Literary links between Trieste and Buenos Aires during the first half of the 20th century

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Abstract

The article ventures into the field of Slovene and Friulian migration to Argentina at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, speaking up on migration from the Brda region and its environs. It is a hilly and wine-growing region which was under Austro-Hungarian rule during the end of the 19th century, but after WWI the Kingdom of Italy was given the reins. Nowadays, the region is divided between Slovenia (the Goriška region) and Italy (the province of Gorizia). We will focus on two literarised chronicles, created based upon the transoceanic letter correspondence and the oral tradition. The first literary chronicle Un pò di cronaca famigliare Godeas – Gradnik was written by Maria Samer, a female author of Italian and Friulian decent from Trieste. Her work is unpublished and has been found only recently. The second work Nepozabljena Brda was written by Oskar Reya – Kozanski, a Slovene author from Brda. The article stems theoretically from literary imagology, using the comparative method to study the literary image of Argentina in both texts. While doing so, based on Kozanski’s chronicle, the article reveals the identity crisis specific to the migrants from Brda, who were existentially tied to their “native” land as a means of survival. This article also ventures into the field of literary reception, reconstructing the previously unknown Slovene-Argentinean literary and family connections based on Maria Samer’s chronicle.

During the first half of the 20th century, Eduardo Dughera, an Argentinean author of Friulian descent, corresponded with his cousin Alojz Gradnik, one of Slovenia’s greatest poets and whose mother was Friulian, and Maria Samer, their cousin who translated both their works into Italian. In relation to this it is important to mention the interest the Slovene community in Argentina had for Gradnik in the 21st century.