

## Summary

The monograph entitled *The image of Trieste and the Trieste region in Slovene and Italian poetry of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century* sheds light on the Slovene and Italian poetic depictions of Trieste and the Trieste region in the historically turbulent times of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since the poetry under analysis stems from the same period and deals with a joint physical locale it made sense to confront the two poetic discourses, Slovenian and Italian, so as to find out whether there was dialogue between them, whether they reflected each other, whether they shared the same motifs and ideas or whether they opposed or even excluded each other. With this end in view, and drawing on the methodological tools of literary imagology, the image of the foreigner in the region was subjected to close scrutiny.

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Slovene and Italian poetry dealing with Trieste from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century does not display the same thematic, nor does it undergo the same development. The major thematic shifts of both poetic discourses however do occur around the time of the First and Second World War, so it made sense to organize the poetic material chronologically and with respect to these two historical watersheds.

The Italian poetry of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has already received a fair amount of scholarly attention, particularly as regards its motifs and themes, which has facilitated the documenting of Italian poets and their works with Trieste motifs. This was not the case with the Slovenian poetry about Trieste. The extant anthologies of Slovene Triestine literature tend to encompass broader time frameworks and are grounded in a methodology different to the one adopted by this research. Consequently they draw attention only to the most established poets of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Such a selection was found wanting for the requirements of this research, so I supplemented it with poetic texts about Trieste published in the Slovene periodicals of the Primorska region as listed by Miša Šalamun (1961).

A survey of the periodicals revealed that the dynamic first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century gave rise to a number of lesser known poets, who, while not authoring independent poetry collections, nonetheless transmitted their personal experience of Trieste into

verse. These works, though aesthetically of a lesser standard, are precious as they reveal a significant aspect of the poetic depiction of Trieste, and are therefore given equal treatment to the works of established Slovene poets of the region.

As a bases for my analysis of the image of Trieste and the Trieste region in Slovene poetry of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, two works deserve singling out as they offer a historical overview of the Slovenian literary depictions of Trieste: France Bernik's *Trst v slovenski poeziji* [*Trieste in Slovenian Poetry*, 1984] and Marija Pirjevec's *Tržaška knjiga* [*The Trieste Book*, 2001]. Furthermore, the poems collected by Mira Cencič in her book *Primorske pesmi rodoljubja in tigrovskega upora* [*The Primorska Poems of Patriotism and The TIGR Rebellion*, 2010] were also carefully analysed. For the period of the Second World War, it was the poems collected in the volume entitled *Slovensko pesništvo upora 1941–1945* [*The Slovenian Poetry of Rebellion*, 1995, 1996, 1997] by Boris Paternu which were studied. Furthermore, I analyzed the poetry collections of Anton Aškerc, Alojz Gradnik, Dora Gruden, Igo Gruden, Srečko Kosovel, Stano Kosovel, Marija Mijot, Janko Samec, Karel Širok, Ljubka Šorli and Oton Župančič.

Amongst the searched periodicals, the greatest number of relevant poems came from the literary journal *Razgledi*. Other periodicals from which poems have been cited include the following: *Čuk na palči*, *Jadranka*, *Koledar Mohorjeve družbe*, *Koledar osvobodilne fronte za Svobodno tržaško ozemlje*, *Lipa*, *Njiva*, *Novi rod*, *Partizanski dnevnik*, *Pastirček*, *Primorski dnevnik*, *Štampiharski glas* and *Ženski svet*. The authors of the poems analysed from this body of periodicals are Vinko Beličič, Danilo Benčina, Andrej Budal, Cvetko Golar, Dora Gruden, Igo Gruden, Gema Hafner, Miha Klinar, Franja Ksaverija, Stano Kosovel, Mara Lamut, Peter Levec, Milan Lipovec, Ivo Marinčič, Zdravko Ocvirk, Ruža Lucija Petelin, Rodoljubka, Lev Svetek – Zorin, Črtomir Šinkovec, Karel Širok, Ivka Vasiljeva and Marička Žnidaršič.

In collecting Italian poetic materials about Trieste, I drew on the Italian poetry anthologies and literary historical overviews of the Triestine literature. The most representative selection of poets from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is to be found in the

book tellingly titled *Poeti italiani d'oltre i confini* (edited by Giuseppe Picciòla in 1914, reprinted in 2006). It features poetic works of Italian authors from the region, including Trieste, which up until the end of the First World War belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. For the most part the names to be found in the collection are lesser known, since the editor was not concerned so much with the quality of the selection as with its theme (Guagnini 2002: 998).

A significant number of Italian poems about Trieste are written in the Triestine dialect. A representative body of this poetry is sampled in the collections *Trieste vernacola* (1920), edited by Giulio Piazza, and *Poesie patriottiche dei tempi passati, 1891–1914* (1969) by Paolo Zoldan.

These Italian poetry anthologies contain poems about Trieste that emerged up until the year 1918. The subsequent three decades have admittedly received less scholarly attention as regards Italian poetry about Trieste. Nonetheless, in keeping with the basic tenets of this research which encompasses the entire time span of the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, a representative number of Italian post-war poetry collections about Trieste were analysed.

Given these literary and historical constraints, the poems studied in the period from 1900 to 1950 were authored by the following poets: Eugenio Barison, Luciano Budigna, Giosuè Carducci, Flaminio Cavedali, Carolus L. Cergoly, Raimondo Cornet, Luigi (Crisan) Crociato, Vittorio Cuttin, Ketty Daneo, Carlo de Dolcetti, Ida Finzi, Marcello Fraulini, Adolfo Leghissa, Augusto Levi, Vladimiro Miletta, Carlo Mioni, Riccardo Pitteri, Ettore de Plankenstein, Mariano Rugo, Umberto Saba, Giulio Ventura, Odoardo Weiss.

II. The Slovene and Italian poetry of the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century has given us two different images of Trieste and of the Trieste region. The Slovene poetic representations received their defining features at the end of World War One, when the anchor of Slovenianness was beginning to slip dangerously away. The traumatic experience of losing “the Slovene Trieste” was most often articulated by poets from the Trieste regions who had witnessed the process of elimination of the symbols of Slovenianness and who, as representatives thereof, were themselves forced to leave.

Their poetry therefore turns to Trieste from two inextricably bound up aspects: the symbolic loss of national identity and the loss of the native city. As a result, the lyric subject of Slovene poetry experiences Trieste from the outside; it remembers the city from a “foreign” place in elegiac tones, shot through with homesickness and pain.

The poets hardly ever descend into the city streets and squares, with their café smells, as they rarely freely succumb to aesthetic impressions, given the city’s picturesque coastal location. Instead they tend to focus primarily on the events and places associated irrevocably with the Slovenian existence in the Trieste region (The National House, Basovizza (in Slovene *Bazovica*), Opicina (in Slovene *Opčine*)), while drawing attention to social inequalities, whereby the lyric subject characteristically embodies exploited Slovene workers, fishermen and farmers, often in connection with national repression. What comes through the Slovene poetry then is not so much the pulse of the city as the various aspects of Trieste countryside related to everyday peasant chores, fisherman’s life, and existential union with the sea. What we get from these pages is, in short, a vivid picture of rituals, customs, everyday worries, annoyances, as well as joys of the local population.

At the time of World War Two, Slovene poetry about Trieste primarily records the struggle to free “the Slovene Trieste” and the crimes perpetrated against the Slovene population in the Trieste countryside and the Trieste prisons. Following the relatively short period in which “freed Trieste” became the central theme in Slovene poetry, in the first post-war years the city assumes the relevance of an ideological landmark as well as a border city. In this period the social and ethnic tensions can give way to lighter – mostly love – themes, correspondingly shifting the locale of poetic action to popular Trieste footpaths and the city park. On the one hand this shift in theme is a reflection of the end of the war, on the other, it is probably an expression of the poetic impotence in the face of the political unfolding of the events. Despite occasional upbeat tones the overwhelming part of Slovene poetry dealing with the theme of Trieste in the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century carries on the oppressive memories of bygone decades, the feelings of disappointment and a sign of unpredictable future.

III. Italian poetry of the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century gives shape to two main images of Trieste and the Trieste region as they emerge against the historical background. Up until the end of World War One, the contours of “Roman Trieste” are seen to dominate, while after the watershed date, this image is replaced by a return to the pre-war, “Habsburg Trieste”.

The poets of the first “irredentist period” were typically seeking out the historical and archaeological roots of the Roman tradition in Trieste, announcing in their wake the city’s “marriage” with Italy. In poetic language this was reflected in the personification of Trieste as an Italian bride, whereby Italian poets, in keeping with the grammatical rules of their own language, referred to Trieste in the feminine gender - *quella Trieste* (in Slovene Trieste is of masculine gender). For poetry this period was rich with other symbols too, the most characteristic of which was the symbolism associated with St. Just, who stood for the protection of Italianness in Trieste.

After the First World War the Italian poetry found itself at a crossroads. The vitalist and combative nature of poetry set to “free” Trieste lost its propagandistic role and thereby its key poetic function. The new thematic and ideological source for the Italian poetry of the interwar period was now relocated to “Habsburg Trieste”. Consequently the mood became more subdued in comparison to the pre-war poetry, since the poem’s orientation was no longer towards the future, but rather entailed a nostalgic return to past decades, into which the poets projected feelings of homeliness and safety. The image of Trieste from the Austro-Hungarian era thus came to represent in the Italian interwar poetry a desired image of the town, alongside which the Italian poets could not only juxtapose contrasting images of the post-war Trieste in ruin and plagued by great social inequalities, but also images of a contemporary, modernized but alienating city. Even gloomier is the image of the “suffering Trieste” during the Second World War and first years following the war, with the lyrical subject now professing profound feelings of isolation and disappointment.

IV. Both Slovene and Italian poetry about Trieste of the period under research speak about the Other (Slovenes or Italians) in the Trieste region. In the interwar

period its representation seems to have followed along two main poetic trajectories which could be designated as “a strategy of silencing the Other” and “a strategy of a metaphoric representation of the Other”.

The first strategy is characteristic of the Italian poetry of the interwar period, in which we are faced with the phenomenon of negation or silencing of the Other (Slovenes). Effectively this means that the observing Italian culture no longer gives a voice to the Other in its poetry. Should the latter nevertheless be named in this period, then the locale of poetic action shifts to the past, to the Austro-Hungarian era.

Before the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire Slovenes were mentioned relatively frequently, though the references tended to be one-sided, since Italian poets were not interested about the Other in his/her own right but insofar they felt their own culture to be under threat. In this context the Other was not portrayed as a neighbour, but rather as an uncultured foreigner and threatening barbarian.

For the Slovenian poetry up until the end of the First World War the Other (Italians) is not the central subject of poetic interest, but he/she can appear as a minor player, for the most part without any value-laden label attached to it. However, after the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and in the wake of an intensified political climate, the Other becomes the focus of poetic interest, but this time entirely from the perspective of an aggressive foreigner, depicted with strong metaphoric language and described through the consequences of his actions reflected in the social and national spheres of the Slovenes living in the Trieste region.

Both poetic discourses converge in certain parts of Trieste. Amongst them, the port of Trieste has a particularly important role. The manner in which it is depicted by Slovene and Italian poets however differs substantially. The Italian perspective is focused on the colourful port crowds and the ships coming in, while the Slovene poets, though fascinated by the mighty port, give attention to the manual labour of workers there. In Italian interwar poetry, for example, *Cittavecchia* (old town, in Slovene *staro mesto*) and *Giardino Pubblico* (public gardens, in Slovene *Ljudski vrt*) act as a kind of starting point for ruminations about the past, while in Slovene

poetry they do not hold a recurring poetic role. The role of the Pier of San Carlo also differs: in Slovene poetry it is primarily associated with Dragotin Kette's poetry cycle entitled *Na molu San Carlo* (*On the Pier of San Carlo*), whereas in Italian interwar period the *Molo Audace*, as it became known after the First World War, becomes a symbol of the Italian occupation of Trieste. The main Trieste market (*Piazza Ponterosso*, in Slovene *Rusi most*) is a space visited by both Italian and Slovene lyric subjects. The Slovene perspective sees the market through the eyes of Slovene women vendors, hoping for good business and consequently survival, while the Italian one presents buyers and chance passers-by responding to it through colour and smell.

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Even more polarized is the image of Trieste countryside. Italian poetry after the First World War neither detects the presence of the Other (Slovenes) in the region from the perspective of a linguistic and cultural difference nor does it reflect on the existing socio-ethnic tensions. The lyric subject of Italian poetry, most often in the role of a visitor to the Italian countryside, experiences it in exclusively idyllic terms, as a space meant for relaxation and good culinary treats. This depiction does not match the image of the aggressive foreigner (Italian) in the region recorded by contemporaneous Slovene poetry, preoccupied as it was by the socio-ethnic problematic of the Slovenes living in the region.

Where the two poetic worlds do converge, however, is in the playful motifs of the regional bora wind and in the colourful depictions of the coastal town. Nonetheless, the latter mainly provides the narrative framework into which the poets project a darker image of the wind-swept and tempestuous, if all too loved a city.



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prve polovice 20. stoletja