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Belonging and Unbelonging in Literary Geography: a Comparative Approach to Johann Koppelstätter's and Arturo Manzini's Place-based Detective Fiction

Geografia letteraria tra senso di appartenenza e estraniamento: un approccio comparativo ai libri gialli con ambientazione locale di Johann Koppelstätter e Arturo Manzini

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Abstract. The concept of a sense of belonging to a place has long been the subject of attention in geographical studies. Scholars have consistently highlighted the ability of literary works to convey a spatial sense of belonging on the part of protagonists and authors, as well as to foreground landscape elements that may reveal the characters' personalities. Within this framework of research, the paper calls attention to the specular concept of estrangement, or unbelonging: a literary geographical quality that characterizes certain novels. A comparative analysis is presented between two different cycles of detective novels set in the Italian alpine areas. Specific elements of the landscape, the social milieu, and the authors' psychology that might convey such a sense of belonging are identified and categorized. The analysis shows how the relationship between the protagonists and the space in a novel can be based on a sense of estrangement that plays a role in signifying the characters' psychology and personality. In conclusion, it is proposed to consider the absence of the sense of belonging to place as a literary quality and element of agency within an intra-textual analysis of literary geography.

Keywords: literary geography, detective novels, sense of belonging, estrangement, unbelonging.

Riassunto. Gli studi geografici hanno da tempo promosso lo studio del concetto di senso di appartenenza ad un luogo. Su questo tema, la geografia letteraria ha ampiamente dimostrato la capacità della narrativa di trasmettere il senso di appartenenza e radicamento da parte di protagonisti e autori, così come di evidenziare elementi del paesaggio capaci di rivelare aspetti della personalità dei personaggi di un'opera letteraria. In questo quadro, il saggio affronta il concetto di senso di estraniamento, o non appartenenza ad un luogo, come una qualità geografico-letteraria che può caratterizzare un racconto. A questo proposito, si propone una analisi comparativa di due differenti cicli di romanzi gialli ambientati in due contesti alpini. A partire dall'analisi dei testi, si identificano e caratterizzano gli elementi specifici del paesaggio, del contesto sociale e della psicologia dei personaggi che veicolano il senso di radicamento o la sua

assenza. L'analisi mostra come la relazione tra il protagonista e lo spazio in cui è ambientata la storia può essere basata su un senso di estraniamento che può essere utilizzato come esplicito narrativo per connotare psicologia e personalità del personaggio. In conclusione, si propone di considerare l'assenza di un sentimento di appartenenza al luogo come una qualità ed un attore letterario all'interno delle analisi intratestuali di geografia letteraria.

Parole chiave: geografia letteraria, romanzi gialli, senso di appartenenza al luogo, estraniamento.

1. Introduction: Sense of Belonging and Literary Geography

In recent years, the international geographic debate has explored the concept of belonging and the ways in which it can be transmitted, constructed and represented (Tomaney 2015)¹. In general terms, this interpretive category refers to the individual or collective meanings subjectively attributed to a given space, which as such becomes a place (Tuan 1974)².

Belonging holds therefore a strong relation to the definition of personal identity (Tuan 1980; Twigger-Ross, Uzzell 1996).

In fact, for a long time, the concept of belonging – intended as emotional attachment to the feeling of being “at home” and “safe” – has been used to define the affinity to a specific social group or to a set of ethical and political values, expressed with feelings or ritual practices, without a spatial declination (Yuval-Davis 2006). More recently, belonging has been recognized to have spatial, social and temporal connotations (Lähdesmäki et al. 2016).

According to Marco Antonsich, the sense of belonging – i.e. the conscious act or involuntary sentiment of

feeling at home in a given context – constitutes the geographical emanation of identity consciousness (Antonsich 2010).

In geographical research, two different meanings of the sense of belonging to a place are well established: the first, to be understood at a collective level, refers to the discursive practices that help to construct, legitimize or reclaim the connection between a given community and its social actors with what they define as their reference territory, and which can form the basis for a population's political claims and self-definition (Antonsich 2010). In this sense, Arjun Appadurai has developed the concept of “production of locality” to underline the processual nature of the practice carried out by local actors, often in the pursuit of self-legitimization, through shared or unshared discourses which have the aim of defining, circumscribing, and enhancing the particular characteristics of their place (Appadurai 1996). The second meaning of the notion, on the individual level, refers to the feelings of a person who recognizes a sense of attachment and harmony with the territory where they were born or that they have elected for their home, with which they identify some personal habits and characteristics (Savage et al. 2005; Tomaney 2015). The present paper focuses in particular on the latter dimension, to which geographical epistemology as well as public perception seem to have recently attributed new positive values, also in response to globalization. Whereas in the 1980s and 1990s the claims of belonging to a circumscribed place could be in fact seen as retrograde and conservative (Castells 1997, 10-20), today such claims have been reconsidered as a strategy of self-recognition and a reaction to cultural and physical processes of standardization (Savage et al. 2005; Stratford 2009).

Literary works have been accorded an important role in the construction, transmission and representation of the sense of place. In the famous *Imagined Communities* (1983), Benedict Anderson remarked the role of nineteenth-century historical novels in the construction of a sense of national belonging. On a larger scale, several researchers have highlighted the role of works known as regional literature in the production of ideas and identities belonging to specific regions, understood not only as administrative entities, but as the dimension where different processes and human relations exist (Gilbert 1960; Papotti 1996; Maggioli, Morri 2009; Tomaney 2010; Prokkola Ridanpää, 2011; Tomaney 2015; Ridanpää 2019). The setting of a novel or a short story cannot therefore be considered a mere frame within which the plot unfolds. In fiction, space is always given formal distinctive features and meanings

¹ That of belonging is a concept difficult to translate into other languages. In Italian, for example, a close but non-identical meaning could be phrased as “senso di appartenenza ad un luogo”. On the topic, see Antonsich 2010.

² The attention of geography to place, comprehended as meaning and emotional attachment to a space, has increased within the so-called humanistic geography. According to Yi-Fu Tuan (1990), a sharing of experiences and memories settled over time results in an attachment to a place – defined as “topophilia” – that is transformed into a sense of place identity and belonging. For Robert Hay, the accumulation of positive experiences and emotional investments for place and the community leads to a “rooted sense of place” (Hay 1998, 261). However, the concept of “belonging” differs from that of “rootedness”: since the former is based on a conscious and continuous choice, while the latter is an ontological relation between inhabitants and place, unintentional or not necessarily perceived (Tuan 1980, 4). The former is the definition adopted in this study.

that make it “place” for the purpose of supporting the narrative structure (Anderson, 2014); so much so that, in some cases, “locations turn into actors themselves, both underwriting the story, and playing their part on the page” (Rao 2017, 119).

Geographical and literary sciences have extensively explored the role that literature can play in representing and conveying the identity of specific places and a sense of belonging to them (Pearce 2002; Papotti 2011; Gavinelli 2016; Marengo 2016, 15-18; Vandervlist 2018; Gabellieri 2019; Amey 2021). Yuan has already noted that literature could provide an “access to the environmental perceptions and values of particular cultures” (Tuan 1978, 205). An example comes from the realist regional novels which constituted “both a representation of regional consciousness and at the same time an important factor in its development” (Hones 2022, 49). Similarly, Armand Frémont (2007, 129-130) identified in art works one of the tools to understanding and analyzing the relationship between society and space, while also urging scholars to go beyond the narrow confines of regional and realistic novels to embrace new genres as well. Italian geography has adopted such an approach, recognizing with Fabio Lando (1993, 9-11) the sense of place, cultural roots and territorial awareness that reside in the literary text as possible keys for literary geography understanding. The literary work could not only reflect this rootedness, but be interpreted in turn as an active engine for the creation and narration of territorial identities (Tomaneý 2015, 511; Ridanpää 2022). Recently, Angelo Turco has proposed the concept of “topogenesi”, namely the “trasformazione dei posti in luoghi” as part of the process of territorialization as identity path, that can be narrated as well as promoted through literature (Turco 2022, 75).

As a result, the stark statement “belonging has no place in geography” (Antonsich 2010, 645) can now be considered at least partially overcome (Ridanpää 2022). While the concept of “disorientation” – i.e. the lack of reference points for moving through and understanding a rapidly changing world (Schmidt di Friedberg 2017) – has been quite fortunate in geography, far less explored has been the sentiment opposite to that of belonging, which can be declined in the concepts of “unbelonging” and “estrangement”, on which especially philosophers and literary scholars have reflected a great deal (Ginzburg 2011, 15-39; Lähdesmäki et al. 2016, 6-7; Papotti, Tanca 2018; Colonnello 2019; Comberiati, Giro 2021). A significant exception is a work by Douglas Porteous (1985) which focuses on the capacity of literature to describe different forms of attachment to the place by identifying

four different categories, ranging from a full sense of belonging to that of rootlessness³.

Since the symbolic value and function of landscape descriptions in literary works – not only a pictorial background to the context in which the action takes place, but also a representation of the characters’ sphere of values, feelings and perception – has been widely recognized (Lando 1993, 10-11), following this line of research in literary geography (Hones 2022), the purpose of the paper is thus to reflect on the role that the sense of belonging or its absence can play within works of fiction, by analyzing how the intertwining of specific geographical elements and their perception by the characters contributes to characterize the narrative plot. In particular, in the present article, two detective novel cycles with a specific geographic location have been selected as case studies: the series of police commissioner Johann Grauner (2015-2022) by Lenz Koppelstätter, set in Alto Adige/South Tyrol and the series of the vice police official Rocco Schiavone (2012-2022) by Antonio Manzini, set in the Aosta Valley.

The choice of two different detective fiction series as case studies depends on two main reasons. First, the literary genres of detective and noir fiction are currently very successful in the Italian publishing market. This success implies that works formerly intended for a popular, non-elitist audience are now structured as composite, multi-layered narrative products which capture the attention of different categories of readers (Dubois 1992; Knight 2010, XX-XI; Worthington 2011, IX). Secondly, in recent decades the very nature of this genre has undergone a strong shift towards post-modernism owing to the celebrity of such authors as Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Andrea Camilleri and Jean-Claude Izzo, with the narrative focus moving from the deductive reasoning of the investigation to the social context in which the investigation is conducted (Brosseau, Le Bel 2016; King 2020; Gabellieri 2022). Unsurprisingly, from Camilleri onward, the Italian detective production features a wide number of regionalist and place-based detective stories,

³ Among the four categories distinguished by Porteous in his conceptual framework, there are “home-insider”, i.e. when the character experiences a full sense of place, and “away-outsider”, associated with “declassament”, “deracinement”, “depayement” and caused by “varying degrees of alienation, anomie and angst” (Porteous 1985, p. 119; see also Piras, Tanca 2019, pp. 50-51). Referring to writings by Marguerite Duras and by Albert Camus, in order to describe different characters and the relationship with their own space, Fabio Lando has built upon these categories the typology of “home-insider”, having an affinity to a specific culture and territory; the “home-outsider”, that is the lacking of a relationship with the territory, which “implies topophobia, escapism and fear”; and the “away-outsider”, that is the “uprooting, alienation and lack of rapport with the territory” of marginalized people (Lando 1996, p. 8).

with much emphasis on local elements and hallmarks throughout the narrative plot (Pezzotti 2012, 1-4; Merzagora 2020).

In the second paragraph of the article the two case studies are presented. Both detective series are set in Alpine territories that are influenced by their liminal geographic location, where two cultures manifest strong local marks and widespread bilingualism. However, to these common features correspond divergent, if not opposed, representational forms, which are discussed in the third section. To this end, some of the factors identified by Antonsich (2010) as defining the sense of personal and intimate belonging have been taken into account: an auto-biographical criterion, i.e. personal life experience; a relational criterion, namely the characters' personal and social bonds; a cultural criterion, including language, habits, customs, traditions, food, aesthetics, etc. Such factors – along with others that have been identified throughout the reading – are used to draw up a case history of both narrative elements and psychological characteristics that may be conflicting, thus strengthening or weakening the protagonists' sense of belonging to the setting of their stories.

On the methodological level, we adopted an approach to the “text as text” (Brosseau 1994), pinpointing the passages that most exemplify landscape representations and characters' attitudes toward space. Based on the criteria mentioned above, the diverse phenomenology of belonging and estrangement as represented in the selected novels is discussed. The comparative approach between different sets of books has allowed us to highlight the peculiarities of two opposite types of phenomenology. In the last paragraph conclusions are drawn about the two main objectives of the paper: on the one hand, understanding how certain descriptions and spatial aspects in some novels can convey to the reader a feeling of belonging or estrangement; on the other, reflecting on how such feelings constitute narrative devices to define the personality and psychology of the main characters.

2. The Case Studies: Detective Novels Set in the Alps

Lenz Koppelstätter (Bolzano/Bozen, 1982) is a South Tyrolean freelance journalist and author. After finishing his studies between Bologna and Berlin, he worked for many years in Germany and then returned to live in the province of Bolzano/Bozen. Starting in 2015, he published three detective novels written in German and later translated into Italian (Koppelstätter, 2018; 2019; 2021); one of which, *Omicidio sul ghiacciaio*, was awarded the Giallolatino literary prize in 2019.

The protagonist of all three books is the police commissioner Johann Grauner, who serves at the Bolzano/Bozen police headquarters. Born to a South Tyrolean family of cattle farmers, he studies law in Verona. During the university years, a mournful event involving his parents prompts him to join the police force, but he also continues to devote himself to cattle breeding on the family farm in the Eisack Valley, where he lives with his wife and his daughter. The commissioner thus represents an interstitial character: he is part of the local German-speaking community, but is also a representative of the State and Republic of Italy, and has lived in some cities of the Po Valley as well. In spite of the mystery surrounding the disappearance of his parents, which remains an unresolved trauma in the protagonist's psyche, Grauner is depicted as a mature and well-balanced adult. A sly, patient and understanding South Tyrolean who is perfectly integrated in his environment, he speaks dialect, German and Italian fluently. He is also a great lover of local cuisine, enthusiast of the mountains, and a deep connoisseur of the Bolzano/Bozen territory, although he maintains a certain distrust of the mountain people of South Tyrol. Thanks to his wit, not only he is always able to solve the murder cases that he finds himself investigating while immersed in the local reality of the inner valleys (Val Senales, Val d'Ultimo, Passo del Brennero) – where the crimes are committed – but he also manages to break the rule of silence and distrust that surrounds the investigators coming from the city. Counterbalancing Grauner's character is his second associate, the Neapolitan inspector Saltapepe, begrudgingly relocated to South Tyrol. He is a sanguine young man, easy to anger, who finds it difficult to settle into an environment so different from his own and to adjust to the new local customs.

In several interviews, the author has emphasized the importance that the landscape and the social milieu of his upbringing have had in shaping his personality, a presence with which he has tried to imbue his characters: “Io sono nato e cresciuto in mezzo alle montagne, sono parte del mio DNA e di quello dei miei personaggi”. Moreover, Koppelstätter has stated that his *modus operandi* for developing the plot and the setting, heavily influenced by his journalistic experience, combines previous knowledge of the places with research and geographical insight: “Per me è importante scrivere di un luogo che conosco [...] Voglio sapere sempre tutto prima di scrivere, per poi far vivere la fantasia”. The plot emanates in fact from a deep knowledge and love for the local environment, of which Koppelstätter acknowledges the active role in the story: “Secondo me l'ambiente è sempre personaggio di un buon libro [...] Non c'è distinzione fra noi e l'ambiente che ci contorna” (Marra 2018).

Compared to Koppelstätter, Antonio Manzini (Rome, 1964) is much better known to the Italian audience. A film and television actor (and short film director), in 2005 Manzini began writing detective stories set in the cities of L'Aquila and Rome. In fact, his celebrity as a detective story novelist came with the Rocco Schiavone series, which was launched in 2013 and currently includes eleven books and twelve short stories, issued by the well-known Italian publisher Sellerio. Rocco Schiavone's notoriety soared in 2016, when the Italian broadcasting company RAI began producing a TV series based on Manzini's novels.

The main character, police commissioner Rocco Schiavone, has quite a different story than his South Tyrol colleague. Born in the Trastevere district, in Rome, at an early age he loses his parents, who were blue-collar workers. Embroiled with the city's underworld as a young man, he later chooses to break away from the local *suburra* and reluctantly joins the police force, while his friends (with whom he yet maintains strong relationships) become mostly thieves or drug dealers. His wife ends up being the victim of an assassination attempt made against him: an unresolved trauma that will haunt the officer's life. From that moment on, he engages daily in self-destructive behavior in the attempt to soothe his loneliness and guilt. In this sense, Schiavone as an investigator corresponds to Marlowe's post-modern model of the anti-hero: he is irascible, moody, partially corruptible, violent, unable to maintain a stable relationship, devoted to the use and abuse of drugs and alcohol. At the same time, he has a profound sense of individual justice and strong feelings against the system; he is hostile to power and capable of great acts of generosity toward the outcasts, as to all those that he deems to be wretched. His stubborn pursuit of the investigation of a prominent politician results in his relocation from Rome to Aosta, where the first of Manzini's novels begins.

As opposed to Grauner, Schiavone represents an outsider in the Alpine setting. As Nicoletta Di Ciolla (2021) has brilliantly pointed out, Schiavone never fails to underline his condition of foreignness: he deplors the local customs and culture, never disguises his disdain for the mountain landscape and climate and maintains very strong ties to his hometown. Only gradually, over the course of the novels, just like the ever-present memory of his departed wife, his bond to Rome becomes thinner. Like Grauner, Schiavone has a sidekick: agent Italo Pierron, born in the mountain town of Verrès, of which he embodies the local connotations.

In many interviews, Manzini has repeatedly stressed the importance of verisimilitude in literary settings (Puggioni, n.d.). In his view verisimilitude is paramount

for the detective story genre, which “entra subito nel tessuto sociale e non è un racconto sull'ombelico dello scrittore. La forza del giallo, per me, è di parlare della società che trovi ogni giorno” (Pietricola 2021). As opposed to other writers, however, Manzini claims his complete separation from the personality of his protagonists: “La cosa bella del giallo è quella di escludere l'autobiografia dell'autore. Lo scrittore più è fuori da ciò che scrive e meglio è. Parlare di se stessi è volgare per me” (Pietricola 2021). Nevertheless, he maintains the need to know the setting very well: “non potrei mai scrivere un libro ambientato in un posto dove non sono mai stato, direi una montagna di sciocchezze” (Quarti 2022).

3. Setting and Local Geographies

3.1 Grauner's South Tyrol

Landscape descriptions are heavily featured in commissioner Grauner's detective stories. The very titles of the novels – *Omicidio sul ghiaccio*, *Il silenzio dei larici* and *Notte al Brennero* – contain indication of geographical elements and other iconic landmarks, or iconemes, such as mountains and forests.

In the early pages of the first volume, the readership is introduced to the main character. In his Panda 4x4 pickup truck (already a clear enough indication that he prefers functionality over elegance), Grauner is driving down from the farm where, every morning, he practices animal husbandry and milks his cattle.

Su verso i paesi e i masi di montagna, che risaltavano sui pendii scoscesi come macchie di colore buttate lì. Giù verso le cittadine e i villaggi nelle valli, circondati dal fertile terreno che dava da vivere agli abitanti. Dove in inverno il terreno era ricoperto dalla neve, nella bella stagione crescevano mele succose, in alcuni luoghi asparagi, in altri fragole, nell'estremità più meridionale addirittura limoni, e dove la pianura e i fianchi di montagna si confondevano, crescevano la Schiava, il Lagrein, il Pinot Nero, il Pinot Bianco, il Sauvignon e il Gewurztraminer (Koppelstätter 2018, 19).

While the landscape is described as lively, prosperous and productive, with a strong human imprint despite its extreme conditions, some glimpses of the social and cultural environment are also presented that accentuate the identity of a place at the crossing of different cultures:

Incastrato tra Austria, Svizzera e Italia, l'Alto Adige offre al visitatore cultura tirolese e tocco mediterraneo, sen-

so dell'ordine dolce vita, canederli e piazza. La comunità tirolese, cui apparteneva Grauner, parlava un dialetto tedesco indecifrabile e che variava da valle a valle e da paese a paese. Gli altri parlavano un italiano con accento napoletano, come l'ispettore Saltapepe, oppure toscano, calabrese e siciliano. E non di rado tutti insieme e contemporaneamente parlavano un misto di tutto (Koppelstätter 2018, 27).

Mountains and valleys are strongly integrated with the urban context, which is poetically described as a material stratification of the many cultures that have merged in South Tyrol:

Merano era diversa da Bolzano. Bolzano aveva facce belle e facce orribili, Merano invece era un libro illustrato per bambini, in ogni angolo. Bolzano si era scontrata con la storia: quel capoluogo di provincia era stato scosso e segnato dal passato dell'Alto Adige, era stato sfigurato dalle costruzioni fasciste ed era stretto in una cinta industriale [...] Merano invece era rimasta com'era: asburgica, anche se con reminiscenze del tempo in cui fu capitale del Tirolo, sempre elegante e trasognata. Protetta dalle pendici del gruppo Tessa a nord, aveva sempre goduto di una nota più mediterranea rispetto al resto della provincia. Bolzano combatteva mentre Merano riposava. Bolzano era la dura realtà, Merano era l'illusione: una favola velata da un manto di seta (Koppelstätter 2019, 64-65).

The local context, however, is not always idyllic, as reiterated by some recurring narrative *topoi*: Grauner's cell phone that does not pick up a line; the rugged morphology of the area putting his car to the test; the unfriendliness of the mountain people. The investigations lead the readership across time and space, spacing from a glacier setting to the Museum of Bolzano (where the contradictions associated with the discovery of Ötzi emerge) and up to Val d'Ultimo, a former thermal valley where some old feuds are brought to light.

The setting thus becomes a space of contrast and *chiaroscuro*, in which the landscape represents an attempt to encapsulate dichotomies. The differences between the Italian and the German cultures or between mountains and valleys are reflected in the dialectic opposition between Grauner and Saltapepe, regarding especially weather and cuisine. For instance, whenever Grauner orders a *cappuccino* for dinner – outraging his Neapolitan colleague – a heated argument may even break out:

Ma che t'importa, brontolò Grauner, Mattina, mezzogiorno, sera, vino, grappa, cappuccino, noi tirolesi beviamo cosa vogliamo e quando lo vogliamo. Era la solita solfa, pensava Grauner. Praticamente ogni santo giorno l'ispettore invocava delle regole culinarie, cosa si doveva bere quan-

do, quando si doveva mangiare cosa e come si doveva cucinare cosa (Koppelstätter 2018, 81).

It is particularly at mealtime that cultural differences are exposed: Saltapepe usually has late meals and prefers Mediterranean food, whereas Grauner has always lunch at noon (or earlier) and does not venture much beyond the dishes and drinks of his homeland, such as “l'immacabile Schuttelbrot [...] il buon pane contadino fatto di segale croccante di quelle zone nordiche” (Koppelstätter 2019, 48):

Le campane della chiesa non avevano ancora suonato, dunque doveva mancare poco alle dodici: era tempo di ordinare un bicchiere di rosso, oppure un bicchiere di Weissburgunder, il Pinot Bianco dell'Alto Adige, per preparare il palato al pranzo del mezzogiorno: i canederli, le salsicce di casa accompagnate con i crauti, la zuppa d'orzo (Koppelstätter 2019, 125).

Only once Grauner leaves his homeland to go to Riva del Garda, not too far south of Bolzano. Trentino then takes on the characteristics of a Mediterranean and almost exotic landscape:

La strada si snodava sinuosa con i suoi tornanti orlati di ulivi fino alla sponda nord del lago dove furono poi le palme e i pini a ombrello a farle ombra [...] edifici pittoreschi dai colori vivaci si affiancavano l'uno all'altro e il lago sembrava un'acquamarina incastonata tra i pendii rocciosi. Il sole faceva rilucere e scintillare le ondine e un vento leggero soffiava dozzine di surfisti come figurine sull'acqua [...] Cipressi e splendide magnolie dispensavano la loro frescura tutt'attorno. I pescatori se ne stavano seduti in piccoli crocchi sulla riva e rappezzavano le reti (Koppelstätter 2019, 257-258).

3.2 Schiavone's Aosta Valley

As opposed to the police commissioner from South Tyrol, the Roman-Valdostan detective's attitudes and practices openly emphasize his foreignness to the Alpine context, where he has been forcibly posted. Despite the harsh climate and the snowy winters of Aosta, Schiavone insists on wearing mild-temperature clothes as a statement of his personal style, although they prove ill-suited to the local weather: because of the snow his Clarks shoes wear out and need to be constantly replaced, while his Loden coat offers scarce protection against the harshest temperatures (“poco o niente lo proteggeva da quelle temperature”: Manzini 2014, 53). In the following passage, the snow seems to engross Schiavone's perception of the city, exacerbating rather than relieving his

sense of distrust towards the place: “[The snow] fiocava e gonfiava d’ovatta soffice tetti, pali della luce e attutiva i rumori della città con quella capacità che ha la neve di silenziare il paesaggio” (Manzini 2021, 9). The climate is frequently described with an emphasis on the mutual hostility between the protagonist and the city:

Erano giorni di marzo, giorni che regalano sprazzi di sole e promesse della primavera che verrà. Raggi ancora tiepidi, magari fugaci, che però colorano il mondo e aprono alla speranza. Ma non ad Aosta. Aveva piovuto tutta la notte e le gocce d’acqua mista a neve avevano martellato la città fino alle due del mattino. Poi la temperatura, scesa di parecchi gradi, aveva dato alla neve partita vinta [...] poi improvvisamente si era alzato un vento maligno che aveva invaso le strade della città come una torma di cosacchi ubriachi, schiaffeggiando uomini e cose (Manzini 2014, 13).

With very few exceptions too, Schiavone’s eating habits seldom include traditional local dishes or typical restaurants. In fact, he mostly prefers national dishes or food coming from geographical contexts opposite to that of the Alps: for example, he usually orders pizza from the deli or goes to a Neapolitan restaurant to eat seafood spaghetti (Manzini 2017). Local culture is rejected even through language, which is mostly Italian, interspersed with some slang expressions from the Romanesco dialect by the protagonist. French, the official second language of the Aosta valley, is never used. Toponomastic references are almost absent and there are very few mentions of the actual names of the places where the crimes are committed, such as the Saint-Vincent casino or the Champoluc ski slopes. Even the locals’ habits are observed by Schiavone with detachment, seemingly without any feeling of sympathy: “In poche settimane aveva imparato una cosa di quella città: i suoi abitanti sfruttavano qualsiasi spicchio di sole fuori stagione, coscienti che per mesi avrebbe potuto essere l’ultimo” (Manzini 2018, 20). In general, his relationship to the community is almost exclusively work-related, as he bitterly muses: “Non s’era legato a quella città, neanche ai suoi colleghi. Spesso si era domandato se si sarebbe mai più affezionato a qualcuno” (Manzini 2017, 25). By contrast, he maintains close relationships with the Roman friends of his childhood, whom he often meets in Rome when he returns home.

Despite his aversion to Aosta, Schiavone rarely leaves the city to wander in the surrounding mountains. Only because of a murder does he venture to a refuge at high altitude, demanding transportation by helicopter and spurning the attitude for sports and the love for skiing shown by policeman Pierron, who mir-

rors Saltapepe’s narrative role, although with much less relevance to the overall economy of the tale. Within this framework, landscape descriptions stand out mainly by their absence. The representations of the urban space of Valle d’Aosta where events and investigations take place are very rare and often related to unrepresentative spots, or presented under a mocking and edgy perspective. The description of the institutional buildings, for example, could fit any other Italian city: “Il palazzo erariale era un’architettura del Ventennio che stonava con Aosta come un brufolo sulla pelle di un neonato. Nella testa degli architetti fascisti l’orologio del Comune doveva sostituire il campanile” (Manzini 2014, 125). Moreover, the few passages in the novel portraying the beauty of the mountain landscapes always end on a negative note from the protagonist, which shows Schiavone’s inability to assuage his inner conflicts by immersing himself in the landscape:

La corona di montagne azzurre ricoperte di boschi imbiancati dominava il paesaggio aggredita da prati soffocati dalla neve grassa [...] lo spettacolo avrebbe mozzato il fiato a chiunque, tranne a Rocco Schiavone, che guardava la potenza e la bellezza della natura con gli occhi tristi di un cane abbandonato [...] ‘non ci vedo niente di straordinario. Neve ovunque e tanto, tanto disagio’ (Manzini 2019, 57-58).

The representation of the setting is conveyed as with firm brushstrokes, through visual, olfactive, and acoustic details: “Quello era l’unico dettaglio che era riuscito ad amare di Aosta, il profumo della legna bruciata” (Manzini 2019, 104). Yet even when positive elements emerge, Manzini outlines the personality of the protagonist in a constantly negative contrast⁴.

The descriptions of Aosta are as sparse and short as those of the Roman neighborhoods are detailed, illustrating Schiavone’s frequent homecomings, sometimes for work and sometimes for sentimental reasons. In fact, Rome plays an ambivalent role in the fiction: on the one hand, a distant homeland associated with the detective’s roots and positive childhood memories; on the other hand, the hub of the tortuous mechanisms of a corrupt power that taints his professional life and his entire existence. Gradually, however, the thread that binds him to his past starts to thin: step by step, Schiavone manages to make peace with the guilt that he carries

⁴ A partial exception is the first book, where Schiavone’s characteristics perhaps are not yet well delineated. The beauty of the Champoluc mountain scenery arouses some enthusiasm in him as he utters exclamations of appreciation. He even performs actions that can no longer be found in later volumes, such as buying mountain footwear to replace his ill-fitting shoes or praising the local food (Manzini 2013).

after his wife's disappearance, while his former friends grow apart from him. Confined to a stateless *limbo*, the Roman policeman seems to be able to slowly open up to the new city.

4. Conclusion: Estrangement as Subject of Literary Geography

Owing to the type of narrative mechanisms developed through the investigation process, literary critics have long considered detective novels as a genre conducive to the unravelling of the characters' psychology and to insight into the social and geographical dimension where the crimes take place (Pezzotti 2012, 161-164; Allan et al. 2020; Gabellieri 2022).

The previous paragraphs aimed to illustrate two case studies in which the portrayal of the characters and their attitude toward the space around them appears to be somewhat antithetical, although the respective stories are set in similar contexts. The main differences can be

identified, on the one hand, in the protagonists' different approaches to local space; on the other, in the way landscapes and local society are represented and described. The comparison between the two detectives – including their relationships to the respective sidekicks – allows for a better definition of the peculiar phenomenology concerning the literary geographies of the two series.

In Table 1 some of the established criteria are classified in relation to the corresponding narrative *topoi*, standing out either by their absence or abundance.

Whether present or absent, the sense of belonging to a place is represented in detective fiction through specific elements which help to locate the "lived space" (*sensu* Frémont 1976) of the characters, i.e. the setting where the action takes place and the social reality from which the criminal impulse has originated. Such elements may either be part of the local people's *genre de vie* and habits, including clothing, food or daily schedules; or they may be part of the characters' affective geography, e.g. their network of friendships; or yet they may be based on their relationship with the inhabited space and land-

Table 1. Criteria for the classification of narrative *topoi* outlining the characters' sense of place or disorientation in Koppelstätter's and Manzini's detective novels. Source: Author elaboration.

Narrative <i>topoi</i>	Koppelstätter's series		Manzini's series	
	<i>Commissioner Grauner</i>	<i>Inspector Saltapepe</i>	<i>Commissioner Schiavone</i>	
<i>Customs and practices</i>	<i>Clothing and technical equipment</i>	Durable car and technical clothes suitable for cold weather	Stylish cars and clothes	Clothes suitable for mild climates, preference for stylish cars (BMW) over practical off-roaders
	<i>Food</i>	South Tyrol traditional dishes and typical wines	Dishes of the Neapolitan tradition	National and non-specific dishes
	<i>Timetables</i>	Customary in South Tyrol	Customary in Naples	Irregular time patterns
<i>Setting</i>	<i>Alpine landscape</i>	Love and respect for the mountain and woodland landscapes (widely described)	Contempt for mountain and forest landscapes	Hostility or indifference to the nondescript mountain landscape
	<i>Urban landscape</i>	Preference for buildings and monuments related to the Habsburg past	Not explicit	Indifference towards Aosta; homesickness for the places in Rome
	<i>Climate</i>	Quiet acceptance of extreme weather	Idiosyncrasies of cold temperatures	Idiosyncrasies of cold temperatures
	<i>Language</i>	Alternate use of German, dialect and Italian	Exclusive use of Italian	Use of Italian with expressions from the Roman dialect
	<i>Local history references</i>	References to the thermal past of Val d'Ultimo and the discovery of Oetzi	Not present	Not present
<i>Relational space</i>	<i>Personal biography</i>	Local origin	Forced relocation from Naples	Forced relocation from Rome
	<i>Relationship with local people</i>	Friendship, family and work relationship	With communities of southerners and colleagues	Only episodic or work-related relationships
	<i>Relationship with distant people</i>	Not present	Friendship and family relationship	Friendship and family relationship

scape. Landscape descriptions are indeed presented not through objective criteria, but conveyed as the protagonists perceive them. In the case of Grauner, for example, the deep knowledge and love of his homeland emerge in the depth and richness of the landscape descriptions, in his many references to local practices and productions or to actual topographical localizations, and in his consistent use of positive adjectives. The result is what the author himself calls an example of an “environment-character”. According to the categories adopted by Tuan (1980), the bond between Grauner and his territory is not a matter of “rootedness” but can be interpreted as “belonging”, not only because the character is keenly aware of it and constantly tries to maintain it through daily rituals, but also because he suffers from the lack of it on the few occasions when he leaves South Tyrol (Koppelstätter 2021).

On the other hand, as far as Schiavone is concerned, it is the absence of landscape descriptions that reveals his lack of interest in the place, hence his sense of disorientation and alienation. Thus, in Manzini’s fiction, the insubstantiality of the “place” and of its symbolism is equally influential for the plot, allowing for a discernible perception of foreignness.

Considering the analytical categories proposed by Porteous (1985) and developed by Piras and Tanca (2019), Grauner is an example of “home-insider”, a character perfectly rooted in his own territory, as his *modus operandi* of investigation benefits from this belonging. By contrast, Schiavone corresponds to the definition of “home-outsider”, the character who feels alien and out of place, always inadequate.

Belonging and unbelonging are in both cases a narrative device used to better define the character. As such, they can be considered a literary element of agency that contributes further to delineating the plot.

As effectively demonstrated by various authors (Lando 1993; 1996; Tomaney 2010; Gavinelli 2019), a sense of belonging can result in an exhaustive presentation of the place that may captivate the readership. In the present article, however, we have also shown the potential that lies in reporting on the page the sense of estrangement, a literary quality that magnifies Schiavone’s feelings of angst and loneliness, his process of self-degradation, and his literary nature as a stereotype of the outsider and marginalized cursed hero (Scaggs 2010, 58-63) – all to the benefit of the readers. In such cases, the estrangement has a negative connotation: far from showing their own *filia* to the place and the identity path of the territorialization processes on which Angelo Turco (2022) reflected, in this case the individual recognizes himself as external to the territory and to the established com-

munity, and he defines itself in opposition to the *ethos* of the place.

In conclusion, if the sense of belonging – paraphrasing Juha Ridanpää (2022) – is part and parcel of the discourse on space and deserves to be studied also in its literary projections, the suggestion presented in this paper is to consider its absence as well, namely unbelonging as a fundamental element of literary geographies.

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