

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN CONSTRUCTING THE OTHER IN SLOVENIAN AND ITALIAN POETRY OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: IMAGES OF TRIESTE¹

Ana Toroš

I.

The Slovenian and Italian poetry about the city of Trieste that emerged in the first half of twentieth century was thematically grounded in the social and political realities of the region, while displaying an affirmative nationalist role. From within this framework many poets were pushed to grapple with issues of language, which in themselves reflected the uneasy relations existing between the Slovenian and Italian communities of the region in the days of Austro-Hungarian Empire and later under the Kingdom of Italy.² In their work *Trieste, un'identità di frontiera*, Angelo Ara and Claudio Magris help us identify the causes behind the fraught Slovene-Italian linguistic relations in the Trieste region. Amongst them, they single out the sphere of education as “the basic sector for the protection of the Italian identity of Trieste” (Ara 2001: 70). On the other hand, they note, “Slovenian politics too focused on the problem of the education and language rights of Triestine Slovenes and the defense of their identity in the city” (Ara 2001: 71). Or, as Milica Wohinz Kacin and Jože Pirjevec claim in their work *Zgodovina Slovencev v Italiji 1866–2000* (The History of Slovenes in Italy 1866–2000), the Slovene education system of the period was “the most palpable expression of a nationally conscious community and the strongest tool for its development” (Wohinz Kacin 2000: 53).

This paper, methodologically grounded in studies of literary images, thus aims to present and analyze the most relevant poetic texts that display a strong linguistic theme as well as establish the attitudes of the observing culture (Slovenian or Italian) towards the observed culture

¹ The paper is based on research I undertook of the images of Trieste and the Trieste region in the Slovenian and Italian poetry of the first half of twentieth century, sponsored by “Consorzio per lo Sviluppo Internazionale dell'Università di Trieste,” with a particular focus on Srečko Kosovel and Umberto Saba.

² More detailed overviews of the history of Trieste can be found in Vivante (1912), Čermelj (1965), Ara and Magris (1987), Pohl et al. (1994), and Wohinz and Pirjevec (2000).

(Slovenian or Italian)—i.e., the Other. For this purpose, it also notes the phenomenon of Slovene words used in Italian poetic texts or, conversely, the existence of Italian words in Slovenian poetry, in the hope to establish what the foreign vocabulary is telling us about the attitudes of the local indigenous culture (Slovenian or Italian) towards the culture of the Other.³

The poems about Trieste were mostly written by writers who lived in the city and its environs. Given the fact that many Slovene as well as Italian writers, for various political reasons, either left or came to this region, while others had only minor contacts with Trieste during WW II, be it as prisoners or as soldiers, it does not seem necessary to distinguish between Triestine and non-Triestine poets. Therefore my analysis includes both Slovenian and Italian poets who had dealt in their work with the theme of Trieste.

As the bases for my analysis, and with reference to existing Slovenian literature on the topic, two works deserve special attention: *Trst v slovenski poeziji* (Trieste in Slovenian poetry), by France Bernik (1984), and *Tržaška knjiga* (The Trieste book), by Marija Pirjevec (2001). These works are useful because they offer a historical overview of Slovenian literary creativity suffused with motifs of Trieste. In addition, the poems collected by Mira Cencič in *Primorske pesmi rodoljubja in tigrovskega upora* (Primorska poems of patriotism and the TIGR rebellion, 2010), also served as an important source of analysis. For the period of World War II, I examine the poems collected in the volume entitled *Slovensko pesništvo upora* (The Slovenian poetry of rebellion, 1995), by Boris Paternu. At the same time, individual poetry collections of major Slovenian poets, such as Srečko Kosovel, were also included in this analysis. A substantial body of Slovenian poems about Trieste from the first half of the twentieth century

³ The paper is methodologically grounded in literary imagology. It mainly follows the theoretical tenets of Daniel-Henri Pageaux. Accordingly, it analyzes the image of the Other (Italians) in Slovenian poems and the image of the Other (Slovene) in Italian poetry. Literary imagology studies images and representations of the foreign in literature, whereby the literary image is understood as an entirety of ideas about the foreign in the process of socialization and literalization. The underlying assumption is that the image emerges at the point when the I (the speaker, the observing culture) becomes aware of his or her attitude towards the Other (the observed foreign culture). Such a perspective demands not only a close analysis of the literary text but also an understanding of the various forces that have shaped a given society, its literary system, and its social imagination (Pageaux 2008: 17–52). For further details; see: Moll (1999), Beller (1996), Beller and Leerssen (2007), and Pageaux (2008).

was published in the periodical press coming out mainly in the Trieste region. In the inter-war period, when the Slovenian press in the region was banned, some Slovenian texts were nonetheless published in illegal Slovenian publications. Since these poems published in Trieste periodicals and illegal publications have not as yet received any systematic scholarly attention, my analysis proceeds foremost by taking into account this important body of work. In trying to track down illegal publications, which are not easily accessible and relatively unknown, I relied on the following sources: *Prerez zgodovine slovenskih knjižnic in knjižničarstva na Primorskem* (An overview of the history of Slovenian libraries and librarian activities in the Primorska region, 1961), and *Slovensko primorsko časopisje: Zgodovinski pregled in bibliografski opis* (Slovenian newspapers from Primorska: A historical overview and bibliography, 1961), compiled by Srečko Vilhar; *Slovenske ilegalne mladinske publikacije v Trstu in Gorici* (Slovenian illegal youth publications in Trieste and Gorizia, 1927–40), edited by Nastja Colja, as well as, in part, on the works of Lavo Čermelj (1965), Milica Kacin Wohinz and Jože Pirjevec (2000), and Bogomila Kravos (2006).

The overview of the material showed that a good number of lesser known Slovenian poets published poems with the theme of Trieste. Since they were never re-published in book format, they did not receive due attention in literary histories. Despite their arguably weaker aesthetic components, I treat them equally alongside the works of more recognized Slovenian poets. This resulting broader spectrum of writers and their works has enabled a more comprehensive overview of the strategies employed in articulating the linguistic issues and tensions in the poetry of the Trieste region.

Following the same logic in the selection of Italian poets, I did not primarily go by aesthetic criteria. The task of identifying poems with Trieste motifs was however made easier by the fact that the ground is somewhat better covered in terms of scholarly research and literary anthologies, at least up until the First World War. The Italian writers that come up for discussion in the works I consulted (Piazza 1920, Binaghi 1926, D'Orazio 1935, Anceschi 1943, Maier 1958, Zoldan 1969, Damiani 1981, Doria 1988, Benco 1988, Maier 1991, Picciòla 2006, Cadoresi 1971–83, and Schiavone 2006) thus formed the basis for my own research which focused on choosing relevant poetry collections, going over them and picking out poems displaying the Trieste theme, before subjecting them to close scrutiny.

Altogether, I have studied and analysed the poems of some fifty Slovenian and fifty Italian poets. In this paper I sample only a few of what I

consider to be the most relevant poetic voices for the chosen methodological approach.⁴

II.

Up until the end of the WW I, Slovenian poetry with motifs of Trieste did not for the most part dramatize national tensions of the Trieste region and the linguistic preoccupations arising from it. Therefore, it drew freely on non-Slovenian lexical items whenever the need arose for a more colourful depiction of the poetic content. In the poem “Školjka” (Shell) by Anton Aškerc, for instance, we find these lines: “Takšno lice rožnato imelo / včera j v Trstu laško je deklè! // Rib je kupila od mene / signorina mlada, lepa – da!” (Such a rosy cheek / did an Italian girl in Trieste have yesterday! // She bought fish from me, / young fair signorina – she did! [Aškerc 1989b: 189]).⁵ Such attitudes towards the language of “the Other” not only point towards tolerance of the observing culture towards alien cultures, but also reflect a linguistic flexibility for the purpose of business and trade. Besides Slovene fishermen, there were also the so-called *mandrierkas*⁶ (Slovene peasant women who sold their produce in the Ponte Rosso market square), who would have assimilated the language of “the Other.” This is captured succinctly in the sonnet *San Antonio* by Janko Samec, where: “Na trgu Ponte Rosso / razpenjajo že štante brhke starke, / da ujele z jutrom bi ‘l’affaire grosso’” (At the Ponte Rosso Square, / brisk old women are already putting up their stands / to catch the *l’affaire grosso* of the morning [Samec 1981b: 20]),⁷ though the rapport suggested between the vendors and the foreign buyer seems less spontaneous than the one intimated by Aškerc’s fisherman.⁸ The rising national tensions before WW I would attest to this and, indeed, find expression already in some pre-war poetry. Namely, the observing Slovenian culture was showing signs of distress due to the Italian degrading term *ščavo*,⁹ as for example in Aškerc’s ballad

⁴ For details, see Toroš (forthcoming).

⁵ The poems by Anton Aškerc cited here are taken from the collection *Jadranski biseri* (The pearls of the Adriatic [1908]).

⁶ A *mandrijár* is an owner of a farm with outbuildings.

⁷ The poems by Janko Samec (Trst 1886 – Ljubljana 1945) that were analyzed were published posthumously in 1981. The poems were written between 1926 and 1945, after the poet had left Trieste for the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

⁸ After 1920, Slovenian women were required to speak Italian at the market, else they lost their place in the square (Čermelj 1965: 87).

⁹ *Ščavo* is a pejorative term for Slovenes.

entitled *Balada o Čožotih*: “Čožoti,¹⁰ / kazali nam osle, / pitali nas s ‘ščavi’, / kadar so veslali / drzni mimo nas” (*Čožoti*, / they stuck out their tongues at us, / fed us with *ščavos*, / as they would brazenly row / past us [Aškerc 1989a: 176]).

In the Slovenian poetry of the inter-war period, such antagonisms can be seen to be aggravated to a point of complete severance of dialogue between the local protagonist and “the Other,” the exception being individual satirical poems executed in an amorous vein, which strove to portray the reckless and opportunistic character of young Slovenian women, “rojanska Geiskas,” as they were referred to, who flirted with Italian officers, as we read in the poem “Rojanska Geiska,” from the Gorizia newspaper *Čuk na pal’ci* (Owl on a stick): “Posebno oficirčke, da rade vidijo / v sergente – ufficiale se zaljubujejo” (Especially officers they fancy seeing, / with sergente – ufficiali they fall in love [N. N. 1924: 6]).¹¹

Discounting these few individual instances that feature Italian words in Slovenian poetry with Trieste motifs from the inter-war period, no Italian vocabulary can be detected that would suggest a positive inclination of the observing Slovenian culture towards the Other (the Italians). Rather, centrality is given to the repression of Slovenian culture in the region by the observed Italian culture. Within this framework, the preservation of the Slovene language attained the symbolic meaning of not only the preservation of national integrity, but also of the personal integrity of the individual. A woman poet going by the pseudonym Rodoljubka (Patriot), for example, saw the Slovene language as one of the foremost pillars of the Slovenianness the Other was bent on destroying. In a poem entitled “K obletnici 13. Julija” (On the anniversary of the thirteenth of July), written to commemorate the first anniversary of the arson at the Narodni dom (National Home),¹² and published in the magazine *Jadranka: glasilo zavednega ženstva* (Adriatic woman: The magazine of nationally conscious women), we find these lines: “Buči, buči morje, ti, jadransko, / da prevpiješ našo bol slovansko, / da osveto skličeš nad bakljado, / maščevanje kruto nad grmado”, ki so jo prizgali “blaznobesni gospodarji novi”, v upanju, da

¹⁰ Italian fishermen from Chioggia, a small town near Venice (Volpi Lisjak 2010: 93).

¹¹ In the case of this poet, as also of many others that come up for discussion, there is no exact information as regards the time when the poems were written. Given the theme however, it can be deduced that the poems were written not too long prior to their being published in literary magazines or books, from where they are taken.

¹² Narodni dom (The National Home) in Trieste, the central seat of Slovenian society in the region (Kacin Wohinz 2000: 29).

“otrpne naša četa, / naša govorica in prosveta!” (Roar, roar, the Adriatic sea, / to howl down our Slavic pain, / to summon vengeance over the torch, / a cruel revenge over the stake”, lit by “the madly raging new masters” in the hope to “thwart our corps, / stifle our tongue and schools! [Rodoljubka 1921: 6–7]). The theme of repression of the Slovenian language and the resistance of the local culture against the assimilative pressures found a strong voice in the poetry of Igo Gruden, as for example in his sonnet “Barkovlje”¹³: “I/z Barkovelj, kjer moj jezik ne ugaša, / ker izdajic dojile niso grudi, / zajeda v Trst se kri in zemlja naša” (From Barkovlje, where my language is not being put out, / because traitors weren’t nursed by a bosom there, / our blood and land juts forth into Trieste” [Gruden 1920: 43]). The theme of the muted Slovene language is articulated in more elegiac tones by Janko Samec in his sonnet “Kras” (Karst), where the Karst people are seen to manage merely “a timid sound of language’s former days, / when their hearts were turned towards more charming suns” (“plašen zvok nekdanjih dni besede, / ko so njih srca v lepša sonca zrla” [Samec 1981c: 35]).

In Slovenian poetry with Trieste motifs that emerged during WW II, Italian words can be detected in certain poems that were written in Trieste prisons and camps prior to Italy’s capitulation and even after that. The poem “Trst” (Trieste, 1943), for example, by an unknown woman poet using the pseudonym Olga, describes the appalling conditions of a nun’s bedroom that was turned into a prison cell. Bedbugs, attacking the three girls lying in the middle of the prison cell are evoked forcefully in the poem, while the poet chooses to denominate the girls using Italian: “Bile tri so, gambe belle, / ki za ,amore‘ so trpele” (There they were the three ‘gambe belle’, / yearning for their ‘amore’ ” [Olga 1997: 39]). It is not entirely clear what the function of the Italian vocabulary might be in this particular poem; possibly it serves to allude to an erotic relationship between these girls and Italian men, something that was met with disapproval by other Slovenian women prisoners who in the poem appear in the role of the authoritative first-person plural subject. It would appear that the Italian words contribute to the negative label given to the three girls, who are moreover, and significantly, the first ones to be subjected to the attack by the bedbugs and also to beatings. To say the least, the language of The Other (Italian) during the war can no longer be said to hold a neutral function in the Slovenian poetry as it did in the poems from the turn of the century. Rather, it strives to accentuate the tensions between the observing and the observed culture. This can be attested to by another poem, written

¹³ Barkovlje (Italian Barcola), a mainly Slovenian village in the Trieste countryside around 1910 (Čermelj 1958: 49; Pletikosić 2006: 478).

by Vekoslava Slavec, at the beginning of the spring in 1945, when she was held prisoner in the Trieste prison of Coroneo. As in Olga's poem, Slavec's poem entitled "Moj dom" (My home) opens by describing a prison cell in which "štiri Slovenke trpe" (four Slovenian women suffer" [Slavec 1997: 61]). Their only connection to the outside world is represented by "the black nun" who "opens the door / while nodding her head: / 'Sia lodato Jesu Cristo!' / She offers us clean water / only to shut the door / in our faces!" ("črna nuna", ki "vrata odpira / in zraven z glavo kima: / Sia lodato Jesu Cristo! / Ponudi čiste nam vode / in vrata pred nosom nam / zapre!" [Slavec 1997: 16]). The central protagonist for the women prisoners is thus an Italian-speaking nun, who is symbolically marked by the color black. The Italian citation functions ironically, striving to lay bare her bogus morality, thus problematizing the ethical values of the observing culture.

A poem dealing with a similar theme but less fraught with nationalist tensions is the poem "Ilegalec" (Illegal), written by Vinko Šumrada in September 1944, when the writer illegally resided in Trieste as the functionary of command. In this poem, the speaker is seen to be watching beautiful Triestine girls (Julietta, Brunetta and Mirjana) through a window on the other side of the street, but on account of war does not succumb to their enticing looks, aware that "because of Dalilah, / Samson lost his head" ("Z/bog Dalile / Samson zgubil je glavó" [Šumrada 1995: 68]). The Italian names of two girls, Julietta and Brunetta, in this case merely belong to everyday Triestine life and are not meant to be signifiers of the tortuous Slovene-Italian relations as in the aforementioned cases. Of course, we should note this was an exceptional treatment in Slovenian poetry of the period.

Such a nationalistically defensive stance on the part of the Slovene lyrical subject persisted well after WW II, at the time of the Free Territory of Trieste, and consequently linguistic dilemmas informed a wide variety of thematically different poetic texts. In the poem "Melanholija" (Melancholy) by Črtomir Šinkovec, who lived in Trieste after 1946, the poet portrays a love triangle between a Slovenian Triestine woman, an English speaking foreigner, and the speaker in the poem, who is Slovene. The love between the Slovenian woman and the foreigner is depicted with disapproval, not only due to the speaker's presumable jealousy, but also due to the real concern that Slovene language could become extinct in the Trieste region and that the child from an ethnically mixed marriage would give priority to the foreign culture: "Zdaj v mestu se sprehajaš s tujci, / angleško se bo sin učil ... / Bo dal srce slovenski zemlji, / se bo za nove dni boril" (Now you stroll in town with foreigners, / your son will be learning English ... / Will he give his heart to the Slovenian land, / will he fight for a new day" [Šinkovec 1949: 45]).

III.

Until the end of WW I, Italian poetry with a Trieste theme contains occasional Slovenian usages. These tend to have an ironic and caricature-like function, with which the writers underline the Italian lyrical subject's negative attitudes towards Slovenian culture, no doubt stemming from the sense of being threatened by the growing numbers of Slovenians in the city. Angelo Ara and Claudio Magris observe in their book *Trieste, un'identità di frontiera*: "The reaction against the invasion of Slovenes has for the Triestine Italians turned obsessively into a dominant political theme; the city's entire public life has been polarized around the Italo-Slovenian ethnic dispute" (Ara 2001: 68).¹⁴ An example of these issues is found in the poem "Na volta e adesso," by Odoardo Weiss: "I nostri cari noni / I sczava nazai / A colpi de bastoni / Quei prodi del zakai. /.../ In zità i vien urlando: /.../ Ja, zivio Trst slovenska" (Our loving granddads / chased / those bold Slovenes from Trieste / with sticks /.../ And now they come to Trieste, shouting: /.../ *Ja, zivio Trst slovenska* Long live Slovenian Trieste)" [Weiss 1909a: 64–65]. From this extract it can be deduced that the interest in the observed Slovenian culture was confined to the boundaries of the conflict, so the knowledge of the culture of the Other was necessarily skewed and superficial, signalled also by the poor knowledge of the Slovene language. The name Trst (Trieste) in Slovene, for example, is masculine, but on analogy with the Italian phrase "quella Trieste," where Trieste is feminine, the author resorts to the feminine ending also for the Slovene counterpart: "tista Trst" (it should be "tisti Trst" or that Trieste). In addition to that, Slovene words lack the necessary diacritical marks for sibilants (as in *živio*).

In connection with the misspelling of Slovene words in Italian poems, it should be mentioned that Italian poetry of the period alluded to Slovenians with the word *pipa*, literally referring to the use of a diacritical mark that looks like a rooftop turned on its head for transcribing sibilants in the Slovenian alphabet.¹⁵ In the poem "El triestin pustizzo," by Adolfo

¹⁴ See: Angelo Ara and Claudio Magris (1987).

¹⁵ The studied Italian poetry uses the terms Slovene and Slavic interchangeably, conflating the two categories. Alongside the Slovenian community, there were other Slavic communities present in the region (Croats, Serbs, Czechs, Poles, Russians, etc). The historical sources I draw on, however, stress mainly the relations between Italians and Slovenes (Ara 1987), since Slovenes were the second largest community in Trieste after the Italians. According to an interim census from 1910 and published in the newspaper *Slovenec* on 21 July 1911, there were 37,063 Slovene speakers and 1422 Croatian and Serbian speakers living in Trieste (Pletikosić 2006: 478–479). In the newspaper *Il Piccolo* the results of the above census, published on the 22 July 1911, were presented in

Leghissa, the central character, a Triestine, held onto his Slovenian surname, turning as he did with the wind in the face of insecure political fate:

Con un cognome strambo, intordolado, / Lu per cambiarse de
fisonomia / No el ga che de refar l'ortografia / Per diventar
toscano patentado / Però co' se presenta un caso grave / El ga
in riserva un per de pipe slave. /.../ Po' el se intedescia fina nei
stivai / Pensando fra de lu "no se sa mai" (With his weird,
tangled surname, / should he wish to change his identity, / he
only needs to change his writing, / and already he is a true
Tuscan, / and for some untoward occasions / he carries with
him his Slavic diacritics (lit. rooftops). /.../ And then he fully
Germanizes, / thinking to himself "you never know" [Leghissa
1926: 57–58]).

Slovenian sibilants were a subject of controversy in Italian poetry even as late as the 1930s. In a retrospective poem by Carlo Mioni tellingly entitled "1913," the speaker remembers the growing Slovenianization of the city before WW I, visible in what he felt was the unnecessary bilingualism of signs: "Perchè tentava i 'scavi / Qua farla de paroni /.../ Za zerti botegheri / Meteva le tabelle /.../ Par crico¹⁶ o in dopia lingua /.../ I libri tavolari / Sporcai con pipe e 'ici' " (Ščavos tried to take over /.../ Some merchants / already used /.../ Slavic or bilingual signs /.../ Cadastre books / defiled with Slavic diacritics and surnames ending in '-ic' [Mioni 1933: 28]).

A multilayered linguistic poetic structure was shaped in response to attempts to found an Italian university in Trieste at the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The poem "L'università italiana a Trieste," by Odoardo Weiss, for example, juxtaposes three languages, intermingling them, suggesting three different positions of power in the city. In addition to the Slovene and Italian interests, there is also the voice of the ruling Austro-Hungarian: "L'altra sera dopo zena / Un dei nostri deputati, / Che se trova

such a way that "the residents speaking Slovenian, Croatian and Serbian were merged into one category while the soldiers were left out", giving 37,845 persons in total for Slovenian, Croatian and Serbian speakers (Pletikosić 2006: 479). The Italian presentation of the census could offer an explanation for the conflation of the terms Slovene and Slavic in Italian poetry. For further detail, see Čermelj (1958) and (Pletikosić 2006).

¹⁶ Crico, nickname for Slavic people in Italian poetry (1909a: 64). The same expression is also found in Odoardo Weiss's poem "Na volta e adesso" (1909a: 64).

fora a Viena, / Discuteva con do mati. / Uno iera un s'ciavo duro, / L'altro
 invece un gnoco puro” (Last night / one of our couriers / from Vienna /
 debated with two thickheads, / a stupid *Ščavo* / and a (*lugareto*) blockhead
 [Weiss 1909b: 70–71]). From the perspective of the observing lyrical voice,
 the Slovenian stance on the subject is captured through the expressions in
 Slovene, while the Viennese language policy is denoted by German ones.
 Both stances are seen to go against the interests of the speaker of the poem,
 most probably a surrogate voice for the author himself, who is a
 representative of the Italian interests in the city: “Trst xe nostro /.../ Ti
 ’talian xe farabuto, / Gnente scola gavarà. /.../ Der Slovener hat ragione, /
 Bestemiava ’l lugareto¹⁷ /.../ Nicht votar für facoltà” (Trst is ours /.../ You
 deceitful Italian, / you will not have your schools. /.../ Der Slovener is right,
 / cursed the German /.../ We are nicht in favour of Italian University [Weiss
 1909b: 71]). The conflict is most likely a reflection of broader issues, of
 which education in Trieste constituted an important part, and which stems
 from a particular Italian understanding of government policy, which was
 seen to undermine Italian interests by supporting Slovenian ones (Ara 2001:
 67). Consequently, the attitude towards the Slovenian culture being
 observed is overwhelmingly negative, reflected in the highly pejorative
 term *ščavo*, used for the Other. At the same time, it is clear that the
 protagonist’s knowledge of Slovene is either poor or he deliberately
 disfigures it, mixing it with Italian. The ensuing language mix creates a
 comical effect, in turn also ridiculing Slovenian demands for a “Slovenian”
 Trieste.

In connection to this, Italian poetry of the Trieste region is seen to
 articulate the demands for purified Triestine Italian dialect in the days of the
 Austro-Hungarian Empire, hoping to cleanse it of any words of Slavic
 origin, as the following excerpt from a sonnet cycle entitled “Dialeto
 triestin,” by Vittorio Cuttin, demonstrates: “O bel dialeto nostro, rafinado /
 a poco a poco al fogo de l’ Idea / e da maroca s’ciava depurado” (Our
 exquisite dialect, / gradually purged in the fire of the Idea, / purified of
 useless *Ščavo* clutter [Cuttin 1919: 9]).¹⁸ Such an attitude towards the

¹⁷ *Lugaro* is a Triestine synonym for Germans (Piazza 1920: 137).

¹⁸ In *Storia del dialetto triestino: con una raccolta di 170 testi*, the chapter
 “L’epoca del purismo dialettale” Mario Doria explains:

/Il progredire di una presa di coscienza, da parte dell’elemento
 italofono della città, della propria italianità e, successivamente,
 l’esigenza di una conservazione e difesa ad oltranza contro i tentativi
 snazionalizzatori condotti in quello scorcio di tempo (1860–1880)
 dall’Austria, quando questa avverte in cotesto movimento i germi di
 un pericoloso irredentismo, cui cercherà di opporre, talora con

language of the Other suggests a superiority complex on the part of the observing culture towards their Other.

In the inter-war period, in line with the assimilation policies in Trieste, Italian poetry would no longer use the language of the Other. Italian poems would always refer to the places in the predominantly Slovene areas outside Trieste by their Italian variants (Pletikosić 2006: 478). Italian poems set in the Trieste countryside did not address the social and ethnic issues of Slovenians living there (Kacin Wohinz, 2000, 42–43), issues that were very much articulated in Slovenian poetry of the same period. Indeed, it must be stressed here that the conspicuous absence of the Other in these texts, in the context of the socio-political background against which they emerged, is, from the perspective of imagology, just as telling as the direct poetic representations of the Other in Italian poetry about Trieste of the pre-war period. Therefore, the poems “Barcola” and “Barkovlje” are not merely two poems about the same coastal village. The language as the vehicle for the two poems’ enunciations carries two distinct stories about Trst/Trieste, one Slovenian and the other Italian. The Italian poem “Barcola,” by Carlo Mioni, describes the village as belonging to the attractive Trieste outskirts. The poem is charged with an atmosphere that uplifts anyone who visits this charming coastal town, but allusions to the Other (Slovenes) are utterly missing from the poem, consequently rendering ethnic tensions non-existent:

No existi no al mondo / Riviera più bela / De questa de
Barcola, / Vigni, visitela! / prifumi de fiori, / De salso marin, /
Un ziel tuto incanto / Color del perlin. /... / De sera el senario
/ Se infiamma de lumi / Sul mar, su le vile. / E Barcola canta /

successo, una politica di appoggio all’elemento slavo. In seno a cotesta difesa dell’italianità, la difesa della lingua e del dialetto sono una delle preoccupazioni maggiori; di qui l’esigenza che il dialetto debba mantenersi puro, sfronato da qualsiasi elemento straniero che lo deturpi.” (In the period between 1860 and 1880, the conscience of the Italian part of Trieste about their own Italianness was on the rise, and consequently also their desire to preserve and defend it in the wake of denationalizing attempts from Austria. The latter sensed the dangers latent in irredentism, striving to withstand it by supporting the Slovenian element. Central to defending Italianness was the protection of the language and the Triestine dialect, and here lies the need to preserve it in pure form, without any foreign elements that would defile it.) (1978: 94)

For more on the Italian Triestine dialect, see *Storia del dialetto triestino: con una raccolta di 170 testi* (1978).

L'alegra canzon, / Un canto de vita, / De amor e passion"
 (There truly is not a more stunning coast / in the world / as the
 one in Barcola, / come visit! / The scent of blossoms, / the sea
 air, / dazzling pear-studded sky /.../ At night, the landscape /
 is flooded with shimmering lights, / out at the sea, in villages. /
 And Barcola sings a joyous song / of life, / love and passion.)
 (Mioni 1938: 90)

Conversely, the sonnet "Barkovlje," by Igo Gruden, speaks very clearly about the social and ethnic issues faced by the villagers, since their resistance to bend to assimilative pressures marks a threat to their jobs, an increase in poverty and emigration (Kacin Wohinz, 2000, 42–43):

Kot bi pred burjo se v zavetje skrile / na begu ptice – v bregu
 bele hiše / na pašne, kjer od morja veter diše / med trte so in
 oljke se spustile. // Pred njimi Barkovljanke razgrnile / so bele
 srajce ... v soncu malo više / nad latniki po oknih nagelj rdi še
 – / za koga roke so ga tja vsadile? // Mož v plavžih
 škedenjskih ves dan se trudi, / v tržaški luki žaklje fant
 prenaša, / deklè na Rdečem mostu rože nudi: / iz Barkovlj,
 kjer moj jezik ne ugaša, / ker izdajic dojile niso grudi / zajeda
 v Trst se kri in zemlja naša" (As if the fleeing birds took
 shelter / from the bora wind – in the slope of a white house, /
 on the terraces with the sea-scented wind, / descending into
 the vines and olive trees. // Before them, Barkovlje women
 have spread out / the white shirts ... in the sun, somewhat
 higher, / above the trellis in the windows the carnation still
 blossoms red – / for whom was it planted there? // A man in a
 blast furnace toils all day, / in the port of Trieste a boy
 unloading sacks, / a girl selling flowers on the Red bridge: /
 from Barkovlje, where my language is not being put out, /
 because traitors weren't nursed by a bosom there, / our blood
 and land juts forth into Trieste.) (Gruden 1920: 43)

The elegiac tones, diametrically opposed to the upbeat mood of the Italian poem "Barcola," also pervade Janko Samec's expression in his sonnet "Barkovlje":

Šumi morjé pod molkom belih hiš, / vrtov dehtečih, kjer
 cipresa rase; / med njimi lepi dvorci, njih terase, / ko da držala
 pot bi v paradiž ... // In spredaj cerkve zarjaveli križ, /
 zatopljen v dni nekdanjih lepe čase, / se sonči v dnevu, ves
 pogreznjen vâse – / nad njim samota golih kraških griž ... //
 Ob bregu vije cesta se iz Trsta, / še dalje mest, vasic
 neskončna vrsta, / vsejana preko Istre tužnih brd. // A tam čez
 morje vlačí do pristana / od Gradeža, Benetk se in Pirana /

meglá svinčena ko tujinstva smrt” (The sea murmurs under the silence of white houses, / the scented garden where a cypress grows; / dazzling mansions amongst them, terraced, / as if holding a path to paradise ... // In front of the church a rusty cross, / lost in the splendid past, / basking in the day’s sun, folded in upon itself – / above him the solitude of bare Karst rocks ... // The road out of Trieste winding by the slope, / and further in a long line of towns and villages, / scattered across forlorn Istria hills. // But there, over the sea to the harbour, / from Gradež, Venice and Piran, / a heavy fog drags itself as death upon the foreign). (Samec 1981: 12)

Sorrow in this poem is captured in “the silence of white houses”, to be taken as an allusion to the banning of the Slovene language in the Trieste region. The beauty of the blossoming environment is deceptive (“as if holding the path to paradise”), offset by “a rusty cross, lost in the splendid past”. The sense of dying and helplessness are lent force by certain adjectives and phrases (“the solitude of bare Karst rocks” and “forlorn Istria hills”). The cause of the gloomy atmosphere is revealed in the last stanza with its allusion to enforced denationalization (“a heavy fog ... as death upon the foreign”).

Nonetheless, Slovenian words found an integral place in the inter-war Italian poetry, as it flirted nostalgically with the past. In the opposition between and confrontation of modernity and the past in the poem “Ieri e oggi,” certain expressions of Slovene origin are to be found in italics, such as *mlècherze*, *clanzi*, *cripize* (Mioni 1933: 14–16), symbolizing the times gone by, to which the speaker feels more inclined than to the ever faster modern:

Co penso a le beschize / Ch’el pan sul mus portava / E che a Sant’Ana e Barcola / In *cripiza*¹⁹ se andava, / Che par rivàr su a Opcina / Se ghe meteva un giorno, / I oci me li sfrègolo / E vedo tuto intorno: // Done del pan e *mlècherze* / E sin la lavandere / A bordo dele elettriche. /.../ No se se miga rampiga / Su i sassi par i *clanzi* /.../ I omnibus e le *cripize* / I ga in pension za messo /.../ Me vado dimandando: / Ma dove finiremo? / Chi sa che un giorno o l’altro / A piedi no tornemo” (If I think of Slavic women peasants from the Karst, / who carried bread on donkeys, / and that you could go to St. Ana and to Barkovlje / with *kripice* (a cart), / and that it took a whole day / to clamber up to Opčine, / I rub my eyes / and see around me: // Women selling bread and *mlekerce* (women

¹⁹ Italics in the original.

selling milk), / and women washing clothes, / on the trams /.../
 No need to climb / the rocky slopes and steeps anymore, /
 omnibuses and *kripice* / have retired. /.../ But I wonder: /
 Where will this take us? / Perhaps one day / we will be footing
 it again.) (Mioni 1933: 14–16)

Slovenianness in the poem is thus depicted as an element of the former Habsburg Trieste, which had in this period acquired with many Italian poets the contours of “the Habsbug Triestine myth”—namely, an idealized image of Trieste’s former glory shot through with nostalgia. This of course is not to say that the image of Slovenes had assumed a positive value in its own right; it was merely idealized to the extent it was seen to belong to the idealized Habsburg Triestine past.²⁰

Even after WW II, the poetic stage of the Trieste region continued to be a turbulent setting for the on-going language debates. The sensitive poetic eye of Umberto Saba, for example, captured this in the poetic frame of a seemingly ideal afternoon in the Trieste countryside of the first post-war years in his sonnet “Opicina 1947,” set in the eponymous village of Opčine.²¹ The speaker chances on a slighted (Slovenian) waitress:

Risalii quest'estate ad Opicina. / Era con me un ragazzo
 comunista. / Tito sui muri s'iscriveva, in vista, / sotto, della
 mia bianca cittadina. // Nell'ora dei ricordi vespertina /
 sedemmo all'osteria, che ancor m'attrista, / oggi, se penso
 quella camerista / che ci servi con volto d'assassina” (I
 returned this summer to Opčine. / A young communist came
 with me. / Tito was writ large on the walls / of my white town
 down there. // In the evening hour of reminiscing / we were
 sitting in an inn, which pains me even / today, if I conjure up
 the murderous expression / on the face of the waitress who
 served us.) (Saba 2001: 562)²²

Her origin can be deduced not only on account of the poem’s setting, but also on account of her anger, most likely the consequence of the conversation in Italian held at the table she served: “Due vecchie ebre, testarde villeggianti, / io, quel ragazzo, parlavamo ancora / lassù italiano, tra i sassi e l’abete” (Two old Jewish ladies, stubborn vacationers, / myself and

²⁰ For the Trieste Habsburg myth see: Ara and Magris (1987) and Pizzi (2007).

²¹ Opčine (Italian name Opicina), a predominantly Slovenian village in the Trieste countryside around 1910 (Čermelj 1958: 49; Pletikosić 2006: 478).

²² The English translations of Umberto Saba’s poems are based on Jolka Milič’s Slovene translations.

that boy, we still spoke / Italian up there, amidst the rocks and the spruce trees. [Saba 2001: 562]).

IV.

The issues of language in Slovenian and Italian poetry exhibiting a marked Trieste theme from the first half of the twentieth century can be said to have arisen at different time intervals and with varying degree of intensity. Even before this was true of Slovene poetry, the Italian poetic space became the locale for voicing national and consequently language issues of the Trieste region, with Italian poets stressing the significance of the Italian Triestine dialect. With assimilation policies gaining ground in the inter-war period in the Trieste region, Italian poetry came to avoid any linguistic or other evocations of the Other in the region. On the other hand, linguistic themes only began to make their entry into Slovene space in the 1920s and 1930s, and then they were limited to reflecting the oppression of Slovene language in the Trieste region by the Other. The threat to Slovenianness and Slovenian language in the region and with this a distrust of foreign cultures was to remain the ideological cornerstone for the Slovenian poetry even after the war. Consequently, it was no longer able to forge a dialogue between the indigenous and foreign protagonists in the spirit of genuine linguistic exchange, something the Slovenian fisherman of *Jadranski biseri* [The pearls of the Adriatic] could still master.

Italian expressions to be found in Slovenian poetry up until WW I predominantly reveal a neutral or positive attitude towards Italian culture, but after the war, in the face of assimilative pressures, fear and rejection of the Other come to supplant this benign attitude. On the other hand, Slovenian expressions in Italian texts up until WW I reveal a superior stance and rejection of the other culture, stemming from a sense of being threatened and unable to realize Italian linguistic and political aspirations in the Trieste region. Nonetheless, the inter-war period has yielded poems in which individual Slovenian words appear with the aim to shed light on the former cultural context of Austro-Hungarian Empire, remembered by the poetic voice with affection and nostalgia.

University of Nova Gorica

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POVZETEK**VLOGA JEZIKA V TRŽAŠKI POEZIJI PRVE POLOVICE
20.STOLETJA**

Pričujoča raziskava je preučila vlogo jezika pri oblikovanju podobe Drugega znotraj slovenske in italijanske poezije prve polovice 20. stoletja, ki si je kot dogajalni prostor izbrala tržaško področje. Pri tem je upoštevala kronologijo nastanka pesmi. Jezikovna problematika se v slovenski in italijanski poeziji s tržaško motiviko prve polovice 20. stoletja pojavlja v različnih časovnih intervalih in z drugačno intenziteto. Italijanski pesemski prostor se je namreč že pred slovenskim začel uporabljati za nacionalna in posledično jezikovna vprašanja na Tržaškem. Potom asimilacijske politike na Tržaškem se je v medvojnem obdobju italijanska poezija izogibala jezikovni in vsakršni evokaciji Drugega. Jezikovna tematika je na drugi strani v dvajsetih in tridesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja šele vstopala v slovenski dogajalni prostor, vendar se je omejevala na refleksijo zatiranja slovenskega jezika na Tržaškem s strani Drugega. Ogroženost slovenstva in slovenskega jezika na Tržaškem in s tem nezaupljivost do tujih kultur je ostala idejna podlaga slovenske poezije tudi v povojnem času.

Italijanski izrazi v slovenskih pesemskih besedilih do prve svetovne vojne povečini razkrivajo vrednostno nevtralen ali pozitiven odnos do opazovane kulture, po prvi svetovni vojni pa strah in odpor do Drugega spričo njegovih asimilacijskih teženj. Na drugi strani razkrivajo slovenski izrazi v italijanskih besedilih do prve svetovne vojne superiorno držo domače kulture ter zavračanje opazovane kulture, spričo občutka ogroženosti pri uresničevanju lastnih jezikovnih in političnih interesov na Tržaškem. V medvojnem obdobju se kljub temu mestoma pojavijo posamične slovenske besede v sklopu ponazoritve preteklega kulturnega konteksta Avstro-Ogrske, ki se ga pesemski subjekt spominja z naklonjenostjo in nostalgijo.