

Alojz Gradnik and the Slovenian Community in Italy from the Second Half of the Twentieth Century to the Present

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The aim of the article is to shed light on the role of the Slovenian poet Alojz Gradnik within the Slovenian community in Italy from the end of WW II to the present day. In the case of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region, literary historians have above all been recording the reception of Alojz Gradnik among the Italians (Jan 2001, Košuta 2008, Toroš 2013) and the Friulians (Dapit 2008, Toroš 2013). Less attention has been paid to the particularities of the reception of Gradnik among the Slovenians in the aforementioned region, although it does not match the reception present in the central Slovenian territory at the time.¹

In the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region, a crossroads of languages and cultures, three images of Alojz Gradnik were shaped in the twentieth century. From this point of view, the reception of Alojz Gradnik is considered to be special, as his poetry made its way into three different cultural milieus, between which only few intercultural exchanges occurred.²

¹ In the second half of the twentieth century, two main works were published on Gradnik's life and work: the monograph *Pesnik Alojz Gradnik* (The poet Alojz Gradnik) by Franc Zadravec (1981, 1999) and *Pogovori s pesnikom Gradnikom* (Conversations with the poet Gradnik) by Marja Boršnik (1954). Both works concentrate on Gradnik's work in the first half of the twentieth century, less so on his later period in life, after the WW II.

² The phrase “interculturalism” is used from the standpoint of closed cultures that lean on the “pure” identity position. The phrase presumes the culture to be the nation’s connecting moment, the nation’s culture, that differentiates itself from other national cultures. Such a culture, conceptualised in the nineteenth century, is limited both geographically and linguistically. This understanding of culture was typical for the national imaginaries of Central European countries in Gradnik’s time. This way we can understand the formation of cultural (national) identities as a process of hybridisation that has merged heterogeneous regional elements into an arbitrary unit, so we can speak of a construct formed according to the distribution of power, external limitations and pressures. “Cultural hybridity” is therefore characteristic of all (national) cultures and all (national) cultural identities of each individual. Nowadays, the term “transculturalism” is gaining traction, and differs from the previously described understanding of culture, marked by separation and homogeneity. The term therefore does not stem solely from the realization that today’s cultures are more connected and less homogenized than in the past, thanks to the processes

The reason why this Slovenian poet managed to assert himself within Italian as well as Friulian literary histories lies in his multicultural and multilingual position, which matched the political and cultural needs of this territory. His mother was in fact Friulian, originating from the surroundings of the town of Krmin (It. Cormons) in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region. His father was Slovenian. He worked as a shoemaker in the village of Medana, in Goriška Brda, a hilly region with a Mediterranean climate, through which the national border between Slovenia and Italy runs today. It is here that Alojz Gradnik was born in 1882, when the area was still under the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The young Gradnik had not yet become aware of his position in an ethnically mixed family.³ After marrying, his mother allegedly learnt Slovenian quickly and so the whole household communicated in Slovenian (Gradnik 2008: 260).⁴ Despite this, he had been a part of the multilingual and multicultural environment since his early childhood. In this respect, he himself stated that he had learnt Friulian from his Friulian relatives, his peers. He later used Friulian while working as a judge, in legal procedures in which Friulians were involved. In his mature years, he also translated some poems of Friulian poets, his contemporaries.

of globalization and migration. Transculturalism means a new understanding of culture that should also come into play when speaking of nationalism (Andreson 1998; Geary 2005; Hobsbawm 2007; Jurić Pahor 2012). This article takes into account the new cultural concept (hybrid cultures), but will maintain the term “interculturalism” since its information base stems from the beginning of the twentieth century and explains Gradnik’s sociopolitical standing, which was determined by the understanding of national cultures in his time.

³ To distinguish between these concepts, ethnicity and nationality, see Toplak (2011: 15–20).

⁴ As previously stated, from the standpoint of contemporary cultural concepts, homogenous identities do not exist. Identity is constructed with the help of discourse, at the crossroads of social categories like nationality, ethnicity, sex, class, etc. It can be understood as a collision of discourses in a single subject, within which social tensions are present (Jurić Pahor 2012). Gradnik was, from this point of view, an exemplary case of a European person, split between differing discourses of nationalism. Gradnik’s testimony on his solely Slovenian cultural identity must be understood from the context surrounding his statement: Gradnik defined his national (Slovenian) identity in his conversation with literary historian Marja Boršnik, at the start of the 1950s, in post-war Yugoslavia. At that time his war-period image of a poet with Slovenian-Italian roots, created by the Italian occupying authority and spread around the Slovenian-Italian borderlands, was not approved of. It must not be forgotten that Gradnik personally and symbolically professed his double Slovenian-Italian cultural heritage in his sonnet “Vprašanje” (Question), published in 1926. Due to the changed circumstances in the post-war period, Gradnik must have wanted to stress the transgenerational transfer of language and identity in his family through his father, a Slovenian, and not his mother, a Friulian. More detail on this subject will be shared later on in the article. See also Jan (1995), Pertot (2007), and Toroš (2013).

It is worth noting that Gradnik was schooled in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and therefore entirely in German. As a ten-year-old he attended a German school in Gorizia, where he also went to a German grammar school and, lastly, read law in Vienna.

Gradnik's acceptance of the Italian language and culture was less spontaneous, as he explains to the literary historian Marja Boršnik (1954). The reason was supposed to lie, according to Gradnik, in the tense political relations between the Slovenians and Italians within the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the final decades prior to the collapse of the monarchy.⁵ In this period, both nations were striving for more national rights and for the use of Slovenian and Italian in schools and courts, as well as in public administration. The tense political relations were reflected in the younger generation as well. Gradnik remembers his secondary school years spent in Gorizia, at a German grammar school, and the insults used by the Italian students to insult their Slovenian schoolmates. Gradnik reports that he consequently resented the Italian literature, and his knowledge of the Italian language was limited as well. A turning point in his experiencing of the Italian culture happened as late as during WW I, when he, a court trainee, was working towards greater acceptance and value of Slovenian in education and in court and strongly supported the unification of the Slovenian people with other Southern Slavs into one country. At that time he read the novel *Zwischen den Rassen* (1907) by Heinrich Mann. The novel talks about the fatal intercultural and linguistic dichotomy of its main heroine, split between her mother's Romance heritage (Brazil) and her father's Germanic heritage (Germany). Reading this novel prompted Gradnik to think about his own dichotomy between the two cultures, Slavic and Romance. This dichotomy was even more fatal than the dichotomy present in the novel by Mann, since Gradnik grew up at the very crossroads of the Romance and Slavic worlds, in the period in which strong tensions between these two worlds were present, which culminated in the fascist period.

Gradnik was Friulian on his mother's side, but in the first half of the twentieth century no clear distinction existed yet between the Friulian and Italian identities, therefore the Friulians also identified themselves with the majority Italian nation (Kersevan 2003; Križman 2013). Gradnik thus faced a tragic dilemma about whether to accept his mother's cultural heritage, in spite of the fascist aggression aimed at the Slovenians, or to reject it. In poetry, Gradnik's dilemma was revealed in his sonnet carrying the meaningful title "Vprašanje" (Question; Gradnik 1986), which was published in the 1920s. In the sonnet, Gradnik's alter ego appears,

⁵ On Slovenian-Italian relations at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century in the border areas of present-day Slovenia and Italy, see Kacinc Wohinz (2000) and Vivante (1984).

discovering both of his inner heritages, Slovenian and Italian, and at the same time realizes that these two are in contrast to each other.

Italian politics of the time was striving for Slovenian-Italian intercultural cooperation, aiming to gradually assimilate the Slovenian population (Jan 1995). Gradnik thus perfectly matched the needs of the contemporary politics as an ideal example of a cross-cultural facilitator, not only due to the sonnet “Vprašanje” and his mother’s Romance origin, but also because of his Slovenian translations of Italian literary works, with one of their peak periods in the year 1940, on publishing the anthology of poems called *Italijanska lirika* (Italian lyric). The work comprises the Slovenian translation of the works of more than eighty Italian poets, arranged in chronological order. Due to all these factors Gradnik was an object of interest for the Italian Slavists of the interwar period, who acted in accordance with the above-mentioned policy of bringing together the two cultures. Their reports on Gradnik could be found in Italian magazines and newspapers, anthologies and literary-historical overviews, and the publications were not only limited to the present-day territory of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region, as Gradnik’s name also appeared in the central Italian territory (Rome, Turin). This gradually shaped Gradnik’s “Italian image,” which merely emphasized his ties to Italian culture—that is, Gradnik’s Romance origin on his mother’s side and the sonnet “Vprašanje” as the poet’s manifestation of his own, Slovenian-Italian cultural heritage. At the same time, Italian Slavists stressed Gradnik’s role of a cross-cultural facilitator introducing the Italian literature among the Slovenians, and hence discovering the impact of Italian literature on Gradnik’s poetry. At this point it should be stressed that this “Italian image” of Gradnik was most intensively promoted in the territory populated by Slovenians, which was occupied by Italy and which, during WW II, stretched all the way to the central parts of present-day Slovenia. This central part of the territory under occupation was called the Province of Ljubljana (It. La provincia di Lubiana).

The above-mentioned image of Gradnik was thus primarily aimed towards the Slovenians within the territory under the Italian occupation, as they were supposed to follow Gradnik’s openness towards Italian culture. Such an image of Gradnik was one-sided, since it only stressed those aspects of his life and work that supported the image of the poet as a cross-cultural Slovenian-Italian facilitator or at least did not oppose it. Consequently, this image of Gradnik does not depict him as a translator of numerous European and non-European literatures, but rather points out only his translations of Italian literature. Moreover, the translations of Gradnik’s poetry done by the Italian Slavists do not include Gradnik’s poems dealing with national issues—namely, those that speak about the violence of the fascists against the Slovenian population.

Gradnik was most likely in favor of his role as a cross-cultural facilitator, assigned to him by the Italians, as it is through his establishing of the cultural dialogue that he managed to, at least on a symbolic level, merge together the poles of his cultural heritage. His passion for translating Italian literary works perhaps to a large extent arose from his obvious personal distress and did not appear for any political reason. This standpoint may be used to explain his decision to translate Dante's *Divine Comedy* after Italy's capitulation in WW II. Gradnik actually had not given up translating Italian works until his death in 1967.

After the end of WW II, when the Gradnik's "Italian image" was no longer in the political spotlight, interest in his poetry gradually receded on the Italian cultural scene. Italian Slavists, who were most active in the interwar period, continued to write about him, maintaining the interwar "Italian" image of Gradnik. In contrast, the new generation of Slavists in Italy no longer showed any interest in Gradnik and as a result, they neither renewed Gradnik's image of the interwar period nor made any attempt to create a new, different image of the poet.

While the "Italian image" of Gradnik died out in post-war Italy, it gained ground in post-war Slovenia, with certain new elements being projected onto it. Gradnik, from his student days on, in the times of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, had a hesitant attitude towards the Slovenian Labor Party. In his opinion, the party had not been paying enough attention to strengthening Slovenian identity. As a result, his poetry did not support socialism. In the post-war Socialist Yugoslavia, another burden for Gradnik was also the legal trial against the communists, which he as a judge had to lead in the interwar period, in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The negative "Yugoslav image" of Gradnik as a judge and poet not supporting socialism thus merged with the interwar "Italian image" of Gradnik. As a result, a new "Slovenian image" of Gradnik emerged, the image of a poet with a questionable ideological orientation, which gained ground in the first years following WW II within the boundaries of present-day Slovenia.

At this point, it should be stressed that the poet's ideological orientation had a relatively large impact on judgements about his poetry in Slovenia. For instance, the prominent Slovenian literary critic Josip Vidmar evaluated Gradnik's poetry after WW II markedly more negatively than during the interwar period (Vidmar 1932; 1979; 1985).

In the decades following WW II, this negative image gradually lost its hold; Gradnik, as an author, became a member of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. In the same, post-war period, two new images of Gradnik were formed in Friuli-Venezia Giulia. The first image was shaped by the Friulian community, and the second one by the Slovenian community living in this territory. Although both images were

based on Gradnik's poetry, the main reasons for the revival of the poet's name within this territory were non-literary.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the sense of Friulian national identity grew among the Friulians. Friulian literary historians felt that Gradnik's life and work could contribute to the growth of the Friulian cultural awareness. As already stated in the introduction, in his mature years, Gradnik kept recalling his childhood moments spent among his Friulian relatives with a feeling of nostalgia. He had been particularly attached to these relatives of his, as he did not know any relatives from his father's side. On the basis of these fragments of Gradnik's life the "Friulian image" of Gradnik was formed, and nowadays it is still alive, emphasizing his Friulian origin from his mother's side, his attachment to the Friulian world, his knowledge of the Friulian language and his translations of the Friulian literature. In terms of his poetry opus, Friulian literary historians mostly pointed out his poems depicting rural life in Brda, an area close to the Friulian readers living in its immediate vicinity. The interest in Gradnik shared by the Friulians also prompted the emergence of the translations of Gradnik's poetry, which were published in a collection of poems (Gradnik 2005), as well as in the proceedings of an international symposium held at the University of Udine (Ferluga-Petronio 2008a; 2008b). In 2015, the most recent discoveries relating to Alojz Gradnik and the Friulian area were presented at an international conference on the contact between Friulians and Slovenians, which took place in Gorizia, Italy (Toroš 2015a).

The efforts to strengthen the Friulian identity thus encouraged the growth of the Friulian interest in Gradnik. On the other hand, the fear of the Slovenian minority in Italy losing their Slovenian identity prompted the interest in Gradnik among this community as well.⁶ The members of the

⁶ It must not be overlooked, that the Slovenian language and literature maintain an important bridging role within the Slovenian minority in Italy and is a haven of Slovenianness. In *Evropa in Slovenci* (Europe and Slovenians), Dušan Pirjevec notes how Slovenians, compared to other European nations, were unhistorical, a nation of latecomers, lacking freedom and action, lacking autonomous institutions and ruling roles, all in the hands of foreigners. The basic form of their "action" was defense, or rather, blocked movement. All this affected Slovenian literature, which due to such circumstances was the center of national existence. It embodied the origin and excused the existence of the Slovenian nation. It was the tool of the nation, the nation's main integrational power, gaining purpose through its service to the nation, which it did not have its own institutional base. Only a non-institutional medium, such as language, which is simultaneously the most evident sign of nationality, could enable presence in history. This privileged role of language and literature could only be dismantled with the process of institutionalisation, after Slovenia's independence (Pirjevec 1984). In the Slovenian community in Italy however,

latter were striving to preserve their identity, as they were separated from Slovenia (Yugoslavia) by the national border. Their fear of losing their Slovenian identity was strongly present, as they were left to live in a country in which they were subjected to fascist assimilation pressures in the interwar period. The effects of the national border were even more strongly felt because the border between the two countries also became the border between the western, capitalist world, and the eastern, socialist world,⁷ and crossing the border in the immediate post-war period was thus difficult.⁷

The concern for preserving the Slovenian identity was first reflected in their struggle for Slovenian schools in Friuli-Venezia Giulia. In this respect, Gradnik played an important symbolic role of a Slovenian poet and translator supporting the Slovenians and promoting the intercultural understanding in this area.⁸ Two Slovenian primary schools were named after Gradnik in the second half of the twentieth century, one of them is located on the Italian side of Gradnik's native area of Brda, in the Števerjan (It. San Floriano del Collio) community. The latter belongs to the Province of Gorizia (It. Provincia di Gorizia), forming a part of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region. The school is thus located in the part of Brda that was assigned to Italy after WW II. The other school named after Alojz Gradnik is located in the Province of Trieste (It. Provincia di Trieste), in the Repentabor (It. Monrupino) municipality, near Trieste, which also belongs to the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region. So far only these two Slovenian schools have been named after Alojz Gradnik, no other school in Slovenia or within any Slovenian community abroad carries Gradnik's name.

The reasons for naming the two schools after Alojz Gradnik could be found first in his poetry, which depicts the hills of Brda, as well as the Slovenian villages in the Trieste area. But the Slovenians in Italy also paid attention to certain other aspects of Gradnik's life and work, which neither the Italians nor the Friulians or Slovenians living in their homeland had paid any attention to. Gradnik was a role model for the Slovenian minority in Italy, which is evident from the newspaper articles, brochures, and testimonies written by the representatives of this minority after WW II. The

language and literature still maintain their central role in national representation.

⁷ For further information about this see: Kacin Wohinz (2000).

⁸ Relating to this, we can speak about the appropriation of Alojz Gradnik in this area in the sense of "symbolic capital" (Juvan 2012: 158), which stems from the idea of a "cultural nation" (Juvan 2012: 158), a nation that bases its identity and existence on its culture. Stemming from this ideological repertoire (the concept of European cultural nationalism), copied by many other European nations, (nationalized) literature and schooling in the mother tongue, precisely, were the base building blocks of the collective national identity, or rather, the national community's individuality (Juvan 2012). Cf. Lukšič Hacin 2011: 27–29.

reason is that Gradnik already in the Austro-Hungarian times was striving for the establishment of Slovenian schools in the provinces of Gorizia and Trieste and kept stressing the importance of Slovenian schools in terms of preserving the Slovenian identity in this area. The Slovenians living in this area have been at the same time particularly perceptive for Gradnik's poems describing the love and concern for preserving the Slovenian language and land in the present-day border area between Slovenia and Italy. In this respect, they stressed Gradnik's subtle depiction of the peasant population, its existential ties with their land, due to which they felt particularly close to Gradnik's poetry. Both of the schools are actually located in rural areas.

As it has already been stated, the Slovenians in this territory made an example of Gradnik's faith in the harmony among the Slovenians and Italians in this territory, that is Gradnik's role of a cross-cultural facilitator. In 1972, upon reaching the decision to name the school in Repentabor after Alojz Gradnik, the then mayor of the Repentabor municipality, Mihail Guštin, stressed that Gradnik's poetry expressed love towards one's closest. To support that, children of Slovene nationality, as well as children of Italian nationality took an active part in the ceremony marking the opening of the newly built school (N. N. 1972). At the school's naming ceremony, which took place in the following year, the school's principal, Egidij Strnad, explained that the initiative to name this school after Gradnik came from the teaching staff of the Repentabor school. The main reason for having chosen that name being as follows: "Pesnik je v svojih delih izkazal veliko ljubezen domači zemlji in njenemu človeku, pa tudi vero v sožitje dveh narodov mejašev, katerih del je bil on sam"⁹ (N. N. 1973).

At this point we should not overlook the fact that the opening of these two schools was a remarkably important event for the Slovenian community living in Italy, and was attended by both local and national representatives of educational, political and cultural milieus, from Italy and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (N. N. 1973). The Slovenian schools in Italy actually play a special role, which arises from the needs of the Slovenian minority. Its most important role is the concern for preserving the Slovenian identity. The latter is thus much more stressed in these schools than in Slovenian schools in Slovenia proper. Consequently, the Slovenian schools in Italy represent an essential part of the Slovenian community and the main base of social life (N. N. 2013: 13; Škabar 2013: 35).¹⁰ The Repentabor school's publication *Naš čira čara. 40. obletnica*

⁹ "The words of this poet reflect the author's great love of his motherland and its people, as well as his faith in the harmony of the two nations living in the borderlands, the nations to which the poet himself belonged."

¹⁰ In this respect, the role of "collective memory," characterized by traumatic events, must not be overlooked. It is intertwined with the very history of institutions, cultures and subjects (Jurić Pahor 2012). We can see this mirrored

poimenovanja šole po pesniku in prevajalcu Alojzu Gradniku in 140-letnica ustanovitve šole na Repentabru (The school's 40th anniversary of its naming ceremony after Alojz Gradnik and the 140th anniversary of its establishment in Repentabor) clearly demonstrates the school's role of bringing together various organizations, institutions, and generations within the Repentabor municipality, which is essential for preserving a common Slovenian identity. On the anniversary, the school was also visited by senior villagers, who shared their memories of their school days. Among other things, they also told what words their schoolteacher had used to wish them farewell upon finishing school. She had said: “[N]e pozabite, da ste Slovenci!” (“Don't forget that you are Slovenian!”) They also explained that they were not using the Slovenian language for the sole purpose of communicating, but, above all, to express their emotions (Černuta 2013: 19). In the above-mentioned publication, the parish priest of Repentabor, Anton Bedenčič, further stressed the high importance of the Slovenian school in Repentabor: “Šola je lahko ponosna, da je poimenovana po primorskem pesniku Alojzu Gradniku. Naj njegova ljubezen do slovenske besede in slovenske zemlje hrani otroke v tej šoli.”¹¹

It is this emotional, intimate perception of the Slovenian identity, shared by the Slovenians in Italy, that represents the decisive component contributing to the differences in the perception of Gradnik among them in comparison to the perception of Gradnik among the Slovenians living in their home country. Only through this perspective we can, for instance, understand the struggles of the former teachers at the Repentabor school, who, after WW II, took a risk to smuggle the bronze statue of Gradnik, made in Ljubljana by Marjan Keršič-Belač, so that it could be placed in the entrance hall of the Repentabor school building. They had to smuggle it across the newly established Yugoslav-Italian border, dividing the Slovenian capital Ljubljana, which was then part of Yugoslavia, from the Repentabor municipality in Italy (N. N. 2013c: 18).

The acts of naming two schools located in Italy after Alojz Gradnik reveals Gradnik's utmost cultural importance, which is recognized by the Slovenians living in this territory. Certain prominent representatives of culture in the provinces of Trieste and Gorizia may have contributed to such reception of this poet within the Slovenian milieus in Friuli-Venezia Giulia. First, we should mention the Slovenian composer Pavle Merkù, born in Trieste in 1927, who, in 2014, received the Prešeren Award—the most

in the Slovenian school system of the Slovenian minority in Italy, which gives Slovenian schools even greater value due to their experience of fascism and its ban on Slovenian language and schooling.

¹¹ “The school can be proud of the fact that it carries the name of Alojz Gradnik, a poet of our local region. Let all the children attending this school be fed upon his love of the Slovenian language and Slovenian land.”

important Slovenian recognition award for one's achievements in the field of culture. Already in 1956, Pavle Merkù composed a setting for Alojz Gradnik's poem "Padaj, padaj, rosica" (Let, let fall, morning dew; Frelih 2008: 134), which became the anthem of the Alojz Gradnik School in Repentabor.

The poet Ljubka Šorli (1910–93), who lived in the Province of Gorizia in Italy after WW II, dedicated the sonnet "Alojzu Gradniku" (To Alojz Gradnik) to him in 1982. In this sonnet, she states: "[Z]a nas je pesem tvoja kakor mana"¹² (Šorli 1983: 136). I would especially like to point out the fact that the sonnet was written by Ljubka Šorli, who was seen as a moral authority in the Goriška region after WW II, a role she still holds in the collective memory of this area to the present day. She has been highly esteemed among the Slovenian minority up to the present day due to her bravery demonstrated during her suffering under fascism and due to her tireless efforts in favour of the Slovenians in Italy (Brecelj 2003: 99–108).

The internationally renowned Slovenian writer from Trieste, Boris Pahor (b. 1913), a Nobel Prize nominee, has also been writing about Gradnik in a very positive sense. He actually invited Gradnik to Trieste in 1953—that is, in the year in which Gradnik celebrated his seventieth birthday. On that occasion, Gradnik met Slovenian secondary school students and younger pupils, who recited his poetry. Moreover, the Ivan Cankar Choir from Sv. Jakob (It. San Giacomo) prepared a special program for this occasion and performed the settings of Gradnik's poems. The media in Trieste, Italy, reported that the audience as well as Gradnik himself had been moved by this event (N. N. 1953a; N. N. 1953b).¹³

¹² "Your poems are like mana to us."

¹³ Gradnik received a letter on this occasion, which shows the ideological division of the Triestine Slovenian space (Gradnik 2003: 574–75). In the letter, around ten Slovenian Triestine culture professionals recognize Gradnik as representative of Slovenian culture, but at the same time, they mourn the fact that "večina tega ljudstva" ("most of the [Slovenian Triestine people –A. T.] people") cannot attend the stated cultural event, "ker jo priejajo politični eksponenti, ki vsa moralna in materialna sredstva ljudstva Jugoslavije uporablajo le v nizkotne, sebične namene osovražene titovske klike tu in onstran meje" ("because it is orchestrated by political exponents, who use all the moral and material means of the Yugoslav people for the selfish, vile purposes of the hated Tito's clique here and across the border"). The undersigned blamed Gradnik of supporting those: "ki pod krinko čaščenja slovenskih kulturnikov zasužnjujejo ter hočejo zavajati slovensko ljudstvo stran od napredka, stran od naprednih narodov, stran od slovanstva, stran od Sovjetske zveze" ("who under the guise of celebrating Slovenian culture professionals, they enslave and wish to mislead the Slovenian community away from progress, away from progressive nations, away from Slavism, away from the Soviet Union").

Boris Pahor referred to Gradnik as a poet of the coastal area, where Lepa Vida, a Slovenian literary character, was born, since he also wrote about the sea and the Slovenians in the Trieste area. Upon Gradnik's visit to Trieste, Pahor asked him to compose a poem which would give more self-confidence to the Slovenians in the Trieste area in the period in which it was already clear that Trieste would belong to Italy.¹⁴ On this occasion, Gradnik wrote a sonnet entitled "Sonet o človeštvu" (A sonnet about humanity), which, according to Pahor's words, stresses the importance of individual identities within the process of the merging of nations. The sonnet was published in the Slovenian magazine *Sidro* (Anchor) from Trieste, edited by Boris Pahor. On his request, it was later reprinted in the main Slovenian newspaper *Delo* (Labor), in Slovenia in 1997, upon the thirtieth anniversary of Gradnik's death (Pahor 1994: 11–25; 1997: 12).

<p>Človeštvo! Ta beseda te razvname. "Človeštvo! To le ideal je zame, ne narod!" kličeš množici, tribun. "Človeštvo!" pevec, brenk je tvojih strun.</p> <p>Čemu brezmejnost, ki nas le v plitvino bo zapeljala? Svojo domovino na zvezde zoži, ki so nad teboj: tu orji, sej, tu toči kri in znoj,</p> <p>tu širi veje, sok daj korenini, v tej mej globini in teh vej širjavi obraz boš našel domovine pravi.</p> <p>Svoj ogenj vžgi in vžgal ga boš tujini. Le eno smo drevo, le trte grozd, človeštvo pa neskončen, temen gozd.¹⁵</p>	<p>Mankind! The word rouses you. "Mankind! For me, only an ideal, not a nation!" you call to the crowd, to the stands. "Mankind!" a singer, your guitar chords rings.</p> <p>Why boundlessness, when only onto the banks it will steer us? Your homeland limit it to the stars above you here sow and plough, here sweat and bleed,</p> <p>here spread ranches, water your roots, in this depth, in this breadth, find you shall your homeland's face.</p> <p>Light your fire, it shall spread abroad. Just one tree, only a bunch of grapes, yet mankind an endless, dark woods.¹⁵</p>
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¹⁴ After WW II, Trieste was part of the Zone A of the Free Territory of Trieste (FTT, Slov. STO), under the Allied Military Government. After 1954 the FTT ceased to exist, the Zone A was assigned to Italy. For further information about this, see, Kacin Wohinz (2000).

¹⁵ This is a literal translation, meant solely for understanding the meaning of the poem.

The fact that Gradnik was considered to be a cross-cultural facilitator encouraged the Slovenians from the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region to start translating Gradnik's poetry into Italian at the end of the twentieth century. In the interwar period, as well as during WW II, Gradnik's poetry had actually only been translated into Italian by the Italian Slavists. But in the given case, the translations emerged in order to contribute to the gradual Italianization of the Slovenian population (Jan 1995). Gradnik's translations from the last decades, done by the Slovenians in Italy, however, play a different role. Their aim is to acquaint the Italian majority with the Slovenian culture, through which they have been trying to contribute to the growing of the Slovenian identity. As early as in 1984, the Braitan publishing house from Krmin (It. Cormons), in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, thus published a collection of Gradnik's poems in Italian, entitled *Poesie*, which was later reprinted in 2001. Although Hans Kitzmüller, who had launched the initiative for this collection and who had also edited it, was not of Slovenian origin, Slovenians from Friuli-Venezia Giulia took part in translating the poems into Italian. This trend continues into the twenty-first century as well. In 2013, a comprehensive and thematically diverse anthology of Gradnik's poetry was published, entitled *Eros - Thanatos*. The translator and editor of the book is Fedora Ferluga-Petronio, a Slovenian from Trieste, a member of the teaching staff at the University of Udine, in the Province of Udine (it. Provincia di Udine), part of Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

It also should be mentioned that both collections are important in terms of understanding Gradnik among the Italians as well, especially because for the first time ever they present a thematically complete opus of his work. Among the poems, one can also find ones that speak about the fascist oppression of the Slovenian population.

As previously observed, the Slovenians in Italy did not only discuss Gradnik in primary schools, but also in secondary schools and universities. The efforts of the above-mentioned Fedora Ferluga-Petronio are particularly worth noting, as in 2007 she organized the first international symposium on Alojz Gradnik, which was held at the University of Udine. So far this has been the only international symposium dedicated to Alojz Gradnik. One of its aims was to focus on the Gradnik's role of a cross-cultural facilitator, as the contributions shed light onto Gradnik's translation opus and his translations into Italian, as well as onto the reception of Gradnik among the Italians and Friulians.

Besides Fedora Ferluga-Petronio, another two university teachers from *Friuli-Venezia Giulia* have been striving to present Gradnik's life and work within the academic milieu, Miran Košuta in Lojzka Bratuž. Miran Košuta, Head of Slovenian Studies at the University of Trieste, has been studying the reception of Alojz Gradnik among the Italians (Košuta 2008). Moreover, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the primary

school in Repentabor he revised the school's anthem, "Padaj, padaj, rosica" (Let, let fall, morning dew).

Lojzka Bratuž from the University of Udine, daughter of the poet Ljubka Šorli, spread the interest into Gradnik among the secondary school students of the Primož Trubar Classical Lyceum in Gorizia, in the Province of Gorizia. Under her mentorship, Marjanika Terpin wrote a seminar paper and the data used in the latter had been provided by the poet's brother Jožef from Medana in Brda (Terpin 1998: 9–18). In this respect, it should be mentioned that in 2013, Alojz Gradnik's poems were yet again the subject of baccalaureate examinations at Slovenian secondary schools in Italy (N. N. 2013d).

Within the Slovenian community in Italy, Alojz Gradnik is occasionally also perceived as a symbol of the unification of the Slovenians themselves, despite the controversy around his visit to Trieste in 1953.¹⁶ In 1998, the ceremony held in Števerjan, on the Slovenian cultural holiday, was thus jointly prepared by both politically opposing cultural societies from Števerjan. It was dedicated to Alojz Gradnik, to mark the thirtieth anniversary of his death (Vogrič 1998: 10; N. N. 1998: 7).

It is also of particular interest that the symbolic image of Alojz Gradnik among the Slovenians in Italy has been taken over by Gradnik's son, Sergej Gradnik (b. 1924), who has ever since been in contact with both of the schools carrying his father's name and has been attending ceremonies dedicated to his father. For instance, at the previously mentioned ceremony organised on the Slovene cultural holiday in Števerjan, he, as an honorary speaker, held a speech on the importance of the unity among the Slovenians in Italy.¹⁷

With such public appearances among the Slovenians in Italy, Gradnik's son has actually been realising his father's vision and his wish to immortalise his cultural heritage, which would come true precisely through his descendants. Gradnik's wish is evident in poems such as the poem "Sinu" (To my son), which reads:

¹⁶ About the ideological dichotomy of the Slovenians in Italy after WW II, see Kacin Wohinz (2000).

¹⁷ The documentation belongs to Sergej Gradnik's personal archives.

<p>“Kaj, kaj bi bil brez tebe, o moj sin? /.../ Še klil bom iz vesoljstva globočin, ko bom že davno spaval smrtni san in ko ne bo moj grob nikomur znan, boš ti življenja mojega spomin” (Gradnik 1986: 175).</p>	<p>What, what would I be without you, oh, my son? /.../ I shall even arise from the endless depths, long upon having been dreaming lethal dreams and when my grave becomes unknown to every man, you shall keep my life in one's memories.</p>
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As a representative of his father's cultural heritage, Sergej Gradnik has always been welcomed with enthusiasm and overwhelming emotions by the Slovenians in Italy. Such a warm atmosphere prevailed, for instance, also upon receiving him as an honorary guest at the ceremony marking the fortieth anniversary of naming the primary school in Repentabor after Alojz Gradnik. Various Slovenian media in Italy reported about his attendance at the event, among which were both of the two most important newspapers, the Catholic *Novi glas* (New Voice) (N. N. 2013a) and the more general *Primorski dnevnik* (The Primorska Daily), which captured Sergej Gradnik's appearance in Repentabor with the words: “Ob zaključku proslave je s kančkom ganjenosti stopil pred mikrofon in čestital vsem nastopajočim. Prepričano pa je zatrdil, da po takem nastopu verjame v trden obstoj slovenskega naroda izven državnih meja”¹⁸ (N. N. 2013b: 5).

Most recently, Gradnik's son attended the celebration of a Slovenian cultural holiday in the Repentabor municipality in 2015. The celebration was dedicated to Alojz Gradnik and his connection to the Trieste region and once again received a very warm welcome (Toroš 2015b).

Among the more significant events celebrating Gradnik's poetry, the excursion and the ceremony “Along Gradnik's trail” should be mentioned as well. First, the excursion to Medana took place in autumn 1998. The members of the childrens and youth choir from Vrh sv. Mihaela (It. S. Michele del Carso), in the Province of Gorizia, visited the house in which Gradnik was born, as well as his grave. In the following year, the trip, also attended by parents and music teachers, was concluded with a ceremony at Vrh sv. Mihaela, featuring the recital of Gradnik's poetry and

¹⁸ “Upon closing the ceremony, he, with a hint of emotion, came to the microphone and congratulated to all those who took part in the ceremony. With confidence he also assured that on the basis of such performances he believed in the future existence of the Slovenian nation across the national borders.”

its settings (N. N. 1999). Sergej Gradnik made an appearance on this occasion and concluded his speech with: "Tu, na etnični meji pomeni [pesem, fn. A. T.] poleg jezika obstoj, zato mora pesem živeti v vaši srcih. Pesem v domačem, slovenskem jeziku. Spoštujte jo, gojite jo in se veselite z njo. Da boste ta rob morja do planin ohranili še naslednjih tisoč let"¹⁹ (N. N. 1999).

We should not overlook the fact that pupils of the primary schools in Števerjan and Repentabor have also been taking part in similar excursions to "Gradnik's Medana." These children therefore gain a different perception of Alojz Gradnik than the children living on the Slovenian side of the border. To the latter, Gradnik is presented as a poet from the edge of the Slovenian territory, while on the Italian side, Gradnik is perceived as a major central Slovenian author.

In Gradnik's life and work, the Slovenians in Italy have thus found some important starting points, which they can use to support their struggle to keep their Slovenian identity. Only upon revealing this, we can understand Gradnik's role and importance in this territory, which in many a respect differs from the reception in Slovenia.

Another point worth mentioning is that we can explain Gradnik's popularity with the Slovenian minority in Italy within the frame of contemporary cultural concepts (hybrid culture). As it is clear from the portrayal of Gradnik's biography in this debate, he oscillated between the various cultural options from the Romance, Germanic and Slavic worlds, depending on the external limitations and pressures, through which he, symbolically speaking, deconstructed the precedence of a single linear cultural identity. The latest research conducted among the younger generation of Slovenians in Italy has discovered the same identity expression, one that is culturally diverse, in the sense of integration and shifting, and without the need of homogenisation (Pertot 2014).²⁰

Slovenians in Italy, specifically the younger generations, who are increasingly more in contact with the majority Italian population and mixed marriages, can recognise in Gradnik the cultural hybridity, unique to them. For them, Gradnik is a reference point of Slovenianess that allows them

¹⁹ "Here at the ethnic border, the song, besides language, means survival. That's why the song must live in our hearts, in our native, Slovenian tongue. Respect it, nurture it and rejoice in it, so you will preserve this stretch of land from the sea to the mountains for another thousand years."

²⁰ The new view on the identity of Slovenians in Italy is mirrored in the works of some contemporary Slovenian novelists in Italy, notably Slovenian author Evelina Umek (b. 1939) from Trieste, in whose novels, *Frizerka* (Hairdresser, 2005) and *Zlata poroka ali Tržaški blues* (Golden anniversary or Triestine blues, 2010), the main root of conflicts is specifically the question of cultural hybridity in Trieste.

other options of identity. In the coming years, it is this dimension of the poet that will most likely be at the forefront of the Slovenian community in Italy.

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POVZETEK**ALOJZ GRADNIK MED SLOVENSKO SKUPNOSTJO V ITALIJI
OD DRUGE POLOVICE 20. STOLETJA DO DANES**

Pesnik in prevajalec Alojz Gradnik ima med slovensko skupnostjo v Italiji pomembno simbolno funkcijo, kot pesnik in prevajalec, ki se je zavzemal za slovenstvo in medkulturno sožitje v tem prostoru. Gradnik je namreč v poeziji opozarjal na zatiranje slovenstva na Goriškem in Tržaškem, obenem je s prevodi iz italijanske in furlanske literature v slovenščino prispeval k krepitvi slovensko-italijanskih in slovensko-furlanskih literarnih stikov. Prav tako je opozarjal na pomen slovenskega šolstva za ohranitev slovenske identitete na tem območju, tako da sta tam danes kar dve slovenski osnovni šoli na poimenovani po njem.