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AT THE JUNCTURE OF LITERATURE AND GEOGRAPHY: LITERATURE AS A SUBJECT OF GEOGRAPHIC INQUIRY IN THE CASE OF SLOVENE ISTRIA

Literary works as discursive articulation of the experience of residing in a space are becoming a legitimate subject of geographic inquiry. Postmodern geography also has adopted for its purposes some concepts from literary studies, such as intertextuality and landscape as text or geographic imagination. A qualitative analysis of selected examples of literary texts that thematize the space of Slovene Istria shows how topophilia, the Self/other identity distinction, and feelings of place and placelessness take shape in them. These are contemporary concepts of humanistic geography, which build on the predominantly objectivist, natural and social science tradition by taking into account individual and group apprehension, imagination, and formation of space. Literary works enable geography to analyze our relation to our living environs and the meanings that we attribute to the space or identify ourselves with. Our relations to space are also a fundamental condition for forming identities and societal responsibility.

Key words: Slovene Istria, qualitative textual analysis, literary representations of place, geographic imagination, cultural representations

1 Introduction

The face of the water, in time, became a wonderful book--a book that was a dead language to the uneducated passenger, but which told its mind to me without reserve, delivering its most cherished secrets as clearly as if it uttered them with a voice. And it was not a book to be read once and thrown aside, for it had a new story to tell every day. Throughout the long twelve hundred miles there was never a page that was void of interest, never one that you could leave unread without loss, never one that you would want to skip, thinking you could find higher enjoyment in some other thing. (TWAINE 1961: 55)

Literary studies and geography. At first glance it seems that the two have nothing in common. The first treats the achievements of verbal art, societal life, and the historical evolution of letters; the other is an all-encompassing, eclectic field devoted to space, which studies natural phenomena and social events in their connectedness and mutual dependency. Despite the prevalent view of disjuncture between the two disciplines, there are many shared points in the sphere of research approaches and conceptual points of departure, as well as in the sphere of objects of study. Debates about the so-called spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences, which expanded from about the early 1990s and were met with a wide response, focused attention on how literary studies could follow models of geography and cartography (DÖRING

and THIELMANN 2009); nevertheless, exchanges between the disciplines also flowed in the other direction, from literary models to geography. An interest in literature is already apparent in writings of one of the founders of modern geography, Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859), and at times in those of other geographers, up to the middle of the twentieth century (HENDERSON and GREGORY 2009: 420). However, literary studies and geography began to draw close and develop linkages only recently, when geography outgrew its traditional boundaries—in particular social geography (human geography, *géographie humaine*, *Humangeographie*, *Kultur-/Sozialgeographie*)—and opened itself to new trends and philosophical conceptions, gradually transforming itself into the so-called new cultural geography.¹

2 A Disciplinary Juncture: Geography becomes Part of the Humanities

In the course of its development, so-called humanistic geography, which focuses on how people's relations to where they live are formed by their perceptions, creativity, convictions, and experiences, took an important step in connecting literature and geography. The humanistic approach, which was a response to the reification of the human factor in social studies, put people's perceptions and consciousness at the center of social analyses. Our consciousness makes us unique as social beings and enables us to take an active role in the world, to realize our will and desires. Consciousness is not only something conceptually rational because it also includes feelings, recollections, hopes, fears, satisfactions, and aspirations (WARF 2009). Humanistic geography is inspired by phenomenology, existentialism, and idealism (e.g., from Husserl and Heidegger) when it espouses the position that the world is actually a social construct and that any object is constituted through intentionality (HUBBARD et al. 2002; PICKLES 2009). Although humanistic geography is a comparatively new direction in social geography, humanistic thought has long been present in the field. Already at the beginning of the twentieth century, the great French geographer Vidal de la Blache (1845–1918) showed with his inquiry into *genres de vie*—an individual region's significant markers of cultural identity and practices engraved in landscape—how closely bound are people's consciousness and their physical surroundings. Yet the real beginnings of humanistic geography are in the 1970s, when Edward Relph (1976) brought it to prominence with his studies of the cultural influence of mass production and consumption, the homogenization of capitalist landscapes, and the resulting alienation; then came Ann Buttimer (1976), with the phenomenological conception of lifeworlds, in which reality is interwoven into human experiences; and David Lowenthal, who wrote on regional tastes and perceptions and the relation between history and cultural heritage (WARF 2000). Yi-Fu Tuan, who coined the term »humanistic geography«, also introduced the very popular and widely used expression »sense of place«, which pertains to the subjective batch of feelings and impressions individuals associate with a certain area (TUAN 1974a); for example, a house

¹ For new cultural geography is a process, not a static term. Cultural geography is based on various theoretical standpoints (Marxist political economy, feminist theory, postcolonial theory, post-structuralism, and psychoanalysis) and uncovers power relations and explores the construction of identity on the model of Foucauldian criticism.



becomes a home because of sense of place. The same author introduced the term »topophilia« into geography (TUAN 1974b), which is an umbrella term for a series of subjective emotions and ideas that tie individuals to a certain place. In general, humanistic geography was concerned with what gives places a peculiar colour, how places enter human consciousness, and how the way consciousness interprets space then influences the formation of places. This connected geography with landscape architecture, cultural anthropology, sociology, art history, and other humanities disciplines (WARF 2009).

The next big step in the joining of geography and literary studies was inquiry into geographic imagination, which is founded on cultural representations that have both emotional and ideological import. Such imagination helps form people's identities, their understanding of the world, and the world itself (HOELSCHER 2009a). Geographic imagination is a new term and the Slovene equivalents for *geographical imagination* and *imagined* (or *imaginative*) *geographies* are not yet fixed. However, elsewhere these expressions, which refer to the apprehension of space through images, texts, and discourses, began to gain currency with postmodern social science approaches that influenced geography to a great extent. In the background is the idea that space is not material and physical but metaphorical and manifested through culturally and ideologically negotiated representations. The literary critic Edward Said's contribution was key here. In his criticism of orientalism, he understood imagined geographies as a weapon of power, a way of controlling and subjugating territories (SAID 1995). The creation and diffusion of images takes places mainly through textual and visual materials, which brings literature into the very heart of geographic inquiry.

3 The Juncture at the Level of Writing and Reading

Literature and geography have long cohabited in their quality of discursive practices that connect writing and reading. If we treat geography as one of a number of discursive practices and bracket its scholarly paradigm, which took shape in the post-Enlightenment system of modern scholarship, then in the broadest sense geography has been from the beginning the writing, describing, and presentation of Earth's spaces, and in this way it connects with creative textual genres that since the eighteenth century have been understood in light of the general idea of art, or literature (*belles-lettres*). Throughout, geography concerned itself with questions connected with space, with where, how, and who we are. At the same time, such questions are embedded in the process of writing and reading. As Bakhtin underscored with the idea of chronotope, space or location, infused with the element of time, is the foundational element of a story, defining the actors and the structure, dynamics, modality, and genre profile of a story (BAKHTIN 1981: 217–220). Textual space is imagined in the process of writing, with reference to geographic experience and imagining. Writing can assimilate to factual geographic spaces or relate to them referentially; variously weld, creatively combine, and abstract and generalize them. It can also distance itself from them, opening alternative, possible, and other spaces that Foucault called

»heterotopias« (FOUCAULT 1986). We might say that geography is directly or indirectly woven into writing—the shaping of a story—and at the same time is built into it: »Geography functions as a container for plot« (DENNIS and HOWELLS 1996: 1). The structure of a fictional space not only determines the semantic and value structures of a text and its extra-textual bonds with the cultural context (LOTMAN 1977: 219–234), but serves, especially in literature of a mimetic orientation, as a referential key to discerning real locations, which are otherwise geography's domain. The fact that in the process of reading literature referencing textual spaces to geographic locations is important for much of the audience is evident in the results of such reception—visits to places and spaces described and interpreted in literary works; for example, the journey of Byron's Child Harold, Charles Dickens's London, France Prešeren's the Savica waterfall, or Srečko Kosovel's Karst. The tourist industry nimbly exploits many readers' desire for reexperiencing the story *in situ*. State and local governments do this as well with memorial tablets, monuments, toponyms, school excursions, pub names, and similar evocations of locations in a story, affirming the fame of their locale that has been immortalized in canonical or favorite works of literature with the help of literary connotations.²

The most direct link between geography and literature is made, of course, in travel literature, which joins the main models of both discourses: It is a material explanation, descriptively informative, and at the same time aesthetic, subjective, and narrative. Throughout its history travel writing has been a source of geographic examining as well as a result of geographic (professional or lay) reflection. However, a treatment of the meaning of travel writing for literature and geography would extend beyond the bounds of this article.³

The contemporary humanities characteristically stress the importance of the role of language as a system of signs that enables not only communications, discourse, and expressing opinions, but through the use and application of the system establishes social bonds, belonging, and identities, and forms models for apprehending the world and space. The poststructuralist⁴ »linguistic turn«, which in the humanities foregrounded the ontological supremacy of the text and discourse and linked them to power relations and structures of knowing, in geography is most clearly seen in the metaphor *landscape as text* (HOELSCHER 2009b). Understanding landscape as text is not in and of itself a discovery of postmodern geography. It characterized German *Landschaftsgeographie* and its hermeneutic parsing of anthropogenic traces and objectivization of the social in the physical of a region. The metaphor has even deeper roots in the ancient tradition of Christian and humanistic interpretation of space in old nineteenth-century geography. (HARD 2008:

² Dublin is a good example, where one of the most important tourist attractions is the Dublin Literary Pub Crawl, where they recite and play Irish authors (e.g., Joyce, Yeats, Beckett). On the contrary, in the church of Saint-Sulpice there is an inscription disclaiming any connection to Brown's novel *Angels and Demons*, which was supposed to have taken place in it.

³ Ecocriticism, which arose within literary criticism, also thematizes fields that are in part the subject of geographical study. In Slovenia, Jožica Čeh Steger (2012) has surveyed ecocriticism.

⁴ Poststructuralism as an intellectual movement that undermined structuralist rigidity and the drive for reliability also influenced geography by overcoming traditional binaries—for example, by reinterpreting the pairs objectivity-subjectivity, space-place, and nature-culture (WOODARD and JONES III 2009).



271–272, 279–284) However, the originally more metaphorical analogy between text and space has now, as it were, become part of the lexicon and terminology, being introduced in the framework of the complex linguo-semantic conceptuality that has flooded the postmodern humanities. In general, we can define text as a communicational phenomenon that stems from the use of linguistic signs for representing some knowledge, viewpoints, and/or carrying out a communication purpose or goal (JUVAN 2011: 105). Sentences and other linguistic elements that are formally and in terms of content connected and interdependent make up a text, making it a circumscribed whole. This whole presents a unique level of understanding, its significance, which has among other things a special communicative role. Both the textual significance and its communicative role depend in turn on the situation or context in which the text arises, the conditions in which the audience receives it, and the actors' intentions. A text is a »embedded in the events of juxtaposing and understanding conventional signs« (JUVAN 2011: 114), and therefore it is not only a cultural product, but also a symbolic space, where two processes take place simultaneously: the presentation of the world and social interaction. The text is not only the fundamental unit of literature, but, as Bakhtin noted, »the fundamental given [...] of all humanistic, philological thinking« (BAKHTIN 1986: 103), which means that contemporary and past culture with their practices are accessible and understandable to humanists only through texts (utterances) that are materialized in very different forms. Texts as the starting point and main subject of the humanities are not only written or oral, but also non-verbal, as, for example, the ritualistic behavior of groups or the symbolic language of architecture and urbanism (JUVAN 2000: 7–14). It is possible to apply the concept of text, understood in its broad, semiotic sense, to living space and landscape, insofar as the observer recognizes signifiers (e.g., symbols, indices, traces, and symptoms) in their physicality, signifiers by which a certain meaning and message can be attributed to space. In inquiring into space, geography touched on two other concepts from literary theory that are tied to the concept of text. A constitutive quality of texts is intertextuality, because every text contains the traces of other texts and cultural sign systems or refers to them, while these pre-texts in turn presuppose, evoke, and rewrite further textual layers of contemporary and past cultural space (JUVAN 2008). In light of the concept of intertextuality, we can inquire into the layering of a landscape or an urban tissue, which in every present bears in itself remnant messages of past ages of natural and cultural history. Further, the notion of intertextuality allows for exploring our orientation in space and cognitive ordering and semantic divisions of the actual living conditions through our mental images and memory schemas, accumulated from reading a variety of space-imagining genres (JUVAN 2011: 214–216). Another term that attracted geographers is discourse—that is, language use in a concrete situation in which the act of uttering situates its subject and establishes connections with other actors who are the addressees of the utterance or presupposed by it, in particular as speaking subjects of other (past, present, or possible) utterances (JUVAN 2011: 39–41; KORON 2004/2005). In geography, discourse is understood as a series of representations, practices, and ideas that form and connect meanings in networks, giving them significance.

On these bases, the metaphor »landscape is text« blazed new trails of inquiry. Landscape is a key geographic concept⁵ that despite its apparent simplicity and clarity surpasses all other geographical concepts in terms of actual complexity, ambiguity, and ideological and methodological variety. Since Carl Sauer, who in 1925 introduced the concept of cultural landscape (that the local group forms from the natural surroundings as a medium of its activity; SAUER 1963: 343),⁶ the term completely changed its conceptual content and obtained new applications. The original picture or image of the landscape was complemented by the very processes and functions that produced it. For new, postmodernist directions of inquiry, landscape is no longer just the material, physical reality, but the social and cultural text, the reading of which facilitates the discovery of the conceptual layers and practices of anthropogenic reshaping of the natural bases that created the landscape as text. Our understanding of landscape is based on the relation between the two levels: how a landscape is constituted and formed and which meaning were attributed to it and what experiences it generated. Landscape is thus not neutral and passive, not simply the result of the interpenetration of natural and socio-cultural factors, but of constant production throughout changing socio-spatial conditions (URBANC 2012: 2017).

Landscape is a text that a society wrote or formed and scholars, as well as those who live in the landscape and use it daily, read and interpret. The idea behind the metaphor is that people impress their way of thought, ideas, ideologies, and values upon a landscape as if spilling their feelings and viewpoints onto paper. As a result, it is possible to read a landscape like a book. The new cultural geography thus brings to life and intertextually reinterprets the old comparison with the »book of the world« or »book of nature«, a once beloved commonplace of the European literary tradition. This metaphorical topos has its origins in the Latin Middle Ages and its connotations were predominantly theocentric (CURTIUS 2002: 290–296). Deciphering landscape symbols shows that ideological and political messages are impressed into the landscape as well, or at least they can be indirectly read from its elements (COSGROVE 1989; 1998; 2002; DUNCAN 1993; 2005). The essence of such an understanding is that landscape loses its visual, concrete character and becomes every more subjective as physical and structural models recede before symbolic values, perceptions, and experiences. Reading it reveals numerous stories to use, just as Twain writes about the Mississippi in our introductory quotation. (URBANC 2011: 11)

The link between geographic knowledge and literary studies does not stop with reading, but grows with the analysis of writing (BARNES and DUNCAN 1992), which is indicated by the etymology of the term »geography« in ancient Greek (*geōgraphía*) originally meant 'earth description', 'earth writing' (DUNCAN 1988: 117).⁷ Literary crea-

⁵ On the array and variety of geographical concepts, approaches, and postulates in defining landscape, see »O pomenih pokrajine« (ČERNE 2008).

⁶ »The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result.« (SAUER 1963: 343)

⁷ The *Slovenski etimološki slovar* explains this compound from the Greek *gē* 'earth' and a derivative of the verb *gráphō* 'I write', 'I draw', 'I paint', 'I carve'. The original meaning of »geography« was thus 'descri-



tions and landscape analyses are thus interconnected on the level of writing and describing as well, as stated at the start of this section: the juncture between the two discursive practices is in their describing of the relations between humans and (natural or socio-cultural) space, although each effects this in its own manner. Both geography and literature write about places and spaces and attribute meaning to them in a given social context. Literary narratives can therefore reveal to geographers how a certain space is or was ordered and how the subjective attitude towards the space shapes social action (CRANG 1998: 44).

4 The Juncture of Inquiry: Literature as a Source for Geography

Certain methods employed in geography gained new currency by using texts as sources of inquiry. Geographic analysis of texts has for some time taken into account evidential texts generally assumed to be factual, such as archival and statistical sources. They were ascribed mimetic, evidential qualities because of their nature—a direct picturing of the world as it exists. Now geographers' interest is spreading to textual analysis of *belles-lettres* or fiction as well, and the boundaries between fictional and »factual« texts have substantially blurred. This mirrors directions in contemporary literary theory, which for years has deconstructed the fictional-factual opposition and shown that there is fictional (e.g., story structure) in any factual text, and that fictional texts also refer to reality (if only to ideological reality)—that is, they in fact evidentially touch upon reality as speech events. In addition, theory observes that culturally and historically changing social conventions determine the shifting cognitive border between the territories of the real and imagined, and that a methodological differentiation between fiction and actuality is annulled by the logic of possible worlds (JUVAN 2006: 218–230). Whether a text is thought to be fictional or factual, it produces meanings that people use in cognitively navigating the contemporary world (CRANG 1998: 44). Textual analysis in geography has also achieved greater significance thanks to steering concepts of postmodern culture that emphasize the real power and supremacy of images, representations, and simulacra. Contemporary culture and its space seem to theorists of the postmodern a collage of texts in different media (AITKEN 1997: 198; JUVAN 2006: 257–258).

To the geographer, a text is a medium that can illuminate the interdependence of society and space or, in other words, a text reveals the mystery of human connectedness to the environment. The humanistic geographers Meinig (1979), Ann Buttimer (1976), and Tuan (1974a; 1974b), to name just several, proceed from the assumption that the world is a mosaic of specific places whose uniqueness can only be understood from the perspective of the individual and groups that attributes such meaning to them (URBANC 2012: 202). Meaning is not the find of an individual, but a group product (AITKEN 1997: 211). If we understand text as a singular creation derived from socially coded meanings and forms, and interpret culture as the intermediary, then with postmodernist geographic textual analysis we can create explicit (clearly expressed) knowledge from the implicit (hidden) social production of knowledge. At

bing, drawing the Earth—in Slovene, *zemljepis* (Snoj 1997: 140).

the center of geographers' attention is the question of how space was described in literary works and how writers defined their evocative ties to natural and socio-geographical phenomena (DELYSER 2009). *Belles-lettres* thus attained great narrative power as a medium that by its inherent conventions discloses a deep apprehension of landscape and peoples in their variety, as well as perceptions of physical processes on the Earth's surface. *Belles-lettres* became further important in the 1970s when humanistic geography turned its attention to subjective experiences and the meanings of space. *Belles-lettres* became one of the keys to deciding how individuals and society apprehend landscape and space, especially in connection with feelings, values, and social relations and meanings (DELYSER 2009).

The meaning of *belles-lettres* as cultural text has changed in the most recent trends in geography. The focus shifts from understanding the peculiarity or uniqueness of a given region (place) to a normative level and the question of what a landscape or space ought to be like. This shift is used, for instance, in space planning, the basic goal of which is to create a pleasant living environment for people, and one that can be exploited effectively. This is only possible if people identify with the principles that planning attempts to apply to a space afresh and the attendant transformation of the landscape meanings. Literary tourism operatively employs (and sometimes misuses) fictional speech with normative power from evoking place. This is especially true when they try to mingle the authentic with a counterfeit (DELYSER 2009), or as Pocock puts it: »The truth of fiction is a truth beyond bare facts. Fictive reality may transcend or contain more truth than the physical or everyday reality.« (POCOCK 1981: 11) Moretti also thinks that literature's singularity is precisely because it is ordinary, mundane (2006). The idea behind these apparently senseless statements is that fiction reveals and reports a »sense of place« or *genius loci*, with which the place is imbued (HUBBARD et al. 2002: 128).

However, this direction of geographic thinking must, from the standpoint of literary studies, be treated with caution lest literary images or the evocation of places and landscapes be naively, mimetically understood—of course, not in the sense of factually faithful depictions of actual spaces, which geographers are well aware of, but in the sense of faithful representations of actual (authorial) experiences of a space. That is to say, literary discourse is not a transparent medium through which an authentic perception or at minimum a pure, recollected image of a landscape or place would present itself to the observer (in this case, the geographer). One way or the other, the creator's consciousness evaluated and reinterpreted the image. Genre, stylistic, and other conventions that cross literary discourse—its means are applied in writing, regardless of who, when, where, and about what—influence the articulation of the literary text's subject, its view, and everything that it presents to us in the text. Places and landscapes are no exception: for example, the genre of the idyll created a similarity between temporally and linguistically distant textualized experiences of different regions, such as the island of Kos in Theocritus or the Swiss Alps in Haller; and the pre-Romantic imagination presented the poetic experiences of Harz (Goethe, *Harzreise im Winter*) and the Scottish Highlands (Macpherson, *Ossian*) with like stormy, dramatic flair.

5 Literature as a Storehouse of Geographic Imagination and Representation: The Case of Slovene Istria

In this section we will attempt to define certain ideas that in geography became known and topical only with the introduction of humanistic elements and with the backing of contemporary theoretical philosophical premises; we will demonstrate these notions by the analysis of select examples of literary works on Slovene Istria. These concepts most frequently appear at the interstices of geography and literature. Slovene Istria is an excellent case for showing how we use textual analysis to determine the lived, experiential relation between humans and their environment. Especially in the last three decades this territory saw an exceptional flowering of literary representations by writers who gained prominence in the central media and institutions of Slovene literature, as well as by non-professional writers of often local or regional importance. Among the reasons for this Istria boom (somewhat recalling the Latin American one) it is worth noting Marjan Tomšič's influential work, *Šavrinke* (1986), which grew out of the writer's acquaintance with female Istrian vendors' tales and accounts. The Beseda slovenske Istre study group (and its bulletin *Brazde s trmuna*) also contributed to the explosion of literary depictions of Istria. The group »thoroughly and lovingly researched customs, dialectal speech, creative writing, and stories about the everyday lives of Istrian Slovenes« (*Brazde s Trmuna*). Literary creativity was one of the ways of positing Istria as an exceptional region in the Slovene context (TUCOVIČ 2012: 54) and an important means of forming a regional, Istrian identity. It is especially worth highlighting how the figure of the Šavrinke was made literary (BASKAR 2002a; BASKAR 2002b; BRUMEN 2000), becoming a symbol of Istrian distinctiveness and exceptionality.

5.1 Sense of place

The expression »sense of place« denotes the subjective experience of place that, however, covers a complex bundle of feelings and emotions a place or space prompts. Frequently it appears as a feeling of connectedness and belonging (Cresswell 2009). A sense of place is one of the bases for identity formation, for it enables identification of self with place and landscape. In Istria, different essentials underscore the feeling of place.

The first we can call the *biographical relation* or personal history, which is understood as an indispensable part of local history. In this typically long relation are intertwined the individual's cognitive-emotional and physical attachment to the place. It is built of memories, work and creativity, ownership of real estate, connectedness to the environment, group participation, local community, events and experiences: »The Istrian land, memories of terraced wasteland [bared], slate tiles, five-kilo hoes, hot August sledge hammers, the craziness of the cicadas, adders and vipers, abandoned marl cottages, jays in the rainbow of a storm, the river in the valley that carried away the bridges and mills!« (JURINČIČ 1996: 649). Recollections of ancestors, which are a key aspect of a community's collective memory (clan,



family, local commune), along with individual narrative identities, can depart from the historical logic of linear time and highlight the cyclical component. Cyclicalness creates the impression of eternal life and work in a given landscape. Generations may pass, but customs, belonging, land holding, knowledge, and behaviors are transferred from one to the next, which given the eternal return of the same assures continuity and stability:

| | |
|---|--|
| Nono, je tu oral tudi tvoj nono, pranono? Ja, tudi moj nono je tod oral in kopal. (BRŽAN 2001: 160) | Grandpa, plowed here your grandpa, too, greatgranda? Yes, my grandpa, too plowed and dug there |
|---|--|

The chain of memories of ancestors that narratively forms an individual's identity is inseparably bound up with a place's identity (hidden essence, spirit), as Alferija Bržan's poem with anaphoric parallels shows:

| | |
|---|--|
| Reke korakov moje mame, reke korakov naših non, reke korakov do tvojega srca, zemlja. (BRŽAN 1997: 38) | Rivers of steps, my mom's, rivers of steps, our grandma's, rivers of steps to your heart, the land. |
|---|--|

Land and other real estate ownership and pride in a landholding play and important role in personal history (biographical relation). Property determines and individual's social and class standing in the socio-economic structure and so decisively helps form the individual's relation to place. Ownership strengthens a positive modality in understanding a homeland, as well as a feeling of belonging. In the same way, ownership dissuaded an Istrian from emigrating (voluntary or semi-forced after WW II): »And then I was going to run away to Italy! I had a small farm at home, a few head of cattle, and I didn't need to go out into the world and be a servant to others.« (KOCJANČIČ and ROJAC 2003: 113).

Connectedness to the natural environment in which people lived is seen in the depiction of the Mediterranean landscape with its characteristic flora and rivers winding through the hills, mild climate and sea in the distance. This landscape is shown (in the registers of an idyll or close to it) as bountiful, pleasant for people and animals, and providing a happy life. A close emotional tie developed between it and the people, one that can be expressed in a code of family relations. For instance, Kocjančič personifies the Istrian land as mother who birthed, fed, and raised it, and also as a lifelong friend: »You snuggled up to me as your son at the very dawn of my life.« (KOCJANČIČ 2001: 61). This metaphor, which attempts to express the author's authentic feeling of regional belonging and manifests a special sense of place significant for Istria, on the other hand belongs to the fixed repertoire of patriotic rhetoric; it is an example of how some commonplace (homeland or place of birth as mother) travels from language to language, from literature to literature, age to age, and place to place, every time and everywhere having to interpellate individuals into subjects



of locally relevant ideologies (if we allow ourselves to paraphrase Althusser's theorem).

Stories that locals are able to tell about their area reveal *the narrative relation* to the region. These are mythological narratives about its origin, tales of family histories and various other local traditions, and anecdotes and morally instructive examples. A constant of these stories in Istria is its thousand-year history during which rulers changed and political, administrative, and state borders moved: »He recounted the thousand-year history of the country, all the occupiers, warriors, and conquerors, cited the Romans, Franks, Aquileians, and Venetians. Further, the hordes of both World Wars.« (ŠTOK VOJSKA 2002: 47)

A *normative relation* is based on conscious values and convictions about what relation people should have to their homeland. It is bound up with the experience of dependency and is a response to it. It was formed from collective memory⁸ of historical events and processes, and it is marked by a persistent fear of others (especially foreigners) who might deprive the native group of its territory by conquest or purchase:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Vidiš | You see |
| te hribčke, | those low hills, |
| te doline, | those valleys, |
| ta svet? | that world? |
| Otrok moj, | My child, |
| da bi kupil te kraje, | to buy those places, |
| to zemljo | that land |
| ne bi smel imeti | no one |
| nihče | should have |
| in nikoli | never ever |
| dovolj denarja, | enough money |
| za nobeno njivo, | not for one field, |
| za noben bared. (BRŽAN 2001: 160) | not for one wasteland. |

5.2 Topophilia

The term topophilia denotes a persons positive, fond disposition to the environment, in which beauty and singularity are joined. In belles-letters, it is frequently formed as a denotation of a certain place or region's beauty, which shows that it is an aesthetic condition, one proper to understanding verbal art, and key to perceiving of the living environment as well. However, the aesthetic is just one of the ways of binding. Tuan understands aesthetic binding as momentary; the individual experiences it accidentally when seeing exceptional, previously unfamiliar beauty. Its counterbalance is the persistent tie that gradually creates a warm feeling (of beauty) about a familiar place (TUAN 1974b: 94). The aesthetic sense also arises from individuals' memories of a place and experiences in it. Istrians, too, apprehend their native area as

⁸ KOMAC (2209: 219) says that preserving the memory or awareness of the meaning of past processes or occurrences in present conditions is necessary for understanding the region today.

beautiful, as shown by the use of the word *deštra* 'beautiful' (standard Slovene *lepa*) in connection with Istria and places there—in addition to aestheticized landscapes in literature.

Since topophilia is a relation between landscape and humans, not only landscape features come to bear on it, but people's personal characteristics as well. The characteristics of the Istria landscape must correspond to the Istrian's characteristics, because they have lived interdependently and mutually formed the regional identity. What are the Istrians' chief qualities? Comparative, statistically based demographic, lifestyle, opinion, and values research would be needed to capture a representative model of the Istrian population. However, representatives of the population have ideas about self and »theories« of the regional character. They are not native informants, reified sources of data compiled for a detached, objective researcher, but autonomous subjects for (amateur) »research«. They observe their relatives and themselves and write about them, including in literary works. Here is a »theory« about the Istrians' character that one of them penned: »He is modest, unremarkable, and patient, but tough. He is as the earth formed him, one who works the earth, quarrels and praises, carved out by dry summers, warm breezes and bad weather, years of want and hunger, but also happiness and prosperity. He is like his land, his beautiful (»deštra«) Istria.« (ŠTOK VOJSKA 2003: 163)

Yet another feature of topophilia jumped out during the analysis of collected texts, and that is the idealization of the past: »But for me it was more beautiful then, even though the villages stank of manure in the barns, and hay or wine and polenta was in the air« (PRIBAC 2001a: 116). The past is shown as a pure and unsullied, worthy of longing, and memory of times past is aestheticized, sometimes infused with topophilia's folkloric narrative expansiveness:

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Med škrlami | Amid the tiled roof huts |
| si sam s seboj. | you are by yourself. |
| Iščeš | You search for |
| včerajšnje stopinje, | yesterday's steps, |
| poslušáš hrepenenje trav | you listen to the grasses' yearning |
| in sanjaš, | and dream |
| da bo pozabljeni mlin | that the abandoned mill |
| spet oživel. | will come to life again. |
| Da bodo iz vode | That from the water |
| vstajale vile. | fairies will rise. |
| Čiste, | Pure, |
| prelepe | gorgeous |
| se bodo smehljale | they will laugh |
| tebi, | at you, |
| ki tako čakaš. (BRŽAN 1997: 74) | waiting like that. |

Topophilia is what creates the psychological context in which a person feels good and satisfied. It is the kind of relation in which a person becomes a part of the landscape and the landscape part of the person. The pleasurable surroundings are evident in the feeling of beauty, riches, and plentiful possibilities. The possibilities



that the surroundings offer are both quantifiably physical and unquantifiably existential:

| | |
|--|--|
| A vendar gledam te: z zemljo se spajaš, ko orješ, koplješ, seješ, znoj otiraš, kosiš in žanješ, trgaš, sad obiraš, s pomladjo novo znova se pomlajaš. (KOCJANČIČ 2001: 52) | And yet I look at you: you blend with the earth, when you plow, sow, wipe your brow, mow and harvest, pick, clear the garden, you become young again with the spring. |
|--|--|

The feeling of beauty is a function of the landscape's aesthetics. A person more easily makes contact with the landscape if it appears to be beautiful and attractive—as if viewing the prehistoric topos of a (lost) garden of paradise:

| | |
|---|--|
| Od morja sem pa vsa si vrt, vinograd si prežlahtnih trt, in vsa si nežen oljkov gaj, drobno cvetoč v zeleni maj. (KOCJANČIČ 1990: 67) | From the sea to here you are all a garden, a vineyard of most noble vineyards, one lovely grove of olives, in full flower in green May. |
|---|--|

The Istrian writer Franjo Frančič used an erotic lyrical speech register to describe how good the people feel in the surroundings of their landscape:

| | |
|---|--|
| V tej pokrajini, ki ima tople oči, svilnato kožo, in odprto srce [...] (FRANČIČ 1989: 757) | In this landscape, with its warm eyes, velvety skin, and open heart [...] |
|---|--|

5.3 Others and Otherness

The other denotes that which in the process of establishing identity—as an exterior norm or law, or undesirable foreign body, a suppressed and rejected image—is mentally separate from I or self. The borders of self are constituted in relation to the externalization of the other. The pair self-other found a place in geography as well, in the branches that deal with postcolonial and feminist studies, as well as with rural geography (SECOR 2009: 515). Who were the others to Istrians in the Istrian countryside? Belles-lettres saw the representatives of Italian authority in this role during the inter-war period, and after WW II they were the various newcomers from central Slovenia (e.g., weekend residents), non-Slovenes, or members of the state apparatus, such as customs agents and police. Carabinieri, representing Italian power, were characterized in this way:

In the afternoon, the *carabinieri* stopped beneath it [a tree]. Foreigners from unfamiliar lands. They leaned their cold carbines against it, sat on the rocks, lit cigarettes, and looked about the surroundings. They yowled incomprehensible words, laughed raucously, showed torn and yellowed photographs, and from time to time sang a sad, sweet song... When they became bored, they stood up, hoisted on their carbines, and set off on their way. And the tree, the tree quivered in the wind because it suspected that these men were bringing woe. (JURINČIČ in BERNETIČ 1999: 72)

The quotation displays the reasons for the social exclusion of the *carabinieri* (as »others«) from the natives' community: the *carabinieri* were foreigners with foreign customs and language (loud and incomprehensible yowling) and members of the repressive apparatus of the ruling nation. Their service gave them power over the natives, and therefore they stood out from the rural idyll reserved only for the local Slovenes. The *carabinieri* are shown as harbingers of a dark future. The Istrians often connected their misfortunes with images of foreigners:

| | |
|---|---|
| Jim tujec trnja trosil je, ne cvetja: kot skale trdni niso se uklonili, veliki v svoji trpki bolečini. (KOCJANČIČ 2001: 45) | The foreigner strew brambles before them, not flowers: like hard rocks they did not yield, great in their bitter pain. |
|---|---|

Later the Istrians attributed qualities similar to those of the *carabinieri* to Yugoslav or Slovene customs agents and policemen: they were predominantly newcomers and members of nations of the other Yugoslav republics. Further, they personified state power on the border, which cut the Istrian countryside and likewise the Istrians' collective I, as they understood it. Therefore they hated the border, and not least of all because of demeaning experiences with bio-politics at border crossings:

| | |
|--|--|
| Včasih je treba v kabino... Tuja roka otipava moža, ženo, tudi otroka ... Kot nag je človek, ko blok zapusti, korake zdrobijo mu hrbti noči. (BRŽAN 2001: 110) | Sometimes it's required to enter the booth... A stranger's hand feels man, wife, children, too ... How naked is a person, when leaving the building, footfalls puncture his back at night. |
|--|--|

Weekend vacationers and newcomers from central Slovenia were, of course, Slovenes, but not Istrians, and therefore were just as much others. True Istrians rejected them like an infestation. In the opinion of the Istrian poet Edelman Jurinčič, these Slovene newcomers were threatening, hegemonic foreigners, just like other aliens: »From all ends of the earth in different periods of history they stormed into Istria, yoked it, exploited it, and set the Istrians one against the other« (BASKAR 2002b: 191). Or as Marta Verginella heard and recorded: »Before it was Sicilians, now it's people from the Karst. They come and command us« (VERGINELLA 1998: 207). Both citations indicate the formation of a strong opposition between the collective self of the natives and others. Others are all those who do not have Istrian roots and are called by the same name, *forešti* 'foreigners' (standard Slovene »tujci«). Jurinčič thinks that Istria has invisible borders, adding that a border »existed between Istrians and immigrants and it is still there« (JURIČNIČ 1994: 622). In his opinion, the borders



resulted from the ideologically motivated immigration of people who could not integrate into Istrian life.

5.4 Placelessness

A place is basically defined as a melding of the physical and human worlds that becomes the center of our direct experiences and enables us to live authentic and original lives full of meaning. Placelessness is the opposite (RELPH 1976: 141; HENDERSON 2009: 542) and applies both to environs without meaningful places and the attitude towards environs that do not admit places' meanings (RELPH 1976: 134). Placelessness is first of all connected with uniformity and the loss of a place's uniqueness due to processes of state integration and globalization. This process began in a limited fashion in Istria already with its inclusion into Yugoslavia, and later continued with Slovene independence, especially when Slovenia became fully integrated into a united Europe, NATO, and global financial markets. The forces that caused placelessness in Istria were the political and socio-economic changes that confronted the region with emigration, depopulation, and loss of agriculture. That led to the breakdown of the cultural landscape or certain of its elements, including ones that in the experiential and semiotic spheres were woven into people's lives and metonymically encapsulated their *genre de vie*:

| | |
|---|--|
| Pergole, oreha ne vidijo z balkona. | The arbor, the walnut are unseen from the balcony. |
| Kamne mojih nonotov pokriva skorja iz betona (BRŽAN 1997: 50) | My grandfathers' stones are covered with shards of concrete. |

The leveling and erasing of regional identity is not only a result of global modernization (concrete) but also of the invasion of central Slovene regional elements: »Or if instead of an entry arbor they build a Gorenjska-style balcony. « (DOBRIŃJA 1996: 285)

If a place is the product of uniqueness recognizable in human experiences and interactions with the living environment, then placelessness is the opposite process as well as the result of the process. In Slovene Istria, this means farmland grows over, terraces and old walls tumble down, and a familiar, native world disappears, which grew out of human life in the environment, human's ability to adapt, their inventiveness, and hard work.

Istrian singularity is based on the Mediterranean cultural landscape and lifestyle that derives from it, on the dialect, and weaving of different languages and cultural traditions, with their attendant, violent histories. The Istrian landscape is one of olive trees, figs, grapes, and other flora, especially Mediterranean. The landscape's soil, relief, proximity to the sea, and climate (in particular the winds) give it its own character, as do local practices, tools, and customs—the huge hoes for working the land, busy hands that cleared rocks from the fields and pastures to make walls, the generations that evened out the steep hillsides. That is why many are pained that



Istria is growing over, their ancestors work is going to waste, and the region is losing its singularity:

And everything is grown up and grown over. There are no longer trails along the Drnica and Derešnjak rivers. Only brambles, clematis, at best acacia. In a few years, if we don't plant all these hilltops and hillsides with olives at least, Istria will look like Notronjska. The forests will be full of deer and wild boars and even bears. Well, that's not so bad. That's how Istria was supposed to have been in the Middle Ages, overgrown and wild. (PRIBAC 2001: 117)

6 Conclusion

The search for junctures between literary studies and geography, an inquiry into literature and the land, has shown that despite the apparent disjuncture between these scholarly fields, it is possible to identify many parallels and ties both in the conceptual frameworks and objects of study and in the spheres of textual production and reception. In general we can say that the two disciplines' growing closer is the result of content, conceptual, and methodological developments in geography. Geography has recently distanced itself from the classical profile of a discipline that syncretically combined the natural and social sciences in its conception of space and turned in the direction of the postmodernist humanities. When we consider the junctures between literature, literary studies, and geography, we might be tempted to name the intersection between the fields »literary geography«. Although this term goes back at least to the 1970s or even the beginning of the century,⁹ difficulties with it persist because it is not completely clear whether »geography« in the phrase refers to the discipline or to the object of analysis. Geography (often used in the plural) is, after all, also a word for space, place, and other phenomena of the physical world. On the other hand, the adjective »literary« also pertains to the discipline (literary studies) and literature as its primary source (HONES 2008: 1303). In any event, using the case of Slovene Istria and its thematization in literature, we have attempted to show the informative value of literature as a source of specific data for geographic research, especially in the area of relations between landscape and the population that lives in it. Saunders posed the question of what literature knows from these sources (SAUNDERS 2009: 439). We analyzed the knowledge embedded in literature in light of several key terms of contemporary humanistic geography: sense of place, topophilia, I-other identity differences, and placelessness.

Inquiry into the first two phenomena revealed their common outlook—that is, a »Romantic« perception of Istria and creation of a regional myth. Romantic view of Istria follows the pattern of romanticizing any other cultural landscape that is proud of the farmland: the fertile farmland defines the beauty of the landscape (through its morphology, proportions, texture). The myth idealizes the past landscape and

⁹ Christopher Salter and William Lloyd used the term »literary geography« in the work *Landscape and Literature* (1977). Before them, the Scottish biographer William Sharp used it in the title of his book *Literary Geography* (1904).



projects youth, family, memories of home, and other moments from the catalog of regional belonging onto it. The past is reproduced through numerous recollections, individual and collective, through autobiographies, tales told from memory, fairy tales, and literary texts. Yearning for times past and the landscapes wafts from all of the texts. Bound up with this is the attitude of the people, who still apprehend an imagined landscape of the past as their own, intimate landscape. The actual landscape of today only strengthens the need for perpetuating the regional myth of an imagined ideal in light of which it is possible to sort out what of the contemporary is undesirable, unaesthetic, and creates feelings of alienation and placelessness.

In this article we have given evidence of how this “what literature knows” may be transferred to the treasury of geographic knowledge. Connecting the two disciplines and objects of analysis opens up an area that is becoming ever more important not only from a theoretical standpoint, but also an applied one. There is the opportunity to analyze the relation with the living environment and identity formation together with landscape meanings, which is the fundamental condition for forming a responsible relation with the landscape. The feeling of belonging to a landscape, to which people attribute cultural and historical value and understand as their family and local group’s living space, gives assurance that caring for one’s own good is joined to caring for the environment. Analysis of the relation to landscape, the results of which space planners could take into account, could make possible balanced development of individual regions and ensure the continuity and stability of their identities. There is yet a good deal of room in Slovene geography to maneuver in this field. The realization that people’s opinions are important has only just begun to be respected.

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