

# Genius loci of the city of Padua in the context of Slovak travelogues of the 19th century

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**Abstract:** The authors' decision to "read" and semiotically analyse the city's text based on travelogues stems from their aesthetic, historical and informational value, the possibility of incorporating them "into the network" of other texts about Padua, thus shaping city image. The authors' research on Slovak literature and culture also determined the choice. As a time frame, the nineteenth century is not accidental; the Slovak cultural environment (the territory of present-day Slovakia) witnessed the development of the travelogue genre and journeys to Italy. By interpreting and semiotic analysis of the selected authors' travelogues and works, the paper draws attention to the uniqueness of Padua, the ways of its representation and the grasping of the urban space, which until now despite its importance in education, sciences and art has remained unnoticed in literary studies. Considering that only four Slovak travellers included Padua in their writings during the studied period, all of their works were reviewed to uncover their texts' semantic potential. Interpretive immersions thus reflect the experiential reception of the author's city image and perceiving its architectural structure. Through this, the authors develop a network of texts about Padua and support the typological classification according to its specific function or image. This paper articulates a variant of the Slovak phenomenon of Italian travel and a view of the meanings associated with urban spaces and places. It reflects the importance of travel writing for understanding the (literary) cityscape and its transformations and opens space for further research on the subject.

**Keywords:** Padova; image; structure; meaning; Slovak travelogues

## 1. Introduction

The northern Italian city of Padua was not a typical destination for Slovak travellers in the 19th century. Nevertheless, its visit and subsequent description became part of the travelogues of at least some authors-travellers, namely A travelogue containing a journey to Upper Italy and thence through Tyrol and Bavaria, with particular reference to the Slavonic elements by Ján Kollár, Memorial from my travels in foreign kingdoms by Štefan Nemeckay, travelogues From Slovakia to Rome, From Slovakia to Italy by Gustáv Kazimír Zechenter-Laskomersky and Pilgrimage to Rome by Jozef Kompánek. Although the motives for their travels and visits to Italy were different, these journeys to southern Europe were in keeping with Enlightenment efforts to learn about the world and to spread learning<sup>1</sup>. By visiting the city, the author-travellers continued the tradition of the grand tour<sup>2</sup>. Through interpretation, the paper aims to grasp the image of Padua and its urban structure in the 19th-century Slovak travelogues and simultaneously, to find out what the authors emphasise in their perception of the city. Our choice of the city was influenced by Padua's unique position in Italy and the world, conditioned by its rich cultural and artistic heritage. At the same time, we consider it essential to add that the topicality of the subject matter

in literary discourse prompted the thematic focus of the paper on the phenomenon of the city. In the Slovak environment, there have been no more recent publications since Zlatko Klátik's edition of (*The Development of Slovak Travelogue*) (which is more than 40 years old) mapping the development of the travelogue genre (the exceptions are Rastislav Molda's publications (Golian and Molda, 2018; Molda, 2014)).

## **2. Materials and methods**

Reflecting on the sources that work with the subject matter or its partialities was a prerequisite for fulfilling the aim.

The work of the American urban theorist Kevin A. Lynch, who presented a methodological approach to studying the city's image, and of the Norwegian historian and architectural theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz were inspiring in their approach to the subject. Both represent a crucial theoretical model/template on which we rely to re-examine the literary representation of the city by author-travellers. Especially the trinity of components of the city image defined by Lynch identity, structure, and meaning seems to be an applicable basis for analysing the city image in the reflected authors. However, it can be noted that Lynch is not unambiguous in his definition of the trinity of components above. The way Norberg-Schulz clarifies the spatial and character aspects of the city can be appreciated for this reason. Despite the strong influence of Heidegger, he addresses the concepts of space and character concerning architecture. His considerations lead to a deeper reflection on the categories of lived space, as mentioned by Lynch, the atmosphere of the city, and man's relationship to this place.

We tried to avoid possible terminological ambiguity of terms such as spatial structure, meaning, and function in the intentions of the study-albeit with a necessary amount of inevitable simplification by anchoring their content through the geographical literature (Jagielski, 1982; Maik, 1992; Matlovič, 2002; Matlovičová, 2011).

The publication of the Czech historian and theoretician of architecture Jiří Hrůza (*World of Cities*, 2014), a systematic interpretation of the knowledge of the development of cities from the earliest times to the present day, was also important for the correct optics of the view of the city and its spatial structure. The sections concerning Southern Europe in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance were particularly relevant.

The significance of the city its specific function became the criterion for the typology of cities based on particular functionalities according to the Czech architect and urban planner Vladimíra Šilhánková (Šilhánková, 2020).

The Czech literary scholar Daniela Hodrová presents a stimulating conception of receiving the city text and grasping the semantic potential of the described urban dominants in the publication *Sensitive City*. It deals with the category of the city as a unique way of being in the shaping of which man participates, not only by building and inhabiting it but also by experiencing it. It maps significant images and metaphors of the city, which it perceives as a precipitating symbol of life and human relations in the city. According to Hodrová, the city's natural layout and architectural character contribute to the perception of the city itself and its image.

A relevant source of information on the grand tour and travel to Italy in the 19th century is a publication by the Czech literary historian, critic and translator Martin C. Putna in *Greek Sky Above Us or an Antique Basket*. The following publications by Molda—*Travel diaries of Štúr's generation*, 2014; *Travel diaries Near and far, from the monarchy and the republic*, 2018, co-authored with Golian, as well as Klátik's *Development of the Slovak travelogue* are important for the understanding of Slovak travel activities in the 19th century.

The research of the image of a city (defined by three components, i.e., identity, structure, and meaning) based on literary presentation is a challenging task and is accompanied by many methodological dilemmas. These arise from the need for terminological anchoring of concepts (identity, meaning, structure) that go beyond literature/literary science and, naturally, from their application in the context of literary reception.

Research The research required the study of historical documents and scholarly works related to the subject matter, following which we used an interpretive method to highlight how the city and its architectural landmarks are depicted and point out the four author-travellers' perceptions of the city's specific function(s). We have subordinated the structure of the paper and the methodology of the work to this: from a general synthesising assessment of the motives of the Slovak travellers' trip to Italy and their visit to Padua, the theoretical grounding of the core concepts of the image of the city, we proceeded to the uncovering of its image through the defined triad forming the image, and thus the identity, structure and meaning of the city.

When portraying the city's uniqueness, we focused on depicting its geographical location and integration into the natural environment, the image of the urban-architectural structure of the city, architectural landmarks, and the way of designing public spaces. All this was done to highlight the town's importance in 19th-century Slovak travel writing.

By comparing the analysed travelogues and generalising the existing parallels and differences in the ways of depicting the city's image, the present study attempts to evaluate selected attributes of the image of the city of Padua in the Slovak consciousness in the defined period.

### **3. Results and discussion**

This Padua, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site thanks to the cultural value of its monuments, captivated even Slovak travellers in the 19th century with its architecture, works of art, historic buildings and natural features.

#### **3.1. Padua in the eyes of others**

As Molda (2014) also points out, knowing the author's background is necessary when analysing travel writing. Although they are relatively well-known personalities in the Slovak environment, their motives for travelling to Italy and their travel writing inspired by these journeys are less known. Following the pan-Slavic idea, travel was mainly conducted in Slovakia and Slavic countries. However, they did not avoid travelling to other countries, including Italy. Travelogues and travel records of several authors, for example, the travel accounts of Kuzmány, Zechenter-Laskomerský,

Nemecskay, Čepka, Viktorin, and Kubina, evidence the attractiveness of Italy in the Slovak environs. This paper will focus on only four authors originating from the territory of today's Slovakia-Kollár, Nemecskay, Zechenter Laskomerský and Kompánek, who included a description of Padua in their travelogues. We consider it important to highlight the motivations of the "Slovak" authors in their journey to Italy and their tour of Padua, as their knowledge contributes to the understanding of their "inner experience of the city" of Padua and the selection and presentation of information about this place.

Ján Kollár (1793, 1852), an outstanding personality of the Slovak cultural life, poet, writer and evangelical priest, made two trips to Italy; the first in 1841 together with Antonín Doležálek, the director of the blind institute in Pest, the second in 1844 with his wife Frederika and daughter Ľudmila. Kollár's decision to travel to Italy was inspired not only by the situation in Hungary (he draws attention to this circumstance in the very introduction to his first travelogue, see Kollár (1843)), but also by his curiosity and interest in the country's nature, art, character and language. In describing the cultural and historical monuments and cities he visited in 1841, along Trieste, Venice, Padua, Verona, and Brescia<sup>4</sup>, Kollár highlights their Slavic character. Although the fabricated genesis and the Slavic traces in the visited places show "substantial ruptures", the attractiveness and the way of making visible the "values accumulated by history" that make Italy and, therefore also, Padua "a concentrate of universal human values"<sup>5</sup>. Although he expresses his admiration for nature and his affection for Italians, in his "landscape paintings", the Slavs always get the most space<sup>6</sup> Catholic priest and writer Štefan Nemecskay (Hoferka, 2014) undertook several educational excursions (Italy, France, Germany, the Netherlands and England). He visited Italy three times. In 1835 and 1864, he travelled through Italy; however, in 1852, he accompanied Bishop Zichy (1808, 1879) of Rosenau on his way to Rome. Zichy requested Nemecskay's company on the journey in early March 1852, and they set out in early April by train from Vienna via Gratz to Ljubljana, from where they continued their trip to Trieste, Venice and other cities. They returned home in early June 1852 (Hoferka, 2014). The notes from this Italian journey in 1852, taken from the author's Latin manuscript *Memoriale ex meis peregrinationibus in extraneis Regnis*, which also contains records from other journeys, were selected, translated, and published in Bernolák's written Slovak language in *Pilgrim of St. Adalbert* (1875, 1876, 1878) by the administrator of the Saint Adalbert Association, Juraj Slotta. Nemecskay's journey aims "to see the blessed land and to visit the tombs of the holy apostles Peter and Paul" (Nemecskay, 1875). Thus, he also mentions that an integral "part of the literature of the Slovak nation, at any historical interval, has been and continues to be spirituality, which springs and emanates mainly from Christianity" (Gallik, 2015).

Gustáv Kazimír Zechenter-Laskomerský (1824, 1908), as part of his "passion for travelling," visited Italy twice, as he mentions in his biography, in 1856 and 1877: "This young lad was then placed in the Navy Academy in Trieste, where I visited him occasionally in 1856. When I returned to Italy with my wife and daughter Mariska in 1877, we visited him again in Trieste. He received us most cordially and showed us around in Muggia in the Technical Establishment of Trieste" (Zechenter-Laskomerský, 1956). Under the impression of having "seen" and "experienced" the

Italian environment, the travelogues *From Slovakia to Constantinople*, *From Slovakia to Rome*, and *From Slovakia to Italy* were born. While the travelogue *From Slovakia to Constantinople*, evaluated as “the most spontaneous and stylistically most playful” (Kruláková, 2014) among the travelogues, Italy is represented only by a visit to Trieste, Venice and Ancona, in the second one, evaluated as “dates and facts without that vivid relation to them” (Noge, 1962) or an “impersonal guidebook” (Klátik, 1968), other places were added (Padua, Bologna, Florence, Pisa, Citta-Vecchia). Due to the absence of any information about the journey in his biography or private correspondence, the above travelogue raised doubts about the authenticity of the experiences recounted<sup>7</sup>. As pointed out by Anna Kruláková, its contribution can be seen in the extension of the “southern route phenomenon to new places” (both Kollár and Kuzmány mapped only northern Italy) and in the educational emphasis (2014). Due to the genre difference or the doubt about the authenticity of the experiences, we must recall that the category of grand tours also includes fictional travelogues, i.e., accounts that are not based on a real journey but on the influence of a previous collective imagination about Italy. The last of the author’s “Italian” travelogues captures the atmosphere of Trieste, Venice, Verona, and Milan. Regarding the travelogue *From Slovakia to Rome*, Noge states that these are the notes of a trip that Zechenter-Laskomerský made in 1857 and that they were written eight years apart; the impetus for the Italian trip in 1877, described in the travelogue *From Slovakia to Italy* published in 1878, was an invitation from the manager of the mining works in Bleiberg, Edmund Makuc, and, as is evident from the autobiography, the incentive to write it came from the editorial office of the *Orol* [Eagle] (Zechenter-Laskomerský, 1974).

Remarkable is the travelogue of the Slovak national revivalist and priest Jozef Kompánek (1836, 1917), *Pilgrimage to Rome* (Kompánek, 1889). The reason for his journey to the “holy land” was “the desire to do homage to the noble Giant of the Vatican, the Giant of both knowledge and virtue, of patience, of hope in God, of perseverance, to see Rome, the cradle of the Church” (1889). Based on authentic experience, he describes step by step the towns and places, “rare and splendid things” (1889) visited during the journey between 21 November and 5 December 1887. The author’s strategy, which he presents in the introduction, reveals that he had carefully prepared for the trip and familiarised himself with the contemporary source base. That is to say, where personal experience is absent, as in the case of Padua, for the sake of the picture’s “completeness”, he incorporates the observations of others into his text.

### **3.2. Image/picture of Padova**

All Several urban planners are trying to grasp the city’s image/picture. For example, NorbergSchulz perceives the city through the prism of two components: character (identity) and space (organisation of elements of a given place). According to Lynch, the image of a city is, in turn, a configuration of its identity, structure, and meaning (Lynch, 2004). Although these are different approaches, they both emphasise aspects of an immaterial nature, which creates the prerequisites for a comprehensive description of the object in question. All of Lynch’s image constituents are considered essential, reflecting on the mental map of the city or the cognitive representation of

the environment in the consciousness. Therefore, our interpretation of the literary reception of the city's image<sup>10</sup> will be based on the above elements, which will form its basic outline.

### **3.2.1. Identity and spatial structure of Padua—The Slovak context**

Including symbols and equations in the text, the variable name and style must be consistent with those in the equations. The identity of a city is understood as its uniqueness, i.e., a set of characteristics that distinguish it from other similar units/places. It is, therefore, the authentic expression or character of the city, which reflects the various aspects of its existence and functioning (administrative, economic, political, social, and structural). An important place among them belongs to the spatial qualities of the city formation, i.e., its structure. The literature offers different approaches to defining the concept of (spatial) structure. This diversity is also due to the interdisciplinary nature of the study of the city itself. Despite greater or lesser differences in the definition of this concept and the determination of its components<sup>11</sup> there is a consensus in mentioning the morphological dimension of the city as one of its elements, and it can be noted that even Lynch pursues this dimension of the city<sup>12</sup> “Compositional” elements such as the ground plan, streets, squares, and buildings represent it. This factor influenced our analysis of individual authortravellers’ visual perceptions of the city. This subchapter will focus on this aspect of the city’s spatial structure, including the contouring of its natural potential (location, accessibility, area) if it is present in the travelogue of a particular author-traveller.

For Kollar, one of Italy’s oldest cities inspires little enthusiasm. This may also be due to one of the most pressing problems/deficiencies of Italian cities reflected in travelogues: cleanliness. Kollár criticises local conditions in his records. Although he does not mention the town’s geographical location or layout, he stresses that ‘the exterior of Padua is not pretty’ (Kollár, 1843). The architectural form of the buildings apparently contributed to this assessment: “the darkness of the houses, especially at the ground level, or for the sheds, or the attics, running almost all over the town, the light cannot penetrate to the windows: hence the fact that the whole town is littered, dusty, unclean” (Kollár, 1843). The above excerpt declares Kollár’s feeling for light. Thus, by analogy with medieval metaphysics, light becomes the fundamental principle of beauty for the author-traveller. It helps to distinguish colours, luminosity, the earth and the heavens (Eco, 2007). Kollár’s view of the city corresponds with the Christian perception of the symbolism of light as a symbol of divinity, a spiritual element (Biedermann, 1992). As a result of his religious beliefs/feelings, we can understand the outlined light-dark polarity as upper and lower worlds, good and evil, day and night, birth and demise, death and resurrection, creation and extinction (Eliade, 2004). The outlined dualities also imply a moment of development, i.e., a bright, pure, revived epoch always follows a dark epoch. Along with processuality and under the impression of what is seen, the idea of the world as a world of transformations and history is connected (Eliade, 2004). The city documents this with its tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Norris eloquently articulated this capacity of the city in his theory of the city. He stresses that the city speaks to the visitor through its buildings and the streets; the buildings are figuratively the words, and the streets are its sentences<sup>13</sup> (Norris, 2009). The town is thus a text *sui generis*, a text that preserves its memory

through its narrative (buildings, streets) because “Each road, lane, type of building material or decorative feature can tell us something about the peculiar mix of influences that make up the outward signs of that particular city and the culture which it represents (Norris, 2009).”

However, Kollar’s vision of the “inner” city of Padua contrasts with his view of the “outer” city/environment. This appears to Kollár as both “delightful and interesting” (Kollár, 1843). This is especially so for the spa town of Abano and Arqua near the Euganean hills near Padua, where he finds a piece of Slavic presence. Even considering the stated motives of his journey, it might seem that Kollár planned to “put all Slovak worries behind” and devote himself to appreciating the beauties of Italian, and thus also Paduan nature and art. However, happiness in Italy and Padua, a cliché characteristic of grand tour literature (Putna, 2006), is provided not only by the landscape with its subjugating nature but, above all, by the opportunity to fulfil his patriotic mission. As part of his “experiential” reception, he puts forward a linguistic hypothesis according to which the Vendo hill in the Euganean Mountains is derived from the historical designation of the Slavs (Vendi/Venedi). Additional information concerns the finding of Slavic traces in the Italian environment<sup>14</sup>. The reader has the opportunity to learn not only about the existence of healing local springs in the vicinity of Padua but also about the tombstone of an outstanding Czech nobleman, Count Václav Ferdinand Popel von Lobkovitz, who also visited Padua as part of his travels (Kollár, 1843). Other aspects of Padua, a city easily accessible by train, and its surroundings caught Nemetskay’s eye. First and foremost, he highlights its physical-geographical position. On the one hand, he anchors the city’s good natural, economic and transport endowments, considered in the foundation of medieval and ancient cities (Hrůza, 2014). In addition to the natural barrier, the Bacchiglione River and the flat land, he mentions the outer walls with seven entrance gates as an artificial barrier on the city’s outskirts. Padua thus gives the impression of a residential centre, cut off from the surrounding nature and countryside. Evidently, the entrance to the town was regulated. The description of the internal spatial structure of the town with a triangular plan is based on the contouring of typical components of medieval towns fortifications, entrance gates, street network, main square, and the most important architectural landmarks of the town. It is remarkable what information the authortraveller gives to the readers. We find it interesting to use the triangle and the number seven simultaneously. Geometric shapes and numbers have significance in the Bible, and it turns out that they can also be seen as symbols illustrating the city’s image in the context of Nemetskay’s travelogues. The triangular compositional scheme is applied in architecture as a trinitarian symbol, a sign expressing the trinity of God (Biedermann, 1992). The number seven is, in its biblical meaning, on the other hand, the number of perfection (the seven days of creation described in Genesis, the seven-branched candlestick, the seven signs of the Apocalypse) (Fouilloux et al., 1992). Obviously, Nemetskay is keen on emphasising the city’s “spiritual” character. The city’s image is visibly shaped by the “tall, black, partly Gothic houses and narrow streets” (Nemetskay, 1876). Nemetskay’s description of the urban structure—although its narrative value is significantly reduced due to incomplete information and insufficiently unambiguous formulations suggests the construction of buildings according to Gothic principles and the coexistence of Gothic with other architectural

styles. Here, we can only assume that the Romanesque and Byzantine. Ultimately, however, tall buildings or narrow streets may have evoked in the author of the theological foundation a vision of the city in opposition: pagan vs. Christian, ancient vs. medieval. This could also explain why, in the context of his description, he evaluates the houses as “black”; after all, similarly to Kollár, it is not about building materials, decoration or other architectural elements (e.g., arcades of townhouses), but by analogy with the idea of the medieval man, and perhaps under the patristic-scholastic influence about the symbolism of light in connection with the divine principle (Eco, 2007). It thus evokes the idea of darkness or obscurity as the initial state of substances not yet permeated by God (Lurker, 1999) and light as an attribute of both divinity and divine action (Lurker, 1999), all of which points the way to God. These images may seem to emphasise the city’s antiquity but also to perceive the interrogation of ‘light’ and mass as a source of beauty in the urban environment. This polysemy is also evident elsewhere in his travelogues. Thus, for example, by emphasising the size and purposefulness of one of the largest squares (Prato della Valle Square) in Europe, located in Padua, he indirectly refers to the remnants of Roman architecture and the functionality of the square as the heart of social and spiritual life as well as the medieval city. Nemeckskay appreciates the beauty of the walled canal, the bridges, and the double-row planted trees. The emotional experience evoked by the sight of the natural scenery in the middle of the square is reminiscent of the Renaissance’s perception of nature, meadows, and flowers. L’Isola Memmia (the green island in the middle of the square) represents a specific enclosed space, creating polarities in the consciousness: an ordinary, banal world but also an artificial creation intended for festive rest. It shows what nature should look like nature vs, culture, garden vs. city. In addition to the numerous religious buildings, which are the focus of his interest, at least to the extent that the contemporary press allowed, he also considers other buildings to be remarkable the town hall and the university building. Although the author-traveller sees the town as “very desolate and deserted” (Nemeckskay, 1876), given the demographic data cited, although the place counting up to 40,000 inhabitants (Nemeckskay, 1876), we assume that by citing this peculiarity of the town he is trying to show its demographic potential.

Zechenter Laskomerský’s assessment of Padua’s geographical location is also favourable. Among the many peculiarities of the city’s geographical position, two are worth mentioning, which are strongly reflected in his description of the city. The first is the natural barrier of the Bacchiglione River, which divides the city in two and, at the same time, implies the fertility of the soil; the second is the problem of rail transport and train connections “from Padua southwards up against Ferrara and Bologna as far as the Po (Padus) River (Zechenter, 1960). However, like previous authors, he does not analyse geographic location as a factor in a town’s development potential. His Padua is an intersection of sacred and secular architecture. The city, whose development potential also lies in the artistic (painting and carving) creations displayed in temples and churches, is also a place of palaces and towers, a mecca of education and science, not only thanks to the presence of one of the oldest universities or a botanical garden and an observatory but also because of its openness to new trends and experiments, considering the context of the time. Among such, we might include the popularity of drinking coffee and the café in Padua, which is remarkable, according



to the author, in several respects: “Let’s stop by Café Pedrocchi when it’s right in front of us. But I tell you, my lords, put away your cigarettes and pipes, for if we smoke, we may quickly be expelled. This café is so worth remembering: it stands on the site of a former pagan temple; secondly, it is made entirely of marble; thirdly, it is the largest in the whole of Italy, even in Germany and Slovakia fourthly: smoking is only allowed in some rooms; and fifthly, a cup of black coffee costs only six kreutzers, and with it addio cara Padova farewell dear Padua (1960). Here, the author extends the traditional summary of the city’s architectural peculiarities University, Town Hall, St. Justine’s Cathedral, Prato della Valle Square, and Botanical Gardens which appear in other travel writers, including the Pedrocchi café. Thus, he may suggest a particular analogy with the Slovak situation regarding student involvement in the national liberation movement. In 1848, students explicitly expressed their opposition to Habsburg rule (Bosco, 2017). The excerpt also illustrates the author’s way of lightening the information saturation of the text, overcoming the static descriptions and enhancing the aesthetic experience by using elements of humour and spicing up the text with some curiosities. He also effectively incorporates Italian words and phrases into his descriptions, which can signify national distinctiveness (rather than linguistic affinity, as in the case of Kollár).

In the context of his portrait of the city, Kompánek explicitly verbalises Padua’s position “in the shadow” of Venice: “We had to continue to spend at least two days in Venice, and yet we arrived home on time” (Kompánek, 1889). Unlike previous Slovak authors, he begins his account with the “story” of St Anthony of Padua. He apparently chooses this strategy because as he remarks “here, one finds the memory of this saint every step of the way” (Kompánek, 1889). However, we assume this is also due to his lack of travel experience, which would have allowed him to develop the mediated knowledge further in his rendering of the city and its landmarks. The depiction of the saint’s life thus appears to be a thoughtful way of commemorating the period of the spread of Christianity and the cult of St Anthony, who dedicated his life to both faith and “the science that leads to God” (Kompánek, 1889). Kompánek also outlines the city’s specificity by describing its obligatory tourist “sights” the Basilica of St. Anthony of Padua, the Temple of St. Justine, the University, and Prato della Valle. Besides highlighting the exceptionality of the interiors of the churches, the uniqueness of the square, or drawing attention to some of the landmarks in their immediate surroundings (Capella di S. Giorgio, Scuola dei Santo), Kompánek also provided his “Padua itinerary” with some useful tips to help find the city’s tourist “attractions” and orientate oneself in it. However, unlike Laskomersky, the author’s creativity in conveying the information was not evident, and the account presented sounds rather impersonal and uninvolved.

Squares, streets, and publicly accessible urban greenery/parks are also integral parts of the urban composition of the city and contribute to its uniqueness (Kováč, 2015). Therefore, we will address these components of city structure in the following section.

The square of Padua also captivated Slovak travellers. However, since it is not mentioned in the first place, it might seem that this part of the city is a kind of peripheral “sequence” (Lynch, 2004) of its image. Apparently, the order of the unique features of the cities depended on the travellers’ preferences. The size of the historic

square Prato della Valle particularly attracted Ján Kollár. He compares it to an island, which is about 528 feet long and 328 feet wide, facing the brook, or a brick-lined canal, with bridges and trees for walks decorated. On both sides of the water are statues of famous Padovans, or men who had some merit for the city or were educated at the university here. The town, its admirers, friends, and descendants erected these monuments. Regarding beauty or artistic feeling and judgement, the soul of the winged ones in Venice flew more easily here” (Kollár, 1843).

Although Nemeckay mentions several squares of Padua (St. Anthony’s, so-called manor), he describes only one “immense” space (Nemeckay, 1876), the square “Campus Martius, now Prato della Valle” (Nemeckay, 1876). In the middle of it is “a round island, 528 feet long and 328 feet wide, facing the canal, beautifully paved with square stones, over which four beautiful bridges lead” (Nemeckay, 1876). We are also told that trees are planted in the square and that there is a gallery of statues of 80 bishops, popes and other notable personalities, although no further details are given. The adjective immense, or how it is described, suggests that the square is an opportunity for long walks and finding “inner harmony”. However, this is not only a description of the main square (Nemeckay, 1876) but also an emphasis on its importance/functionality. It is a large, or as Nemeckay puts it, “immense” space surrounded by fine houses, a space for walking, an “annual” marketplace, and a space where the festivities of St. Anthony are held (Nemeckay, 1876). In this way, Nemeckay underlines the economic and representative function of the main square.

Kompánek characterises the square as “a large round marketplace. In the centre of it is a round island, where four bridges lead; it is studded with mighty trees and has many statues of famous men. Dante and Giotto are here - yes, and the Slav John Sobiesky, King of Poland. On the pedestal is a Latin inscription, which in Slovak reads: to the most meritorious for the Christian state” (Kompánek, 1889).

In his records, Zechenter-Laskomersky only briefly mentions the name and peculiarity of the main square, which is “adorned with 74 statues representing Paduan and generally Italian notables, as well as the more distinguished attendees of the renowned local university” (Zechenter-Laskomerský, 1960).

Within the structure, the writers are further interested in the streets, except for Kompánek, who does not devote space to them in his depiction. According to Kollár, the streets are cramped (Kollár, 1843); Nemeckay also says they are narrow (Nemeckay, 1876), and Zechenter-Laskomersky assesses them as mostly narrow and dark (1960). The authors thus follow the typical characteristics of the medieval street network. The width of the town’s streets can be seen as a legacy of the original settlement and the location of the previous houses, but also as a means of defence, a tendency to make it difficult for enemies to navigate the town. The fact that the authors were attracted by this particularity among the many peculiarities of the urban structure may have something to do with the religious mindset and the vision of the city not only as a specific urban space but, above all, as a religious centre. The symbolism of the narrow street/road evokes the image of the Christian life, the parable of the two roads, good and bad, narrow and wide. This is also alluded to in the 7th chapter, verses 13 and 14 of The Gospel of Matthew: „Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate, and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate, and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Svätá

Biblia, 2002). The biblical symbolism of the narrow way thus suggests that it is the way to a meaningful life according to God's will, the way of the godly.

Unlike other authors, Kollár also mentions the extension of the street profile with arcades/colonnades, which are more or less typical for the whole city (Kollár, 1843). However, he does not appreciate their functionality, such as the widening of the street profile, the protection of pedestrians from changes in the weather, or their elegance; on the contrary, he does not consider them the most appropriate architectural feature.

### **3.2.2. Padova a space with an “aura”**

The image of a city also depends on its importance. Lynch understands this term as the observer's relationship to the city and closely links it to the notion of function (1961). Although these terms—importance and function are not further elucidated, their synonymous application is acceptable if we understand function in the broadest sense of the word, i.e., as a set of characteristics by which a city seeks to accomplish its purpose. Although individual cities have different functions, Šilhánková traced several types of cities based on their function in the settlement system. In this respect, it should be noted that, given the content of the voyages analysed, only two of the functions out of the range of individual functions<sup>15</sup> will be dealt with concerning Padua: The cultural function, which includes the cultural-historical and religious functions, and the university function, which is linked to the scientific function<sup>16</sup>. These proved to be the most significant and determining for the city's image.

Šilhánková describes cultural-historical towns as having a historical character conditioned not only by the medieval urban structure, impressive terrain relief and natural components but also by preserved architectural monuments (2020). These aspects can be found in the travelogues of all four authors-travellers, and it can even be stated that they associate the city's uniqueness with its historical value. The antiquity of the town is articulated differently by the individual authors. Nemeckay (Nemeckay, 1876) strictly uses the prefix “pra”, Kompánek a cumulative series of adjectives and a hyperbolising simile expressing the antiquity of the city: “Padua is a city of antiquity, which has a greater and more splendid history than many countries” (Kompánek, 1889). In a sense, Kompánek builds local patriotism or national pride in a historic city not only in Italy but also in other countries. Kollár and Zechenter Laskomerský choose a different way of presenting the historical value of the environment. Both refer to the mythological narrative forming the mainstay of Virgil's epic *Aeneid* (Vergilius, 2018; Karabova, 2022), namely the verses that verbalise that the Trojan Antenor became the founder of the city of Patavium on the northwestern Adriatic Sea, i.e., today's Padua. Zechenter Laskomerský tries to support the objectivity of his historical “account” by providing an excerpt from the historical narrative of Livy, a Paduan native. The significance of this ancient Roman historian's work, which links the founding and settlement of the city to the Veneti, an ancient ethnic group of Indo-European origin living in northeastern Italy, grew during the Renaissance, a period closely linked to the town through its personalities and artistic landmarks.

The urban structure and geography of the city in the context of the authors' reminiscences have been mentioned above; here, we will only mention the reception of the architectural monuments, adding that the authors avoid both an enumerative

presentation and a more extensive description of the monuments in Padua except for some ecclesiastical buildings (on this, see below, in the section on Padua as a religious centre). Nemeckay's attention was drawn to the town hall and its vast assembly hall, "the largest chamber in the world", with a wooden horse famous for contributing to Donatello's mythology. Other travel writers also mention the town hall and its chamber in their accounts.

Both Kompánek and Zechenter-Laskomerský, in their descriptions of the city, present a larger body of information on the names of the builders, painters, sculptors and patrons who created the most fascinating and prominent landmarks of the cities they visited, supporting their view of the city's cultural heritage.

When we talk about the importance of the city, we cannot forget its Christian dimension.

In our view, the city's significance as a religious centre is discussed in several ways. One is the description of the religious buildings, which are an obligatory stop on any city tour. In their description, the authors focus on those religious buildings that are more or less perceived as important/essential stops when visiting the city. This is true of the travel accounts of Nemeckay, Zechenter-Laskomerský and Kompánek. Nemeckay and Kompánek introduce the Church of St. Anthony and St. Justina, the Cathedral Church and the Church of St. Philip and St. James. Zecheter-Laskomerský pays attention only to the first two. The description of the three named authors is in keeping with Baedeker's style of information and efforts to give the impression of credibility and expertise of the facts and data presented. Kollár's characterisation of the churches, which similarly focused on the presentation of the most essential/touristically famous sacral buildings the Basilica of St. Anthony of Padua, the Temple of St. Justina, the Chiesa di Santa Maria dei Servi, the Padua Cathedral, and the Church of Saints Philip and James in Padua is outside the above framework. However, in describing them, he relied on experientialism. He seeks to reach the reader through exciting facts related to the place. Unlike other authors, he appreciates the Church of St. Justina more than the Basilica of St. Anthony of Padua, sparing no "superlatives" in describing it: "According to Palladio's plan, the construction of the temple of St. Justina is much more beautiful and regular, and this temple is rightly counted among the finest in all of Italy. The architecture here is a product of sublime beauty" (Kollár, 1907). There are several reasons for Kollár-the-Evangelical's positive attitude. They concern the church's interior, painting and sculptural decoration representing "biblical histories" (Kollár, 1843) and the use of precious stones on the church floor. The interior design thus contributes to the feeling of freedom and lightness necessary for "a sense of quiet and blissful tranquillity of the soul" (Kollár, 1843). However, the author's negative attitude towards the Franciscans because of their dispute with the Benedictines over the relics of St. Justina and St. Luke the Evangelist (Kollár, 1843) may also be the reason for the relativisation of the importance of the Basilica of St. Anthony of Padua we can only assume that his inclination towards the Benedictines is connected with their missionary activity among the Slavs (Piaček-Kravček, 1999).

This specific position of the town as a religious centre is reinforced not only by the description of the religious buildings but also by the numerical expression of the count of churches. Although Nemeckay does not give the exact number, using an

indefinite numeral indicates that it is higher than usual. Zechenter-Laskomerský staggers the reader with as many as 96 churches.

Another factor is mentioned in connection with religious buildings in the presentation of the churches and temples of Padua. Both Nemeckay and Zechenter-Laskomerský refer to the high artistic value of the church interiors (Nemeckay, 1875; Zechenter-Laskomerský, 1986). Kompánek's work on Saint Anthony of Padua also shows the town's connection with religion.

The perception of the city as a university and scientific centre, home to one of the oldest universities in the world, is also present in the city's image by all four travellers, either through stern remarks or by reinforcing its importance by naming its graduates as T. Tasso, L. Ariosto, G. Galilei, Š. Báthory, J. Sobieski.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Padua was a stop on the Italian itinerary of Kollár, Nemeckaya, Zechenter-Laskomerský and Kompánek. The motive of their journey, except for Zechenter-Laskomerský, was strengthening personal religiosity by performing pilgrimage to express spiritual life. Their authorial strategy for the image of the city is thus based on the delineation of the semantic potential of the city of Padua, whose urban structure makes it possible to "experience the presence of God" and to feel an uplifting emotion when looking at the city. This is also reflected in the choice of sacred objects visited and described, especially churches, temples, cathedrals, and interiors. Although the individual features are fragmentary, the concrete examples tend to emphasise spiritual values and anchor the supernatural orientation of man, his direction from earthly life to another and permanent home in eternity.

These authors' travels, even through their descriptions of the city of Padua, document a visualisation of the travelling experience and a more emotional experience of the beauty and attractions of the landscapes they visit. With its thematic focus and interdisciplinary approach, the present study raises new interpretative perspectives for analysing literary texts. For example, comparing the city's image across centuries, national literatures, and literary genres, as well as other Italian and European cities, thus aiming at creating a textual corpus on the city under analysis. At the same time, it can contribute to linking Slovak literature with other national literatures and cultures, thus cultivating the image of Padua perceived by the American philosopher John Herman Randall as "the centre in which ideas from all Europe were combined into an organised and cumulative body of knowledge" (Randall, 1992).

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#### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> This was not just a peculiarity of Kollár, but a general trend.

<sup>2</sup> Types of cities according to defence, commercial, transport, industrial, administrative, cultural, university, spa and

recreational, agricultural functions.

- <sup>3</sup> The popularity of travelling and travel literature in the German-speaking world (Kiss-Szeman, 2014, p. 155), where some Slovak scholars studied in the second half of the 18th century, as well as the establishment of the Travel Society (Klátik, 1968, p. 117; Molda, 2014, p. 259) at the Department of Czech-Slovak Language and Literature of the Evangelical Lyceum in Bratislava (1838), which financed students' travels through its fund, contributed to the development of travelling and travel genre literature in the Slovak context. However, conditions were set for financial support, including the publication of the travelogue in print or as a separate title. At the same time, the description of the country took into account various aspects - geographical, historical and political (Molda, 2014, p. 252). In this way, i.e., with their thematically diverse content, they also attempted to raise the level of education in various areas of everyday life.
- <sup>4</sup> During his first trip he did not reach Rome, which was outside the territory of the Habsburg Empire (he did not obtain a passport in time) (István, 2021, p. 102).
- <sup>5</sup> M. Putna ranks the exalted feeling of happiness in Italy among the typical topoi of grand tour literature (2006, p. 28).
- <sup>6</sup> The Slavic agenda and the confirmation of previous historical and linguistic hypotheses about Italy as a "Slavic Herculaneum" also became a leitmotif of Kollar's *Staroitalie slavjanskej* [Slavonic Old Italy] (1853).
- <sup>7</sup> Kruláková draws attention to this aspect when she confronts *Vlastný životopis* [Own Biography] with the information in the travelogue (2014, p. 456).
- <sup>8</sup> The indication for Noge's statement here becomes "stylistic entailment in the introduction" (Noge, 1962, p. 440).
- <sup>9</sup> As stated in his *Vlastný životopis*: "On 29 August Edmund Makuc telegraphed me from Bleiberg to Velden in Carinthia that he was looking forward to having us with him. For my wife, daughter Mariska and I went to Italy, Carinthia and Tyrol on 13 August and returned in mid-September. As I described this journey at length in *Orol*—in the year 1878—I shall not discuss the subject further here" (See Zechenter-Laskomerský, 1974, p. 164).
- <sup>10</sup> In these contexts, the tendency to single out different types of city image presented by Matlovičová (2011, p. 218); Matlovičová, Sovičová (2010) is of utmost interest. The aim of our research is to identify the secondary external image of the city (Matlovičová, 2011, p. 218; Matlovičová, Sovičová, 2010).
- <sup>11</sup> Other components of spatial structure depend on the discipline and the author, e.g., in Polish geographical literature Maik (1992) speaks of morphological, functional and socio-demographic components, Jagielski (1982) of physical and social structure, in the context of Slovak geography Matlovič (2002) distinguishes physiographic, morphological, functional and socio-demographic components.
- <sup>12</sup> According to Lynch, the basic skeleton of uncovering a city consists of a description of five elements: roads, peripheries, districts, junctions and significant features.
- <sup>13</sup> "The city speaks—buildings are its words and streets its sentences. This is the language in which the community cherishes its hopes and memories."
- <sup>14</sup> This was not just a peculiarity of Kollár, but a general trend.
- <sup>15</sup> Types of cities according to defence, commercial, transport, industrial, administrative, cultural, university, spa and recreational, agricultural functions.
- <sup>16</sup> In addition to these types of cities, Šilhánková distinguishes cities with defence, commercial, transport, industrial, administrative, agricultural functions, spa and recreational cities, and cities for the elderly (For more details, see Šilhánková (2020, pp. 44–52)).

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