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Minority Literature and Collective Trauma: The Case of Slovene Triestine Literature

The study focuses on the relationship between minority literature and collective trauma. Drawing on the theory of trauma, psychoanalysis, memory studies, and literary representations of memory, we argue that the trauma resulting from the suppression of Slovene identity in Trieste during fascism is transmitted into literary discourse through two channels. Firstly, through the normative model of remembering the trauma in question – namely through literary works that can be described as fictions of memory. Secondly, we paid attention to the manifestations of trauma that (unconsciously) enter the narrative structure, regardless of the time and events, which are not necessarily tied to the period of fascism and to concrete events and places of memory. In this context, we illuminated the literary characters from the perspective of literary imagology (the I and the Other).

Keywords: collective trauma, collective memory, minority literature, Trieste, literary representations.

Manjšinska književnost in kolektivna travma: Primer slovenske književnosti na Tržaškem

Članek preučuje odnos med manjšinsko književnostjo in kolektivno travmo. Na podlagi teorije travme, psihoanalize, študij spomina in literarnih reprezentacij spomina avtorica ugotavlja, da se je travma, nastala zaradi zatiranja slovenske identitete v Trstu v času fašizma, v literarni diskurz prenesla na dva načina: skozi normativni model spomina na omenjeno travmo, natančneje skozi literarna dela, ki jih lahko opišemo kot fikcije spomina, poleg tega pa se avtorica osredotoča še na pojavnosti travme, ki (nezavedno) prodirajo v pripovedno strukturo ne glede na čas in dogodke, torej ne nujno povezane z obdobjem fašizma in konkretnimi dogodki in kraji spomina. V tem kontekstu članek osvetljuje literarne junake iz vidika literarne imagologije (Jaz in Drugi).

Ključne besede: kolektivna travma, kolektivni spomin, manjšinska književnost, Trst, literarne reprezentacije.

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1. Introduction

The aim of the present study is to demonstrate one of the possible ways of understanding and studying Slovene Triestine literature, namely by incorporating findings from the field of trauma studies. First of all, we should clarify that today there are various approaches to the study of the relationship between literature and trauma, because this topic is treated differently by researchers from across the humanities and social sciences based on varied theoretical and methodological starting points.

Trauma studies is an area that came to the fore in the early and mid-1990s. Cathy Caruth, one of the leading authors in the field, explains it as follows: “Trauma is a repeated suffering of the event, but it is also a continual leaving of its site” (Caruth 1995a, 10). Importantly, she explains, “trauma is not experienced as a mere repression or defense, but as a temporal delay that carries the individual beyond the shock of the first moment” (Caruth 1995a, 10). Caruth further states, “For those who undergo trauma, it is not only the moment of the event, but of the passing out of it that is traumatic” (Caruth 1995a, 9).¹

Trauma is thus characterised by a latency period (i.e., a period of time from the traumatic event and its repression to the reaction to it). When a traumatic event occurs, the victims are not fully conscious, so they seem to survive the event unscathed. Because this traumatic event “was only vaguely perceived at the place and time when it really happened, [it] may become apparent only later, after a certain latency period – in connection with another space and time” (Jurić Pahor 2011, 168). Moreover, the psychological trauma seems alien, as it cannot be incorporated into consciousness and memory. At the same time, there is an inability to forget, an inner need to talk about the events: “Perhaps the most striking feature of traumatic memory is the fact that it is not a simple memory. [...] [W]hile the images of traumatic reenactment remain absolutely accurate and precise, they are largely inaccessible to conscious recall and control” (Caruth 1995b, 151). Caruth refers to “intrusive thoughts, nightmares, or flashbacks” as traumatic reenactment (Caruth 1995b, 152). And continues: “[W]hat returns in flashbacks is not simply an overwhelming experience that has been obstructed by a later repression or amnesia, but an event that is itself constituted, in part, by its lack of integration into consciousness” (Caruth 1995b, 152). In other words, “[An] event in trauma may be associated with its elision of its normal encoding in memory” (Caruth 1995b, 152). It is thus a paradoxical connection between “the elision of memory” and “the precision of recall” or “the imposition as both image and amnesia” (Caruth 1995b, 153). The main characteristic of the traumatic event, then, is that it has never been “integrated into understanding. The trauma is the confrontation with an event that [...] cannot be placed within the schemes of prior knowledge” (Caruth 1995b, 153). It cannot be integrated “into a completed story of the past” (Caruth 1995b, 153). Therefore, in the heal-

ing process, trauma requires integration and witnessing: “[T]he transformation of trauma into a narrative memory that allows the story to be verbalised and communicated [...] may lose both the precision and the force that characterizes traumatic remembering [...] may mean the capacity to simply forget” (Caruth 1995b, 153–154).

The use of trauma theory in literary texts has recently been addressed in, for example, *Reflections of Trauma and Selected Works by Postwar American and British Literature*, which analyses the “most crucial traumatogenic stressors that affect the lives of the novel’s characters” (Tseti 2011, 1). Thus, the focus is on literary characters who have been shaped by a traumatic past, and how the trauma has been written into them is of interest. Zuzana Burakova examines, for example, the divided, damaged or disrupted identity of literary characters (Tseti 2011, 2). Stanislav Kolar focuses on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder – the reflection of the survival syndrome in literature (Tseti 2011, 2).

A different approach is taken by Dalia Said Mostafa (2009), who focuses on the literarisation of the traumas brought by the war in Lebanon (1975–1990) in *Literary Representations of Trauma, Memory, and Identity in the Novels of Elias Khoury and Rabī Jābir*. She is interested in how the war has affected the technique of writing itself and the narrative style of Lebanese novelists of different generations. On the one hand, she observes narrative through metaphor, dream imagery, hallucination, montage, fragmentary narration, and interruptions of narrative. On the other hand, she also observes the technique of reportage and detective storytelling. Moreover, she registers the repetition of certain words and phrases (Mostafa 2009, 208–236).

It is also important to highlight the point of view of Stef Craps and Gert Buelens, the authors of the introduction to *Postcolonial Trauma Novels*. The latter point out the inadequacy of a one-sided view, such as a purely Western view of trauma, which can occur if we consider only (Western) theoretical works and traumatic events. For the analysis of postcolonial literary representations of trauma, we should be aware of alternative (different) concepts of trauma and their inscriptions in literary texts, in addition to the dominant discourses on trauma (Craps & Buelens 2008, 1–11).

In Slovenia, the relationship between trauma (as a consequence of events during fascism and the First and Second World Wars) and Slovene literature has been studied by, for example, Boris Paternu and Marija Jurić Pahor. Marija Jurić Pahor researched war trauma in the context of Slovene and other literatures. She analysed literary works that deal with motifs and themes from war and war-related events (Jurić Pahor 2019). Her article *Timeless: The Trauma of Fascism and National Socialism in Light of the Need for “Latency” and Transgenerational Transmission* is also worth mentioning. The essence of her contribution is the observation that the trauma of fascism and National Socialism was a phenomenon that required a long latency period, and that, for the traumatised community, it gained the status of an indelible time that transcends (Jurić Pahor 2004, 40).

In the article *Po sledih jezikovnih travm v sodobni slovenski književnosti* (Traces of Linguistic Traumas in Contemporary Slovene Literature), Boris Paternu (2005) analysed the impact of language trauma on the writer, on literary language, and on the content of literary works themselves. Thus, in the introduction, he points out that over the centuries the Slovene language has had a crucial function in the constitution of the Slovene nation. “Language and everything that happened to it has always been, and to a large extent still is, an extremely sensitive area of Slovene personal and communal consciousness” (Paternu 2005, 65). He points out that the older generation of Slovene writers

[s]till have a strong memory of the experience of linguistic genocide in their childhood and also later. These are writers and poets who went through the experience of being Slovenes under Italy and under Austria [...]. Therefore, among so-called cross-border writers, language trauma is a very conspicuous and well-elaborated theme (Paternu 2005, 65).

He observes the latter in two ways: through the content itself, which focuses on the traumatic events of the ban on the Slovene language, and through the choice of language in which the works of these writers are written. In the context of Slovene writers from Trieste, he cites examples written by Boris Pahor and Alojz Rebula. Boris Pahor’s story *Metulj na obešalniku* (Butterfly on a Coat Hook) (Pahor 1959a) describes the punishment of a Slovene girl who spoke Slovene in class during fascism, which led an Italian teacher to hang her from a coat hook. In the case of Alojz Rebula, he refers to an excerpt from *Vrt bogov* (Garden of the Gods):

For example, that I pay attention to Slovene at all. That there is some kind of convulsive anger in between, I do not know for whom. Who knows, if not Benito Mussolini. Yes, he robbed me of a Slovene primary school, and I would like to take revenge on him, so I would enthusiastically use Slovene in all its flavours and colours (Rebula 1986).

Many discussions of Slovene Triestine literature and trauma refer to Boris Pahor’s *Necropolis*.² The author’s alter ego, the narrator of a traumatic story who survived the tragedy of a concentration camp, carries trauma that brings him back to the scene of the crime after many years. Even writing about this experience can be understood as a process of coming to terms with trauma. In this respect, Ivanka Hergold concludes the accompanying study *The Torment of Living and the Rebellion of Unfree People in Boris Pahor’s Opus*:

The victim remained forever a victim [...]. For Pahor (as a surviving victim), his ineffability appears, on the one hand, with the symbolism of the preservation and protection of the camp as a sacred place [...]. On the other hand, the writing of the novel is only subordinate to this symbolic function (Hergold 1997, 228).

Various research questions are posed in the corpus of literature and trauma research – questions that can be divided into the following four major thematic sections:

- Descriptions of traumatic events in literature.
- The impact of (linguistic) trauma on literary language.
- Literary representation of trauma through specific writing techniques and narrative style.
- Observations of (traumatised) literary characters: what symptoms of post-traumatic syndrome can be attributed to them?

Our research perspective will consider all four research starting points, but it will be based on a broader perspective. We will focus on what happens at the level of literature belonging to a minority burdened with collective trauma. Are there certain common transgenerational features at the level of literature created under the influence of collective trauma?

To this end, the specificity of literary discourse in relation to collective memory and trauma must be considered. While studies of literary representations of individual memory have long been established, it is only recently that research has begun to examine literary representations of collective memory. The term “memory fictions” has become established for literary works “that represent processes of remembering” (Neumann 2008, 333). These are literary works produced by a particular culture to answer the question: Who are we? Furthermore, they are often “imaginative (re)construction of the past in responses to current needs” (Neumann 2008, 334). Moreover, literary creation is not a closed system “but a part of the principal meaning-making process of a culture, interacting with other symbol systems” (Neumann 2008, 335).

From this point of view, Slovene literary discourse in Trieste can also be understood in the function of preserving the memory of the traumatic repression of Sloveneness in Trieste. At the same time, this minority literary discourse can offer “normative models” (Neumann 2008, 341) for the narration and interpretation of the minority’s own past. As Aleide Assmann puts it, “writing is not only a means of immortalisation; it is also an aid to memory” (Assmann 2011, 174).

Literary discourse, then, can participate in the process of remembering traumatic events. In this case, literary discourse incorporates already conscious and articulated traumatic events. In other words, the literalisation of trauma occurs after its transformation into narrative memory. It is characteristic of trauma itself that it is not conscious and that it appears in flashes in different places and at different times. When we become aware of the trauma and articulate it, the process of its integration into narrative memory (Caruth 1995b, 153–154) and emotional processing begins.

Since literary writing is a conscious act, it also follows that writing about trauma does not necessarily presuppose an author burdened with trauma. However, if the author is (was) burdened by the trauma he or she is writing about, he or she has already transformed (at least to some degree made conscious) it into narrative memory (and worked through it).

Considering this, we can analyse literary texts from two starting points:

- How is the transformed trauma (as narrative memory) reflected in literary discourse? Here we are interested in the normative (literary) model (Neumann 2008, 341) of remembering traumatic events.
- Following the finding that the collective trauma of fascism triggered the “transgenerational transmission” of trauma (Jurić Pahor 2004, 40), we can hypothesise that the transgenerational transmission of trauma is also reflected at the level of literary discourse.³ Is trauma, then, also integrated into Slovene Triestine literary discourse in its original (unconscious, pre-narrative) form? Following this, are there certain elements in the literary structure that the authors did not intentionally (consciously) incorporate into their literary works?

2. Slovene Triestine Literature

Before focusing on the relation between Slovene Triestine literature and the trauma suffered by the Slovene community in the province of Trieste, we should provide a clear definition of the concept of Slovene Triestine literature. In her article *Periodizacija slovenske književnosti na Tržaškem* (Periodization of Slovene Literature in Trieste), Marija Pirjevec speaks of four phases of development: the pre-literary, related to religious needs and lasting until the 19th century; the literary phase of national awakening, covering the period 1848–1918; literature in the true sense of the word begins with the Italian occupation in 1918, with the more important authors of this period writing their works in exile; and the fourth phase of developed literature, written by authors in Trieste, begins with the end of the Second World War (Pirjevec 2011, 353). In this study, we will consider literary works from the third phase onwards. We can hypothesise for this literature that it often follows a certain literary model (e.g., normative model, cf. Neumann 2008, 341) that was established at the beginning of the 20th century as a consequence of the traumatic events concerning the Slovene community in Trieste.

The name for this corpus of literature (i.e., Slovene Triestine literature) relates to the concept of *letteratura triestina*, i.e., literary works written from the second half of the 19th century by Italian-speaking authors from Trieste. The time of creation of this corpus of literary works coincides with the shaping of the Italian Triestine identity. This is also when the concept of *triestinità* (triestinity) is used, along with the concept of *letteratura triestina* (Triestine literature). The

concept of *triestinità*⁴ is discussed by Elke-Nicole Kappus in her article The Future for Trieste or a Reconstruction of History, in which she points out that before the 19th century,

[t]he nation of Trieste was not defined as a national entity in the contemporary sense, wherein a nation is characterised by cultural and ethnic homogeneity and, above all, by the idea of its members having a common origin and descent, but the Triestine nation was an economic community of interests. It was ready to integrate all who were for the common good (Kappus 1997, 172).

In this sense, the *triestinità* was not an ethnic entity. It enabled the integration of the linguistic, religious, and cultural diversity of the city (Kappus 1997, 173). From the 19th century onwards, with the nationalization and ethnicization of culture (Kappus 1997, 176), *triestinità* (as *Trieste italianissima*, Kappus 1997, 176) began to assert itself in literary discourse.

The concept of *triestinità* was actually shaped and strengthened precisely through Italian-language literature from the province of Trieste, and it was born out of a contrast with the rest of Italian culture and literature, i.e., the culture and literature from Italy's central regions. While, on the one hand, the Italian-speaking inhabitants of Trieste embraced Italian cultural traditions, on the other hand, they felt somehow special, owing to the fact that for a long period of time they lived at the crossroads between the Germanic and the Slavic world, i.e., under Austria-Hungary.

It should be underlined that the concept of Triestine literature does not include contemporary literary works from the province of Trieste, which are written in the Slovene language (nor does it include literary works from this region, which are written in other languages). Thus, the concept is limited to Italian-language literary production. In the period known as Triestine irredentism, it had a common narrative and conceptual framework (e.g., normative model, cf. Neumann 2008, 341), namely that of representing Trieste as a future Italian town. Since, in terms of language and content, the meaning of *letteratura triestina* is fairly limited, the Slovene term *tržaška literatura* is by no means its equivalent. In fact, the Slovene term covers a much broader area and is much less circumscribed. The Slovene term *tržaška literatura* actually includes literary works from Trieste written in both Slovene and Italian. Moreover, it can also include literary works from the province of Trieste, which were written in other languages. Slovene literary historians felt the need to express the concept of *tržaška literatura* concisely in the Italian language and started adding the word Slovene to the Italian term *letteratura triestina*, i.e., Slovene Triestine literature (Košuta 1997, 109). Owing to the widespread confusion surrounding the concepts of *letteratura triestina* and *tržaška literatura*, especially in Slovene-to-Italian translations, in the work *Images of Trieste and of the Triestine Region in Slovene and Italian Poetry*

in the First Half of the 20th Century, two new, distinct terms are used: “Slovene Triestine literature” (*slovenska tržaška literatura* in Slovene; *letteratura triestina slovena* in Italian) and “Italian Triestine literature” (*italijanska tržaška literatura* in Slovene; *letteratura triestina* in Italian) (Toroš 2011).

The concept of Slovene Triestine literature is useful not only when distinctions must be made between Slovene and Italian literature in the province of Trieste, but also when talking about Slovene Triestine literature in relation to the term Slovene literature. Since the end of the First World War, and increasingly after the end of the Second World War, the term has also been used to make a distinction between Slovene literature from Slovenia and Slovene literature from the province of Trieste. In fact, since the end of the First World War – or, symbolically speaking, since the arson attack on the *Narodni dom* in Trieste⁵ – Slovene Triestine authors started using literature to raise awareness about the oppression of the Slovene people in the province of Trieste and by doing so a specific way of writing literature (e.g., narrative model, cf. Neumann 2008, 341) was established within the Slovene literature from Trieste, which was not characteristic of the rest of Slovene literature.

3. Collective Trauma in Slovene Triestine Literature

In what follows, we will highlight some recurrent features within Slovene Triestine literature that can be understood in the context of the normative literary model of remembering traumatic events. Moreover, we will draw attention to some phenomena within Slovene Triestine literature that can be related to trauma in its original, pre-narrative form. For our analysis, we have selected literary works by authors belonging to different generations, which show how traumatic experience was passed on from the generation of writers who experienced the suppression of the Slovene identity to the younger generations.⁶

3.1 Narodni dom

If we examine Slovene Triestine literature in the 20th and 21st centuries, we find that its current themes are often based on events that occurred in the province of Trieste in the first half of the 20th century, which was a traumatic time for the Slovene Triestine community. As Aleida Assmann states, “there has been a strong alliance between memory and place. [...] This topological orientation leads logically to architectural complexes as embodiments of memory” (Assmann 2011, 147).

An excellent example is the novel *Črni obroč* (Black Ring) by Marij Čuk (b. Trieste, 1952), published in 2020, 100 years after the arson attack on the *Narodni dom* (1920), the event at the heart of the novel. In symbolic terms, the novel tells of the loss and violent destruction of Slovene culture in Trieste. The author

is Slovene and was born in Trieste in the post-war period. Although he did not witness the arson firsthand, his descriptions of the event are similar to those in the short story *Kres v pristanu* (The Fire in the Port), published in 1959 by Boris Pahor (b. Trieste, 1913), who saw the arson with his own eyes. In this way, the *Narodni dom* – or the arson of this Slovene cultural centre in Trieste – further consolidates itself as a literary symbol marking the beginning of the destruction of Slovene culture in the province of Trieste.

3.2 Literary Characters

An important theme in Slovene Triestine literature is, therefore, the sense of belonging to the Slovene nation, i.e., the efforts to maintain and strengthen the presence of the Slovene community in the province of Trieste. Consequently, literary characters could be defined on the basis of their attitude towards Slovene culture: positive, highly moral, and mostly Slovene-speaking characters (the I) strive to keep Slovene culture alive in the province of Trieste; their counterparts (the Other) are mostly Italian-speaking characters who despise the Slovene population and culture. They are usually unpleasant, immoral, and physically unattractive. Such characters can be analysed with recourse to literary imagology, which examines the attitudes of members of a culture (the I) toward members of a foreign culture (the Other).⁷

For example, the analysis of the literary characters in the novel *Zlata poroka ali Tržaški blues* (The Golden Wedding or The Blues of Trieste) published in 2010 by Evelina Umek (b. 1939) has shown that the description of the novel's characters – residents of the city of Trieste – depends very much on their attitude towards the Slovene community. The more the characters identify as Slovenes, the more positively they are portrayed (they have strong ethical values, they feel positive emotions, and they are physically attractive). The greater their distance from the Slovene community and culture – i.e., the more they try to hide their Slovene identity or even act against Slovene people – the more negative their portrayal (they are violent, emotionally unstable, insecure, prone to alcohol abuse, and unattractive) (Stekar 2015). However, such characterization does not reflect the author's purposeful/conscious choice (Stekar 2013). It can be inferred that this was the author's only pre-existing understanding of the situation in Trieste.

Such an arrangement of characters can be understood with the help of Pavel Fonda's theory.⁸ Namely, the vulnerable group is characterized by a paranoid-schizoid position in which the object world is narrowed down to a hostile group and an idealized object (i.e., group of belonging). Based on the paranoid rule (either with us or against us), there is a threat of exclusion and projective identification that identifies or assimilates the representative of the native group, who does not conform to the native group, with the Other – the enemy (Fonda 2009).

In our specific case, we are facing the author's (unconscious) arrangement of literary characters according to their preference for the idea of Sloveneness. The latter points to the author's trauma, which arose due to the suppression of Slovene identity.

That in the given case one can speak of the emergence of a collective trauma within literary discourse that is passed on to the next generation can be demonstrated by the narrative *Identiteta črne maše* (The Identity of the Black Mass) published in 2013 by Igor Pison (b. 1982). The narrative, whose very title foregrounds the question of identity, opens up in grotesque scenes the traumatic memory of the suppression of the Slovene language for the Slovene community in Trieste. The memory of the ban on the use of the Slovene language during church services is particularly emphasised.⁹ Slovene characters who move away from a Slovene identity and closer to an Italian identity are also negatively displayed. The Other are Italian-speaking characters, represented by the chief and government officials, highlighted in black. The narrative clearly indicates that the story is set in the countryside of Trieste, among representatives of the minority (Pison 2013, 161). Thus, the second part of the narrative begins with the subtitle: *Šef udari ponovno in nepričakovano začne maševati po italijansko* (The chief strikes again and unexpectedly the mass begins in Italian) (Pison 2013, 168). As a result, those present at the black mass begin to speak out on the issue:

"Povsem neupravičeno je maševati le v italijanskem jeziku!" zatuli Andrej. [...] Celo strežnik Matej, ki je lep del obreda sam vodil šov, napade šefa, saj so se Slovani dalj časa ukvarjali z magijo, medtem ko so se Latinci kmalu predali "alla ciarlataneria cattolica". [...] "Italijani niso sleparji", odvrne slovenski prvak, ki že leta sodeluje z italijansko desnico. [...] "Noi avevamo Dante, Leonardo, Leopardi, e voi?" doda še drugi. Ivo, profesor zgodovine na višji šoli, skuša miriti navzoče ter razloži, da je povsem upravičeno zahtevati dvojezično črno mašo. [...] A dobri volji navkljub se je šef zoperstavil vsem pravičnim pobudam. [...] Šef se je razburil: "No, siamo estranei a qualunque etichetta razzista, sciovinista o fascista." [...] "Tega ne smemo v templju!" je histerično vzkliknila šefova žena, gospa Majda, Slovenka, ki se že nekaj let sramuje, da se je rodila Slovenka (Pison 2013, 168–172, original text).

"It is completely unjustified to preach only in Italian!" shouted Andrej. [...] Even the servant Matej, who conducted a good part of the ceremony, attacks the chief, saying that the Slavs practiced magic for a long time, while the Latins soon capitulated *alla ciarlataneria Cattolica*. [...] "Italians are not fraudsters", says the Slovene president of a political party, who for years has collaborated with the Italian right-wing party. [...] "Noi avevamo Dante, Leonardo, Leopardi, e voi?" adds another. Ivo, a history professor at the high school, tries to reassure the audience, explaining that the demand for a bilingual black mass is entirely justified. [...] Despite his good will, the chief opposed all reconciliation initiatives. [...] "Noi siamo estranei a qualunque etichetta razzista, sciovinista o fascista." [...] "We must not do this in the temple!" cried the chief's wife hysterically, Mrs. Majda, a Slovene who has been ashamed for some years that she was born a Slovene (Pison 2013, 168–172, translation).

It should not be overlooked that Franz appears in the story as “one of the few members of the Italian majority who learned Slovene” (Pison 2013, 173). His name (Franz, not Francesco) associates him with the Germanic world. In fact, as the narrative progresses, the narrator himself associates Franz with the Habsburg frame, which could be linked to the memory of the cultural development of the Slovenes in Habsburg Trieste. Indeed, Franz mentions “the famous Habsburg law” (Pison 2013, 173).

The narrative ends with concerned questions about the possibilities of protecting Slovene identity in Trieste. The verb *must* is emphasized:

We must consider how the story of Black Mass will continue. We must fight for the Slovene elite mass. [...] We must work secretly, perhaps to call someone from Slovenia (Pison 2013, 174).

3.3 *Ščavi*

Another common feature of Slovene Triestine literature is the frequent repetition of the racist swear word *ščavi*. As Cathy Caruth explains: “To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event” (Caruth 1995a, 4).

In Slovene Triestine literature, this word is usually associated with an event, with a representation of the confrontation between the I and the Other who utters this word, thereby denigrating Slovene culture. As Fonda explains, words such as the word *ščavi* cause pain through alluding to an already introjected painful experience (Fonda 2009). Namely, the victim (the I) involved carries the conviction that he or she is inferior to the Other and actually identifies as *ščavi*.

In this regard, Fonda points out that a member of a minority unconsciously introjects several images of the majority’s national identity. As a result, he finds two stereotypes about his own national identity: how the minority sees itself and how the majority sees the minority (Fonda 2009).

The literary scenes of confrontation between the I and the despicable Other can occur at different times and thus are not necessarily tied to the period of fascism. The latter speaks in favour of the thesis that we are dealing with trauma. Moreover, they seem to intrude unintentionally into the narrative structure.

From the perspective of literary imagology, the use of this swear word to characterise the Other creates a meta-image (Leerssen 2016) that reflects how the I sees itself in the eyes of the Other.

For a better understanding, let us look at another example from the novel *The Golden Wedding* or *The Blues of Trieste* by Evelina Umek. In this case, the Other is represented by the character of Fiore, the descendant of Italian-speaking Istrian refugees who have fled to Trieste. It can be assumed that the role assigned to him by the author (unconsciously) is to reactivate the traumatic

experience (the cultural humiliation experienced by Slovenes in Trieste, dating back to the first half of the 20th century). The narrative climax of the novel is a golden wedding anniversary celebration within the Slovene Triestine family. The celebration is disrupted by a drunken Fiore, who is married to a Slovene woman and is actually the son-in-law of the celebrating couple. Fiore addresses the Slovene guests at the party with the following words: “Tomorrow – no, on Monday – I will see my lawyer and file for divorce. I have had enough of all of you, damned *Sciavi!*” (Umek 2010, 130).

3.4 I and the Other – a Dysfunctional Relationship

The next recurring element within Slovene Triestine literature that can be linked to collective trauma is the dysfunctional love relationship between representatives of the native (Slovene) and the foreign (Italian) culture.¹⁰ It is already hinted at in the quoted scene from Eveline Umek’s novel *The Golden Wedding or the Trieste Blues*, wherein Fiore announces his divorce from his Slovene wife. As can be seen in the novel, this aspect of Slovene-Italian relations also appears in different time frames.

For these representations, we can also hypothesize that they are created from a paranoid-schizoid position, where everything negative is projected outwards, onto the Other (Fonda 2009). As a result, any relationship with the Other is also inconceivable.

Let us analyse a novel by a younger writer, Vilma Purič (b. 1966), *Burjin čas* (The Time of Bora), published in 2009. This novel, set during the Second World War, tells the love story of a Slovene woman named Brina and an Italian man named Pino. The Slovene community does not approve of this love, and in the end, Brina also has to admit that she made a mistake. Indeed, when she is caught and imprisoned by the authorities for her anti-fascist activities, Pino leaves her. Despite her love affair with Pino, Brina remains a positive character: she realises that she made a mistake (in starting a relationship with Pino) and actively participates in the liberation front of the Slovene nation. Had she not acted as she did, she would probably have been portrayed in a negative light. This is the case of Fani, the anti-heroine in the novel *Parnik trobi nji* (A Steamboat Blows to Her) by Boris Pahor (published 1964). Fani has a relationship with a fascist and she is portrayed as vulgar, adulterous, and rude to her mother. In the novel, she is eventually punished for her behaviour: she is run over by a train while drunk.

3.5 Identity

Finally, let us consider an example of the literalization of the suppression of (Slovene) identity, which is at the core of the novel *Frizerka* (The Hairdresser) by Evelina Umek (2005). We will observe the main literary character, Romana,

who rejects her Slovene identity. Such literary characters are presented in other analysed stories only dimly, in black and white, i.e., with negative character traits. In the given novel, the author delves into the psyche of the (anti) heroine from a mixed Slovene-Italian family throughout the novel.

Romana represses her childhood memories of her Slovene-speaking grandmother, who taught her to pray in Slovene, and generally all painful memories related to her Slovene roots.

To understand Romana as a representation of a traumatized person, the fact that components of both cultures accumulate in a child from a mixed marriage may be helpful (Fonda 2009). Interethnic tensions and group traumas reinforce the child's paranoid-schizoid position. As a result, the individual (Romana) is forced to identify herself with only one group. This is associated with a high degree of coercion over certain parts of herself (Fonda 2009). At this level, false ethnic identities are created that prevent an individual from freely expressing different parts of their self (Fonda 2009).

This oppression and its consequences are very well portrayed in the novel itself, for Romana's life lacks the joy of life, the will to live. Her whole life is permeated by an agonising grey, there is an absence of feeling, a suppression of her own emotions, a lack of contact with herself, her own feelings, an escape from her own feelings.

Her inner emptiness contrasts with her friend Ivana, who is described as "smiling" and "cheerful", which clearly expresses her Slovene origin. Thus, when Romana asks Ivana if she knows Slovene, she answers: "Of course, I am Slovene" (Umek 2005, 90).

The author's portrayal of Romana might be associated with a non-domestic internal stranger (Fonda 2009). As Fonda points out, it is unusual when we discover in ourselves parts of the negative, despised, repressed identity of the Other. All of it forces its way to the surface and requires a constant expenditure of energy to maintain repression or division. Thus, a repressed, unconscious image of the doppelganger, that is the Other, is formed. To consolidate the repression, additional defence mechanisms are necessary, such as reactionary formation expressed in the excessive assertion of a pure group identity (Fonda 2009). In this case, Romana might be a literary image of the author's unconscious, repressed, or detached identity.

4. Conclusion

As we have shown, these analysed works within Slovene Triestine literature have specific features, which can be better understood from the perspective of (transgenerational) collective trauma. In this regard, we have highlighted some recurring transgenerational elements within the Slovene literature of Trieste. Drawing on the theory of trauma, psychoanalysis, memory studies, and liter-

ary representations of memory, we argued that the trauma of the suppression of Slovene identity in Trieste during fascism is transmitted into literary discourse through two channels. First, through the normative (literary) model of the trauma in question, namely through literary works that can be described as fictions of (collective) memory. Secondly, we paid attention to the manifestations of trauma that most likely enter the narrative structure unconsciously, regardless of the time frame, which is not necessarily tied to the period of (pre-) fascism and to concrete events and places of memory (e.g., the burning of the *Narodni dom*). In this context, we examined literary characters from the perspective of literary imagology. We tried to understand their representations and the relations between them through the lens of certain psychoanalytic concepts (paranoid-schizoid position, non-domestic inner stranger, introjections, projections).

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Notes

- ¹ In this context, it is worth mentioning Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which was officially recognized by the American Psychiatric Association in the 1980s, as “a response to an event ‘outside the range of usual human experience’” (Caruth 1995a, 3). The latter causes symptoms formerly called “shell shock”, “combat stress”, “delayed stress syndrome”, “traumatic neurosis” (Caruth 1995a, 3). Some dissociative disorders also belong in this group (Caruth 1995a, 3).
- ² See, e.g., Pirjevec and Tuta Ban (1993), Pregelj and Kozak (2011). Traumas, related to Slovene writers from Trieste, are also touched upon in the works of Miran Košuta and Tatjana Rojc.
- ³ The term transgenerational transmission of trauma is generally used to refer to transmission that spans up to four generations, after that we refer to it as traumatic collective memory. In addition to certain patterns of transgenerational transmission of trauma, silence and identification are the main mechanisms of trauma transmission from one generation to another. Although the traumatic past is not spoken about, it is expressed through gestures, hints, repeated interruptions of conversations. In identifications, subjects identify with the life history of objects (Wutti 2013).
- ⁴ On Italian Triestine literature and the concept of *triestinità*, see also Ara and Magris (1997), Pizzi (2005; 2007; 2013). On the difference between the terms *triestinità* and *tržaškost* in the context of literature, see Toroš (2014). For more on trauma and the Triestine region, see Ballinger (2003). The author examines identity and memory in Trieste and Istria in relation to their traumatic past. The discussion by M. Jurić Pahor (2014) is worth considering, in which the author tries to understand Slovene Triestine literature through Homi K. Bhabha’s concepts, which, despite the traumatic past, make it possible to create closeness in dialog: cultural hybridity, the Third Space and translation.
- ⁵ The *Narodni dom* was the main Slovene cultural centre in Trieste. It was burned down in an arson attack in 1920. For more information on the *Narodni dom*, see Kafol and Mermolja (2020).
- ⁶ We have selected a sample of literary works that illustrate the emergence of trauma and the normative (literary) model of remembering the traumatic experience in Slovene Triestine literature from the first half of the 20th century onwards. A more extensive study would, of course, point to other features and deviations, which is beyond the purpose of the present study.
- ⁷ For additional information on imagology, see Pageaux (2010) and Leerssen (2016).
- ⁸ The theory of psychiatrist Pavel Fonda is particularly suitable for our research, because it is applied to the territory of Trieste. He uses the concept of positions developed by Melanie Klein (1952, cited in Fonda 2009) and extends it to group psychic action. In this context, he explains that there are three categories of mental positions of an individual or group. In a dangerous situation, the group retreats into a paranoid-schizoid position because it is better suited to solidify the group, to determine a common enemy, to reinforce positive emotions regarding one’s group, and to externalize negative ones. Trauma victims are also in a paranoid-schizoid position. Characteristically, everything experienced is separated into good and bad, with everything bad

projected outward. In Trieste, throughout the 20th century, a group paranoid-schizoid mood prevailed: pure Slovenes and *italianissimi* Italians (Fonda 2009, 101–134). In this context, Fonda gives an example of contrasting representations of Triestine landscape (with different focus) in Slovene and Italian non-fiction books. Slovene works emphasise the Slovene element of landscape, while Italian works do not mention it (Fonda 2009). A similar duality is evident at the level of literature (fiction), for example, in the analysis of Slovene and Italian poetry in Trieste and its surroundings in the first half of the 20th century (Toroš 2011).

⁹ On the importance of the clergy in preserving the Slovene language, see, for example Klinec (1979).

¹⁰ See also Toroš (2020).

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