children), travel with documents, be a Syrian citizen etc. According to the story, only a "genuine" refugee can be a legitimate victim. As implicitly stated in examples six, seven, and two, a victim's attitude towards help should

only be to humbly accept anything given, be grateful for it, and behave well. The "genuine" refugee, being a victim, is not allowed to have any active agency that would make her a political subject demanding her rights. As shown in example 3, such agency would immediately turn the migrant into a de-victimized, "fake", deviant. Therefore, the legitimacy of a "genuine" refugee does not stand alone, as it is constructed in opposition to "fake" refugees – i.e., single non-Syrian men who migrate incognito for economic benefits. Along these lines the "fake" refugees are constructed as victimizers who take away from "genuine" refugees and benefit from their tragedy.

"Us" victims of unfortunate circumstances

If in the previous sections the ideological squaring consisted mainly of a negative representation of the "other" and it was till now explored by showing how migrants' negativity was emphasized, in the following section I present a simultaneously occurring contraposition of the effect of ideological squaring on reporting: the positive representation of "us" and "our" social actions (Richardson 2004: 95). Example 8 shows how migrants are placed in opposition to a positively represented Slovenian victim. This opposition is presented through a story about a poor Slovenian soldier who was stealing bread which was meant to feed migrants, in order to bring it to his family.

> (8) A soldier was stealing bread intended for refugees. Unfortunately, soldiers do not get paid fairly for working with migrants. Some commissioned officer – this allegedly happened in Maribor, where many Slovenian citizens, including family members of employees of the Slovenian Armed Forces, live in considerable social distress – was "stealing" bread intended for migrants and refugees before the soldiers could deliver it to the refugee centres. He allegedly secretly took it to his car, with the intent to later take it home to his family. […] Migrants who, as we all know, are complaining about the situation in the refugee camps as being inadequate and unsustainable […] have often rejected the food offered to them or they took the food but later on dumped or discarded it without even tasting it. Bread among other things. (Vatovec 2015b: 4)

Example 8 presents a moral dilemma in which readers may decide whether the act of the soldier should be condemned or justified. However, this dilemma opens up a further dilemma in which the readers are supposed decide who is more entitled to get the bread – the soldier's family or migrants. In other words, as the soldier and the migrants are both victims, it should be determined who is more deserving of the status of victim. However, this dilemma is only apparent, as a deconstruction of the example shows that the journalist has already positioned himself on the soldier's side.

First, the soldier's actions are contextualized by explaining he comes from a poor region, which may logically imply he is poor too. The journalist also mentions he is underpaid, a claim deduced from his act of stealing, as the journalist's supposedly low salary is the reason that forced him to steal. Through such contextualization, the soldier's character is brought to the level of the reader's experience. Second, the journalist hedges when speaking about the soldier's actions. Journalists employ hedging when they want to avoid directness and accountability for what they write (Machin, Myer 2012: 192). In example 8 this is done in several instances. For example, he suggests the soldier is not a real thief, as

the word "stealing" is written in inverted commas which are used to distance the journalist from the denominator "thief". As soon as the word "thief" is put in inverted commas, it acquires a new connotation that nullifies the negative connotation of the denominator "thief". The journalist also uses the word "allegedly" twice with the same intent – in the second case to distance himself from the morally questionable actions of the soldiers while in the first case to give the impression that the story might not even be a true one. Thirdly, in order to morally justify the soldier's action, the journalist adds the information that the bread was then brought to the poor soldier's family, which again creates a common space of identification for the Slovenian readers. Finally, in order to fully legitimize the soldier's action, the journalist points out that migrants are not grateful for the bread they receive – i.e. they are not truly victims, as a proper victim would gratefully accept the bread and be thankful for it. This creates the idea the bread would be thrown away by the migrants anyways and therefore stealing bread for poor Slovenian families would make it a legitimate act. This last point is also supported by the photos in the article. A photo of a loaf of bread on the railway tracks appears at the end of the article with the caption: "If soldiers pick up bread that migrants will undoubtedly throw away, would this still be stealing?"

While the article initially poses the action of stealing as a moral dilemma, it then immediately presents a solution to the moral dilemma. The soldier and soldiers (as genericization is present in the photo caption) are represented as pure souls, as innocent victims whose personal life is subordinated to the cruelty of the financial distress of the region. The soldier then becomes at the same time a victim of the situation as well as a hero who dares to steal in order to take care of his family, while migrants become de-victimized.

CONCLUSION: VICTIMIZATION AS A MEANS OF OTHERING

"Othering" in Slovenia occurs on two levels. On the explicit level of hate speech and xenophobia directed towards minority groups (Roma, Serbs, Bosnians, Kosovars, migrants from the Middle East and African countries, etc.) and on the implicit level of self-victimization. The first level, concerning Slovenian rhetoric and practices of exclusion, did not develop during the 2015 "refugee crisis" but has much older origins and a wider context. Many studies have noted an intensification of stereotyping, xenophobia, and discriminatory speech directed against anything or anybody foreign emerging in Slovenian public discourse since the country seceded from Yugoslavia (see Vezovnik 2015; Doupona Horvat et al. 1998; Jalušič 2000; Pajnik et al. 2001; Zavratnik Zimic 2006; Kralj 2008; Bobnič, Vezovnik 2013; Bajt 2016; Pušnik 2011) and even earlier (Mežnarić 1986). This and many other studies show there was a climate of xenophobia in public discourse and practices against groups of ethnic non-Slovenians, especially asylum seekers and undocumented migrants during the early 2000s, ex-Yugoslavian refugees during the early 1990s, low-skilled migrant workers from ex-Yugoslavian regions in the late 2000s, the Islamic community since the 1970s, Roma people and the Erased throughout the transitional period, and lately also refugees. This climate is in line with other European trends of the rhetoric of exclusion that aims at delimiting a European "us" from the non-European "other" (Wodak, Boukala 2015). In Slovenia and elsewhere the abovementioned binarity was produced and reproduced by hegemonic media and political discourse, but also translated into the migration laws, politics, and policies which began to develop since Slovenia became an independent state in 1991.

The analysis presented here does not offer much new material with respect to these general exclusionist trends. The analysis showed explicit "othering" by depicting migrants as culturally different from Slovenians. This difference was then marked with a negative connotation, which was most often evident in a negative moral judgement of the acts and characters of migrants. Such "othering" highlighted and reinforced similarities amongst "us" by emphasizing the "other's" distinctiveness (Benhabib 1996). The migrant "other" has functioned as the point against which the Slovenian positive self-image and self-representation is established. This discursive system that establishes and reaffirms the dichotomist polarization of cultural difference between "us" and "them" is akin to Said's (1995) notion of orientalism – a system of discourses and knowledge organized around distinctions of rational vs. irrational, centre vs. periphery and civilization vs. barbarism (Vezovnik, Šarić 2015). The division between "us" and "them" involved a three-part process. First, the analysed tabloid news identified the Slovenian culture and territory as a "space"; second, it separated "Slovenian space" from the "migrants" space; third, it constructed the "migrants" space as barbaric and different and put a negative social value on their "space" (Richardson 2004: 69). This was most evident in constructing migrants as a cultural and security threat and Slovenians as victims of the migrants' cultural barbarism, obscenity, violence, criminality etc.

The idea of a threatened and oppressed community brings us to the second level of "othering" – a much subtler and implicit one occurring through self-victimization. Threatened/oppressed people are seen to have a specific subjectivity, that of the victim. We usually find a victimizer or oppressor set in opposition to the victim. For the analysed tabloid content, the notion of victim and the opposition between victim and victimizer seems to be an important sustainer of a broader discursive and power operation of "othering". If contextualizing the "othering" of migrants seemed like a pretty straightforward job that was already done by the abovementioned studies, making sense of the apparently new phenomenon of (self-) victimization might be more challenging, as we have to think within the broader frame of Slovenian national and identity building and dig deeper into Slovenian history in order to understand when this pattern of self-victimization "originated". I would contend here that Slovenia has never really liberated itself from the "prison of nations". It was first a part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, then of Yugoslavia, and since 2004 of the European Union. Due to its smallness and marginal status in all of these supra-national formations, its "national character" has mostly been reduced to self-victimization based of feelings of being exploited by stronger nations. The perpetuation of self-victimization as an important feature was evident mostly in canonical literature published since the middle of the 19th century that provided a *locus communis* for the construction of the Slovenian "national character". However, an important feature of the construction of the "national character" can also be attributed to the Catholic values that were strongly promoted in the late 19th century by the Christian-Socialist movement called Krekism. Krekism aimed at solving the social situation of the impoverished Slovenian peasantry by at the same time depicting the Slovenian peasants as humble, servile, hard-working, and diligent, erecting these characteristics as an important signifier of Sloveneness. Since that period Slovenia, its culture, language and population have been perceived as being dominated by these supra-national "big Others" and at the same time endangered by the barbaric Islamic and Balkan "others" that have been represented as a threat to Sloveneness since the Ottoman period. This self-victimization therefore reflects a small nation's fear of being taken over,

dying out, losing its autochthony, population, culture and language. In order to prevent such an imaginary scenario, the Slovenian national consciousness was built on the ideology of ethnic uniformity, exclusivism, language purism, the idea of blood and soil and similar (see Vezovnik 2010, 2015; Šumi 2012; Šumi, Janko Spreizer 2011; Jalušič 2001).

However, the "trend" of constructing victims and self-victimization is not only specific to the Slovenian case but is a prominent "trend" in tabloid journalism per se. As Best (1997) and Glynn (2000) point out, the victimization of a majority population as the victims of a minority has its roots in the right-wing rhetoric that for instance in the USA emerged in the 1970s but especially during the Reagan era. Since then, victimization has become a fashionable mass media topic, to the point where Best (1997) labelled the trend the "victim industry". Television shows in particular enabled the construction of white people's identity which was understood as victimized, and therefore deserving of more rights in relation to the supposedly violent and criminal black urban Americans. The mass media therefore played an important role in establishing and reproducing racist ideology through heroifying and idealizing white victims of black crime. As Laruelle (2015: 1) notes, "/.../ media corruption has made the victim a new ethical value, a point of condensation and effervescence, of the exacerbation of ideological conflicts" (ibid.: 2). *Slovenske novice* demonstrated a very similar process. On one hand migrants were deprived of the status of the victim, while the majority population obtained it, and even more, became the victim of migrants. This is not so much a moral dilemma present in the self-posed question: who should I as a reader feel sorry for? Rather it is a matter of the construction of a social hierarchy in which the majority population becomes a victim and their rights become more important than migrants' human rights.

However, I do not see the solution in restoring the migrant as the victim *par excellence*. In the section about "genuine" vs. "fake" refugees I showed that the representation of the "genuine" victims is equally dangerous as the operation of victimizing the majority population. Although it might be true that the only positive representations of migrants occurred in the case when texts were writing about "genuine" refugees, we have to be careful when thinking what kind of representation of migrants is actually fair. The political implications of constructing migrants only as victims reproduces systemic inequalities between the majority population, sometimes represented as active, mostly through the characters of heroic helpers of victims and migrants represented as passive, stripped of agency and de-subjectivised.

Therefore, what one encounters here is the paradox of victimization. The victimized "other" can be protected and pitied as long as he remains a genuine victim, a victim without agency and political charge. In this case the pitying of such "genuine" victims could be explained by re-addressing the Slovenian self-victimization that allows potential identification with the migrant "genuine" victims who appear similar to the victimized Slovenian "pure souls" (Vezovnik 2015: 262). As soon as the migrant tries to avoid the status of victim by performing acts of resistance, claiming rights etc., his political struggle is reduced to deviant vandalism.

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POVZETEK

DRUGOST IN ŽRTVENOST V TABLOIDNEM TISKU: PRIMER »BEGUNSKE KRIZE« V »SLOVENSKIH NOVICAH«
Andreja VEZOVNIK

Prispevek se osredotoča na analizo reprezentacij begunske krize in migrantov v Sloveniji leta 2015. S pomočjo kritične analize diskurza prispevek obravnava predvsem jezikovne načine, s pomočjo katerih so migranti konstruirani v osrednjem in najbolj branem slovenskem dnevniku *Slovenske novice*. Ker se *Slovenske novice* žanrsko umeščajo med tabloide, članek najprej opredeli elemente tabloidov, predvsem pa tabloidnega diskurza, nato pa s pomočjo empirične študije pokaže, kako so bili s pomočjo tabloidnosti v izbranem obdobju med 20. 8. 2015 in 31. 12. 2015 migranti konstruirani kot »drugi«. Izbrano obdobje časovno sovpada s t. i. »begunsko krizo« v Sloveniji leta 2015. S pomočjo analize avtorica ugotavlja, da tabloidni diskurz preigrava predvsem binarne dihotomije med »nami« kot tistimi, ki poosebljamo žrtve, heroje in heroizirane žrtve, in »njimi«, ki za večinsko populacijo poosebljajo kulturno in varnostno grožnjo. V analitičnem delu skozi reprezentacije migrantov identificira migrante kot tiste, ki za večinsko populacijo predstavljajo kulturno grožnjo. To se kaže v konstruiranju kulturne drugačnosti migrantov, pri čemer so migranti reprezentirani kot umazani in pretkani. Nadalje analiza ugotavlja, da so migranti reprezentirani tudi kot varnostna grožnja, pri čemer je poudarjen predvsem strah pred migranti, povezanimi s terorizmom. Navsezadnje so migranti reprezentirani tudi kot žrtve, pri čemer novinarski teksti vzpostavljajo razliko med »pravimi« migranti – sirskimi družinami, ki so upravičeni do statusa žrtve, in ekonomskimi migranti – mladimi moškimi iz Afganistana, Iraka in Irana, ki jih prikazujejo kot oportuniste in »neprave« žrtve. Članek sklene z razpravo o pomenu statusa žrtve, saj se žrtev kaže kot osrednja kategorija novinarskih prispevkov. Kot žrtve namreč nastopajo tako begunci kot tudi večinska populacija. Pri konstruiranju žrtve se kot osrednje sestavine tabloidnega diskurza kažejo predvsem moraliziranje, upovedovanje skozi osebne zgodbe, senzacionalizem, pretirana čustvenost ipd.