



# Kent Academic Repository

Krüger, Oscar (2021) *Peasant Times: Wine, History, and the Future Past of Farming*. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) thesis, University of Kent,.

## Downloaded from

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/91074/> The University of Kent's Academic Repository KAR

## The version of record is available from

<https://doi.org/10.22024/UniKent/01.02.91074>

## This document version

UNSPECIFIED

## DOI for this version

## Licence for this version

CC BY (Attribution)

## Additional information

## Versions of research works

### Versions of Record

If this version is the version of record, it is the same as the published version available on the publisher's web site. Cite as the published version.

### Author Accepted Manuscripts

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding. Cite as Surname, Initial. (Year) 'Title of article'. To be published in *Title of Journal*, Volume and issue numbers [peer-reviewed accepted version]. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

## Enquiries

If you have questions about this document contact [ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk](mailto:ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk). Please include the URL of the record in KAR. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our [Take Down policy](https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies) (available from <https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies>).

# Peasant Times

Wine, History, and the Future Past of Farming

2021

Oscar Krüger

School of Anthropology and Conservation

The University of Kent

Word Count: 91410

# Abstract

Wine and viticulture are phenomena with deep roots on the European continent. Long missing as topics of anthropological inquiry, both have recently become focal points for discussing important theoretical matters such as petty commodity production, commodification, heritagisation, and conceptions of nature and culture. While this literature consistently makes mention of peasantry, to date no study on wine producers puts peasants front and center. Conversely, the ample literature on European peasantries makes little mention of viticulture or wine, despite how the latter product often invokes ideas about peasants. The present study closes this gap. It attends to a number of politically radical small-scale wine producers in Italy, whose peasanthood is a matter of utmost concern for themselves. Based on 15 months of participatory fieldwork, the study tells us who these producers are, what they do in the course of producing wine, and why they elect to work as they do to begin with. The study remains with these actors' own concern for their own peasant identity. Thus, it conducts an inquiry – ethnographic, historical, philosophical – into what peasanthood *means* for these actors, how it has come to mean that which it does, and what it would entail for anthropological theory to take this meaning seriously. The study has potential implications for the study of wine, viticulture and Italy, as well as for debates on historicity, nature, the temporal politics of peasant radicalism, and methods of analysis for European ethnographic materials.

Keywords: Peasants, wine, Italy, historicity, agriculture, peasant radicalism

# Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	6
Part I: “Where wine is not just a commodity” .....	8
1.1. Imagining the Peasant.....	9
1.2. Peasanthood, Critical Nostalgia, and the Dialectical Image.....	17
Part II: Turning Ontological Anthropology to Europe.....	24
2.1. Theory, Methods, Purpose .....	25
2.2. Making Wine Different for Anthropology .....	26
2.2.1. Wine and Vine.....	26
2.2.2. Agriculture, Difference, and Different Comparisons.....	31
2.2.3. Anthropology and the Definition of Peasantries.....	38
2.2.4. Anthropology turning to (and from) the peasant past.....	46
2.2.5. Peasant Nostalgia: History, historicity, time.....	50
2.2.6. Peasant Difference, Good Difference?.....	55
2.3. Sighting and siting the Peasant .....	62
2.3.1. New Peasants and Old .....	62
2.3.2. On the road to la cooperativa .....	63
2.3.3. Laying the foundations, opening the door .....	67
2.3.4. Managing a cooperative, cooperatively .....	70
2.3.5. Organic agriculture, natural wine, and making a living.....	73
2.3.6. An anthropologist, encountering peasanthood.....	78
2.3.7. Beyond in space: the spatial connections of fieldwork.....	83

2.3.8. Beyond in time: The historical foreground .....	89
Part III: La Terra Trema .....	93
3.1. First Encounters: Critical Wine and Radical Peasant Nostalgia .....	94
3.1.1. The First Encounter.....	94
3.2. Luigi Veronelli: Making wine into art, art into politics .....	100
3.2.1. Wine as Historicity.....	100
3.3. 1881: The peasant trope in light of Progress.....	110
3.3.1. Peasants before (modern) History.....	110
3.3.2. Peasants, history, nation-building .....	113
3.4. 1948: Peasant backwardness against revolutionary progress .....	121
3.4.1. Peasantry at War’s end. ....	121
3.4.2 Italian Communism, progress, and the ambiguity of the peasant class	126
3.4.3. Christian Democracy, and turning peasants into farmers .....	131
3.4.4. Peasants and the Backward slot of History.....	135
3.5. 2016: The peasant trope in front of Crisis.....	139
3.5.1. Bringing the past to the present .....	139
3.5.2. The End of the Peasantry – Or? .....	141
3.5.3. Peasant producers, urban consumers .....	147
3.5.4. 1968 and the Radical NOW .....	153
3.5.5. Modern History, as Progress turns to Crisis.....	156
3.6 Concluding first encounters: From festival to field. ....	161
3.6.1. The Enduring Beginning.....	161
Part IV. The Contemporary Italian “Peasant” in Practice: Ethnographic	
Investigations .....	167
4.1. The Peasant Trope Transitioning to Practice .....	168
4.1.1. Peasants and Peasant work.....	168
4.2. Land I: People, vines, bodies .....	173
4.2.1. Scenes of pruning, in three stages.....	173
4.2.2. Land and hierarchy, corporeality, care .....	183
4.3. Land II: Lands, humans, naturalization .....	191
4.3.1. The question of Nature.....	191
4.3.2 The lay of the land .....	192
4.3.3. Denaturalizing Denaturalization .....	195
4.3.4. Contemporary Peasants and their Nature.....	199
4.3.5 The Etymologies of Peasant Nature.....	201
4.3.6. Claiming the Natural.....	210

4.4. Labour I: Between Security and Care .....	213
4.4.1. Grapes, vulnerability, fear .....	213
4.4.2. Work, Labour, Vineyards .....	218
4.4.3. Caring (to be) peasants.....	220
4.4.4. Cultivating Care .....	223
4.4.5. Weather, vulnerability, and the powerlessness of care.....	227
4.5. Labour II: Between Income and Vocation .....	235
4.5.1. Peasanthood as Choice.....	235
4.5.2. Peasants from Diverse Backgrounds .....	236
4.5.3. The Intrinsic Value of Peasant Life.....	239
4.5.4 Money and Peasanthood as Play.....	243
4.6. Capital I: Critical Wine at the Fort.....	248
4.6.1. Transporting the Goods.....	248
4.6.2. The first day of festival .....	249
4.6.3. First night of the fair .....	253
4.6.4. The second day of festival .....	254
4.6.5. Leaving the festival, returning to the fort .....	258
4.6.7. The significance of the festival .....	260
4.7. Capital II: Re-imagining market exchange .....	263
4.7.1. On analysing a transformation of the commodity form.....	263
4.7.2. Critical Wine, changing exchange .....	263
4.7.3. Certifications and trust.....	267
4.7.4. Anthropology between Gifts and Commodities.....	272
4.7.5. Towards an Etymology of the Commodity .....	275
4.7.6. Radicals against markets, or radical markets? .....	282
4.7.7. Redeeming the Commodity .....	287
4.8. Outro: When “wine is just a commodity”.....	289
4.8.1. Natural Fish.....	289
4.8.2. The commoditization of the qualified commodity.....	297
4.8.3. The Problem of Irony .....	299
Part V: Peasants at the End of the End.....	303
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	310

# Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the contribution of innumerable people, too many to mention here. You all have my gratitude. Here, I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge some directly.

My greatest thanks, first of all, go to all the *vignaioli* around Italy who have so generously shared their work, their homes, and their lives with me. This has made the present study possible, but also so much more. I hope to soon be able to share this life with you again.

I have had the opportunity to present parts of the material presented here in a number of venues. For their feedback, I thank participants in conferences and workshops at the University of Turin, the University of Santiago de Compostela, and the Central European University.

I have taken invaluable inspiration (and joy) from my fellow doctoral students in Canterbury. Here, I would particularly like to acknowledge those with whom I have had extensive discussions about the arguments presented in this thesis (as well as other anthropological matters): Marko Barisic, Mick Bonnington, Jade Richards, Holly Harris, Khalil Avi Betz-Heinemann. For entirely different but equally important reasons, a special thank you also to Gwili Gibbon and Thirza Loffeld. Further afield in England, Gustav Cederlöf and Vanessa Hansen have seldom been far from my thoughts even as our respective circumambulations have brought us together only too seldom.

Among the anthropologists of Canterbury, I direct my thanks particularly to those who presided over the ethnographic writing seminars during my time there: Miguel Alexiades, Joao de Pina-Cabral, and Dimitrios Theodossopoulos. These sessions

provided invaluable opportunities for me to present several sections that appear in this thesis. Additionally, I am grateful for the feedback and advice provided by Jon Mair, David Henig, and (again) Miguel Alexiades. Finally, of course, I extend my gratitude to my primary supervisor, Matt Hodges, who has been with me on this project from beginning to end.

Finally, for reasons greater than I can express here, I thank Corinna and Alva. For everything they have done to help me with this thesis, and for reminding me that there are also other things in life, I am indebted.



## Part I: “Where wine is not just a commodity”

*This section introduces the thesis. It presents aims, research questions, the method of inquiry, the researcher himself, and provides a first ethnographic overview of the places, persons and themes discussed below. By splicing together scenes from three distant times around a shared image – fireflies – the section also demonstrates by example the anthropological significance of history and literature in the thesis that follows.*

## 1.1. Imagining the Peasant

It is spring, and the year is 1300. In Tuscany, most likely. A poet who was no longer young, but already “[m]idway in the journey of our life” has found himself “in a dark wood / for the straight way was lost” (Dante *Inferno I.* 1-3).<sup>1</sup> Suddenly, he finds himself beset by three demoniac beasts – a leopard, a lion, and a wolf. “[C]oming against me, step by step”, the poet recounts, the beasts “drove me down to where the sun is silent” (Dante *Inferno I.* 59-60). The underworld, of hell and purgatory. A long detour this turns out to be, through all nine circles of hell. Yet, led on by a well-intentioned guide, the poet finally comes upon something that “was not death, nor could one call it life” (Dante *Inferno XXXIV.* 25). The Devil himself, a giant figure with three faces and six eyes, who “dripped tears and drooled blood-red saliva”. A horrifying figure. Yet it is the Devil himself who provides the way out, and by climbing his hairy body the two humans reach a hidden passage. They make their escape, treading towards the surface from whence the poet had departed.

The poet, of course, is Dante Alighieri, writing in exile from his native Florence. A phantasmagoria of images has been presented to the poet along the course of his journey through hell. One of these – initially less terrifying than many of the others – appears as he is making his way through the eighth circle of hell. Dante recounts his vision:

As when a peasant, resting on a hillside –  
  
in the season when he who lights the world  
  
least hides his face from us,

---

<sup>1</sup> Dante 1999. *Commedia*. Princeton Dante Project. <https://dante.princeton.edu/pdp/> (Accessed 11.02.2021).

at the hour when the fly gives way to the mosquito –  
sees fireflies that glimmer in the valley  
where perhaps he harvests grapes and ploughs his fields,  
with just so many flames the eighth crevasse  
was everywhere aglow, as I became aware

(Dante *Inferno* XXVI. 25-32)

In 1975, the image of fireflies was picked up by another poet – one who might well have been halfway through the journey of his own life, had it not been brutally cut short only months later. Pier Paolo Pasolini, writing in the newspaper *Corriere della Sera*:

At the beginning of the sixties, the fireflies began to disappear in our nation, due to pollution of the air, and the azure rivers and limpid canals, above all in the countryside. This was a stunning and searing phenomenon. There were no fireflies left after a few years. Today this is a somewhat poignant recollection of the past (Pasolini, in Didi-Huberman 2018, 10).<sup>2</sup>

Here the fireflies make an appearance again, yet now only through their purported absence after having been swept away by the progress of modernity and industry. The image may present an environmentalist lament, but it is very explicitly concerned with something more. Throughout his life, Pasolini had struck an uneasy balance. On the one hand, he wrote his early poems in the rural dialect of his ancestral Friuli and conceived himself as presenting a lament for “the immense peasant and workers’ universe before

---

<sup>2</sup> Pasolini was himself an Italian poet, writer, and filmmaker, whose work was enormously influential in late twentieth century Italy. In November 1975, he was murdered on a beach near Rome. The killing remains unresolved. Several themes dealt with in this thesis – history, peasantry, development, rural heritage – were central preoccupations for Pasolini also. His text on the fireflies is well-known. Less well-known is the connection here to Dante, whose name Pasolini does not mention at this point. Didi-Huberman (2018), however, argues that the connection must have been clear to Pasolini himself.

Development” (Pasolini 1975, 79; my translation). On the other hand, he conceived himself as a communist, and has been characterised as “the most important and most original inheritor of the Gramscian project” (Casarino 2010, 674). In this latter vein, his invocation of Dante follows Marx’s own characterisation of industrial society, at the point where the latter asserts that the medieval poet “would have found the worst horrors of his *Inferno* surpassed in this manufacture” (Marx 1999[1876]a). This is the image invoked yet again by Pasolini’s fireflies.

By 1975, it was the poet’s hope in revolutions and times past that had dissipated. The “fascist fascism” of his youth had been abominable, Pasolini acknowledged. But it remained a superficial phenomenon in comparison with the deep fascism of the Italian 1970s. The Fascist obedience enforced by sovereign violence, Pasolini believed, had been replaced by the obedience of “conformism, permissivism, and hedonism” (Righi 2011, 87). The former directed its violence towards an outside, taking the form of a repression of the autonomous spaces still found in the lives of workers and peasants. By 1975, such fascism had fallen, but only to be replaced by something more insidious: an open permissivism that tolerated alterity, at the price of integrating it into the structures of capital and power. Sovereign violence was receding – Pasolini believed – but so were the autonomous outsides of power. Deviance would soon no longer be repressed, but precisely this permissiveness would ensure its re-appropriation in the form of harmless fashion. The “fireflies” were no more.

In the spring of 2018, an ethnographer – he hopes to have been still less than halfway through the journey of his mortal life – was walking a small gravel road winding along a hillside. This was in the Marches region of Italy, just east of Dante’s native Tuscany. It was early summer – “the season when he who lights the world / least hides his face

from us” – and the earth shone a verdant green that shot up in grasses and vines and trees dotting the land around. He was walking next to a guide of his own, of a humbler kind: Giuseppe. A grey-haired man in his fifties, his beard cropped short and with small eyes that would dart back and forth. Originally from Calabria, for decades he had made his home in proximity of the agricultural cooperative at which he was a key member.

This road was far from the ethnographer’s primary field site, and the two persons walking it had only run into each other briefly before. So, over dinner, in the home of his host – spaghetti, tomato sauce, a bottle of red wine – he had explained what he was doing in Italy. That he had arrived the antecedent year. Initially he had been interested in the phenomenon of *Vino Naturale* – low-interference “natural wine”, defined by how it is produced with as few interventions and additives as possible. He had hoped to learn more about its production and those who produce it, for there is a lot of work involved in making such wine. And there is a large risk, which conventional wine makers do not share. So, who are the people involved in such manufacture? How do they go about their productive tasks? Above all, why do they go to such lengths to work like this? Especially given the often scant financial rewards for doing so. The ethnographer had based himself in a Piedmontese cooperative in order to conduct research. But, by now, he had begun making field trips to wine-producers as far distant as Calabria and Puglia. And now here to the Marches, as well. While the ethnographer’s original questions remained at the back of his mind, he explained between mouthfuls washed down with the strongly flavoured wine, something else had emerged over the last few months. Something he could not quite put his finger on yet.

The ethnographer, of course, was me. My primary fieldsite was a wine-producing agricultural cooperative on the other side of the peninsula, in rural south-east Piedmont.

This site, as well as subsidiary fieldsites (such as the one where the dinner with Giuseppe took place) is presented in Part II. The still-ongoing study I presented to Giuseppe is the same as I present in finished form here. But one dimension obvious to Giuseppe is perhaps not so to the reader: the fact that, despite the significant geographical distance between these fieldwork locations, there is an immanent connection between them which pre-existed my visits. Giuseppe knew my Piedmontese friends well (“From 1987 we know each other”, I had been told, “from a fair... But then our contact became much more intense with Veronelli and with the Critical Wine events”). And he was likewise familiar with the other sites I had gone to visit. As I was explaining the project, he had been enthusiastically nodding along. “You’ve been very lucky to have been where you have been”, he eventually takes over the line of conversation. “These are very special places. It is not like that everywhere in Italy”. A pause, then with emphasis: “This should be the title of your project! “Where wine is not just a commodity [*Dove il vino non è solo merce*]!”. The “capitalist system”, my interlocutor went on, “it... it makes everything into a commodity. Where you don’t give a damn who does the work, how they work, why they work... These five or so places where you have been... there they work for something else. A social value. Where they make organic wine, natural wine... but more. More, with natural meant as also [something] social [*naturale inteso come anche sociale*]!”

Our dinner was finished now, and my host could go on uninterrupted. “In normal places it is all about producing. Here... OK. I also sell [wine] in places where I would rather not sell. But you need to in order to survive. But these places where you have been... they are places where the people have made a choice. To produce organic and so. But also to stay together [*stare insieme*]. Also, the smaller [family farm] realities, they are

part of a certain environment. There is a political dimension to what they do... connected with the Social Centres [*Centri Sociale*] and all that. And there... there is another way than in France. A way which works from below. In France, they sell their wine for 200 Euro a bottle! What happens then? It becomes a wine for the wealthy bourgeois! Here at our place... you can buy a bottle for something like five Euro. Perhaps you can't afford three bottles a day. But if you and your girlfriend share one bottle per day, that's less than three Euro per person. *Everybody* can afford it. This is something very important to us. These are not places where you only produce organic [*bio*] and then don't really care at all, for the soil and for all. We all... for us... it is about taking care of the earth [*curare la terra*]"

I had been happy to let my host talk, gathering the lines of a narrative whose fragments I had already encountered in conversations with wine producers – *vignaioli*, as they call themselves – across the Italian peninsula. These lines have been gathered yet again to form the present thesis. Like Giuseppe, the thesis begins (Part II) by discussing a number of fieldsites that are all *in* Italy, yet not “like” anything typical for Italian agriculture. While dispersed, these sites are sufficiently connected for those found there to themselves speak of each other as belonging to a collective “us”. One aspect of this “us” is defined by adherence to a stance critical of “the capitalist system”, which is articulated in terms of a preference for the “social” (see 4.5.) and “natural” (see 4.3). Those involved in this “us” all produce and sell wine as a commodity and make compromises in this respect (such as that of selling it in places they would prefer not to (see 4.8). Yet somehow the wine is “not just” a commodity, but something more (see 4.4.). Furthermore, Giuseppe himself pinpoints the locations that have brought these producers to know each other, namely the “Social Centers” (see 3.4.). Ultimately, I did

not name the thesis with the name Giuseppe proposed for it. But I adopt the suggestion as the title of this introduction in recognition of how adequately it describes how the central protagonists presented herein would themselves like to be presented.

Then there is something more – that “something” that was still at the back of my mind when my dinner with Giuseppe took place. Something that would turn out to stand as a framing for these fragments, keeping them together. I was still pondering this when (dinner long since concluded) we were walking the gravel road back to where I was lodged during my visit. This was the golden-yellow hour, when Dante held that “the fly gives way to the mosquito”, and just below on our right were the grass and the trees and the rows of a small vineyard running along the road. My guide was laughing, reminiscing: “The old peasants [*contadini*]! They never stop working the earth. Matteo’s father” – referring here to one of the other members of the cooperative – “he had bad knees, so he couldn’t go in the vineyards anymore. Still, he went and he pruned the first three-four vines of each row, as far as he could get! Ha ha!” A pause this time, so I follow up with a question. If that is so, I ask, about the old peasants and their work, then *why* is it so – “Why do they ‘never’ stop working?” A brief hesitation from my guide. “Eh. Well, it’s like you and your reading, no? You don’t stop reading just because you have finished your studies? It is what they have always done, so they keep on. But then it’s a different situation from those who work in the factories, who have been standing and doing the same thing over and over and over again each and every day. When you are a *contadino*... If you plant a seed when you’re still small, you see how the tree grows large together with yourself. That is something completely different”.

“Look here” – my guide pointing to the large stone building approaching, which serves as the main base of the cooperative. “Do you know how many people lived there? Fifty-



three! Always three generations, together. How things are now is very bad... in the capitalist society, when you are not useful anymore, they just put you aside. Together with the other oldies. And because of this there is a loss of knowledge. Me, I believe that we need to take a step back. Not to how things were! These situations were often very authoritarian... where there was a grandfather who decided things because he was the grandfather. Like a uniform with stars on the shoulder. But not everybody grows wise with age! So, I think we need a step back... but not to something authoritarian, but to where the old can teach the way how tasks can be done..." Then suddenly: "Look!" he points, and we slow down. Down below, just where the grass gives way to vines. A flickering of lights below, small and fleeting. We only pause for an instance, before treading onward, "I am happy to see this", my guide smiled. "It means that the soil [*terra*] is good here. Where the fireflies are".

## 1.2. Peasanthood, Critical Nostalgia, and the Dialectical Image

This is a thesis about “fireflies” – about people who decline to accept that Pasolini was right about the irrevocable demise of the Italian peasantry. At this point, I have outlined the themes, people and places that will concern me throughout the remainder of this thesis. While each theme appears in several sections, I have indicated where the reader will find the most focused discussion of each. This overlap, however, is explained by the fact that each theme is connected with every other. And this connection is what we find with the concept introduced last: the peasant, or *contadino*.<sup>3</sup> Giuseppe presents the peasants of the past as a model for the future. Across Italy – in those locations he himself grouped into an “us” – this *contadino* is invoked in order to explain, justify and direct the practice of agriculture as well as the conduct of life.

Like the figure of the peasant is invoked by my interlocutors to frame their productive activities, the figure recurs throughout this thesis as a frame for my discussion. I approach the peasant as a trope (Wagner 1986), functioning along the lines of what Gudeman calls a “primary metaphor” (Gudeman 1986). A primary metaphor is a prominent idiom that a population uses to connect and relate phenomena, and make sense of their own activities. As a basis for a view of the world, such metaphors constitute social practice as much as they reflect it (Gudeman 1986: 40). What the peasant metaphor explains in this thesis is my interlocutors’ manner of producing and making a living from wine. It also helps us understand how those who produce the wine also produce *themselves* as *contadini* while doing so (see Graeber 2001). This will not

---

<sup>3</sup> I use the Italian word *contadino* and English word peasant interchangeably throughout, depending on context.

be an unequivocal explanation. To these wine producers, peasanthood *is* an aspiration.<sup>4</sup> But in many ways, it is an aspiration in relation to which they themselves fall short. To recall the image of the fireflies again, in relation to one interlocutor’s childhood reminiscence of catching such glowing figures: “They are so beautiful, the way they shine. And then you catch one to have a closer look, and – *beh!* Ha ha!” The productive process is shaped by forces that do not operate by means of this metaphor, and my interlocutors often struggle to make sense of what it really *means* to be a peasant. Nonetheless, if we do not consider their ideas about peasanthood, we will fail to grasp the particular quality of the sense of frustration inspired by such forces and equivocations.

As we saw already with Giuseppe, the peasant imaginary explored in this thesis is consistently connected with a valorisation of the past over the present. In this sense, it is a figure of nostalgia. But insofar as “[t]o point out that something is nostalgic draws attention to its deliberate evasion of the present” (Strathern 1995, 110), such a designation invites misunderstanding. For “it is not only strategies for domination which essentialise the past” (Harris 1996, 11). The nostalgia of these winemakers is not one of escapism but *confrontation*. As was the nostalgia, already, of Pasolini, who – when faced with critiques of the aforementioned kind – objected that “No! My nostalgia [is] for those poor and real people who struggled to defeat the landlord without becoming that landlord!” (in Didi-Huberman 2018, 13). “Only revolution can save

---

<sup>4</sup> I employ the analytical term “peasanthood” to refer to the state of being a peasant. In a sense similar to which anthropologists have spoken of “personhood”, the term is used to emphasise the word’s varying range and meaning (see Strathern 2017c).

tradition”, he insisted elsewhere, and “only Marxists love the past” (Pasolini, in Trentin 2013, 1032).

Giuseppe insisted on the need to revive the past, and to “take a step back”. But he added a crucial qualifier: this step would *not* bring us to “how things were”. But in what other sense might one possibly take a step back? This is where we can pick up on Walter Benjamin’s term *redemption*. Redemption, in this sense, is not the restoration of what actually was. It is the kindling of past possibilities – the realisation of what was not, but *could have been*. Writes Benjamin:

The kind of happiness that could arouse envy in us exists only in the air we have breathed, among people we could have talked to [...] our image of happiness is indissolubly bound up with the idea of redemption. The same applies to the idea of the past, which is the concern of history. The past carries with it a secret index by which it is referred to redemption (Benjamin 2007[1968], 254).

The hope of redemption implies a sense of the past as something that is never closed and completed only by virtue of being a past. It perennially contains unrealised potentials by which to be wrought anew. And it is as a method for coming to terms with the past in such terms that the introductory vignette takes the form that it does. The aim is to write in a way that avoids subsuming the past to a “historicist-conceived time sequence”, in a context where – as Taussig puts it – “there is a far more interesting and complicated fit between the rendering of the past in the present than this causally sequential model assumes” (Taussig 1984, 87). Thus, I presented a poetic image – the fireflies – for the reader to hold on to, while making a leap across great spans of chronological time. The methodological reference point here is that of Benjamin’s “dialectical image”. Taussig (1984, 89) calls this an “obscure yet compelling notion

better left to example than to exegesis”. The example is found with the introductory vignette. Nonetheless, a few words of exegesis are warranted.

A primary metaphor can be recognised where apparently disparate entities are brought together. The dialectical image operates in a similar manner for the register of time. It eschews linear narratives that present events as bound by determinate and immovable chains of causality. Instead, the historiographer is to work with fragments. These fragments are removed from any pre-given contextual embeddedness, and are mounted in a new sequence, which gives rise to a novel perception of how they relate to each other (Pensky 2004). In such constellations of materials, conventional conceptions of how the present relates to its past are disrupted, and bonds of linear causality give way to a relation found in the “flash” of a new “constellation” (Benjamin 1999, 462).

There are two ways in which this method serves to advance the inquiry of this thesis. First, note the temporal horizons that frame the peasant in each instance of the introductory montage. With Dante, the peasant is unproblematically a figure of a *present* reality; with Pasolini, the peasant (as firefly) is a figure of a *past* irrecoverably lost; with Giuseppe, the peasant is a figure of a past, which may nonetheless be recovered for the *future*. My primary concern is to come to terms with the sense of peasantry for Giuseppe, and for the other wine producers encountered below. But to grasp this sense involves grasping the specific “historicity” by which the figure of the peasant is used to fold a past into their present lives. The concept of the dialectical image forefronts the difference made by differing modes of historical consciousness. Below, much of the historical context provided takes the form of an exploration of the history of Italian historicities (a commitment I define at length below). Related to this is the second use of the dialectical image. The winemakers’ manner of shouldering the

role of the peasant can be read as a disruption of dominant constructs of the past. Their way of doing so brings disparate elements together in a new “constellation”. This thesis expends significant space tracing out past “fragments”, made newly relevant by the activities and statements found among my wine-making peasants.

The account of my study I gave to Giuseppe still holds for what is presented below. The reader will encounter producers of Italian “natural wine”, and find answers to the questions with which I first arrived in the field: Who *are* these people? What do they actually *do*, in vineyard and in cellar? Above all – *why* do they go about working and living in the way they do to begin with? But these answers have been made into a launching pad for inquiry into something more: their invocation of the peasant – the *contadino*. Taking these producers on their own terms, they *are* peasants – or at least producers who strive to enact peasantry; what they *do* in the course of production makes sense in terms of ideas about what peasants do (or did); finally, they choose to work like they do *because* of a value ascribed to the peasant past. One cannot account for all that goes on in the field by reference to the primary metaphor of the peasant, of course. But without such an account, little of what *does* go on makes sense. And this begs the question: What does peasantry *mean* to these people? And how does their enactment of peasantry relate to the certainty harboured by many others, that the *real* peasantry is really gone? The overarching aim of the thesis is to explore “the peasant” as a core trope, metaphor, or figure, and to examine its role in relation to the actual productive activities of a group of wine producers. I discuss – ethnographically, historically, philosophically – the *sense* in which my interlocutors think themselves as peasants.

While I have found these peasant-interlocutors in villages, the present study does not proceed in line with any established “village studies” tradition. It is true that my interlocutors establish a link with a very local heritage each time they shoulder the role of the peasant; it is also the case that the *way* in which they establish this link is not of local provenance. It is this “way” that is my primary concern. Thus, the multi-sited approach of the study (see 2.3.7). This approach turns around some established ways of studying historicities. I do not ask about the different ways in which the peasantry is invoked by a pre-given (village) community. Instead, I start out from a specific historicity, and attend to how a distributed community (with a past-present-future of its own) has been formed *from* the invocation. This specific historicity, of course, emerged in a specific time and place. But it is an inquiry at the national level – pursued in Part III – that will bring this specificity into view.

The methodological and theoretical reference points found in the preceding paragraph are discussed at length in the next section. First, a brief outline of the structure for the thesis as a whole. The thesis writing is presented in the form of chapters, each composed of several sub-chapters. These chapters are organised into five encompassing sections – “parts” – of the thesis. The first part is the present section, which aims to introduce the inquiry that lies ahead. The second part is dedicated to theory, literature, methods, and fieldsites. The third part comprises a targeted historical genealogy, which analyses and pinpoints the sense of peasantry invoked by my interlocutors. In addition to an introduction (3.1) and conclusion (3.5), this part is composed of three chapters. These chapters aim to trace the genealogy of the peasant-concept throughout Italian history, and each attends to how layers of meaning were added (or peeled away) at discrete

stages of a historical sequence: 19<sup>th</sup> century Liberal Italy (3.3), the post-war decades (3.4), and the present in which we find my wine-producing interlocutors (3.5).

The fourth part of the thesis turns to contemporary ethnographical exposition. It shows – literally—how the peasant-concept (explored in Section Two) is *put to work* at the fieldsites introduced in Section One. In an informal discussion on the research project now presented here in finished form, Tim Ingold once suggested to me that a bottle of wine, as an expression of a way of life in a particular place, could in principle be an equally valid output of an anthropological research project as is a written monograph. While circumstances compel me to provide output in the form of a thesis rather than a bottle, this third part lets the reader follow the steps my interlocutors take in producing the latter. Surrounded by an introduction (4.1) and outro (4.8), the chapters follow the productive process from land and nature (4.2 and 4.3) to human labour (4.4 and 4.5.) and to the commodity form in which the wine is finally sold (4.6 and 4.7.). At each stage, I seek to draw out the “difference” made by my interlocutors’ efforts to organise their production on the basis of a specific peasant logic.

In condensed form, the introductory vignette above already contains a microcosm of the entire thesis that lies ahead. As the scale and complexity of this kernel expands significantly as the thesis itself unfolds, the concluding part (the fifth, without chapters) brings the threads of inquiry together yet again. It sums up, interprets the outcome as a whole, and draws out additional implications for anthropology in general.



## Part II: Turning Ontological Anthropology to Europe

*Part II of the thesis presents the disciplinary and ethnographic context of the study. It is divided into three chapters. The first chapter introduces Part II. The second chapter reviews theory and charts existing literature made relevant for thematic or geographical reasons. The third chapter presents the fieldsites where ethnographic material has been collected and provides a methodological reflection on the ethnographer himself and his mode of inquiry.*

## **2.1. Theory, Methods, Purpose**

“The time has come” – Tsing (2015, vii) writes – “for new ways of telling true stories beyond civilizational first principles”. The statement binds anthropology to a threefold task: identifying first principles, telling stories “new” in relation to these principles, and ensuring that these stories are as true as they are new. In this part of the thesis, I set out what I have done to pursue this task. Each chapter is composed of several sub-sections. The next chapter (2.2) reviews the literature in relation to which my “story” – in Tsing’s somewhat provocative term – is new. I begin with the literature on wine and viticulture, specifically, before moving on to agriculture, generally, and to the theoretical issues that are involved when accounting for differences between agricultural practices. I then home in on two topics related to the anthropological study of peasants: how anthropologists have defined peasants and peasantries, and why especially Europeanist anthropologists were first deeply preoccupied with such peasants, only to later shy away from the topic. I then introduce the concept of “peasant nostalgia” as a node for connecting inquiries oriented to peasantries with matters of historicity and time. Finally, I demonstrate the relevance of existing debates on ethics and “the Good”.

The third chapter (2.3) begins by homing on the geographical location for the primary field site. It then outlines the history of the agricultural cooperative that defines that site, moving on to focus on how its labour is organised and composed today. Then comes the key topic of wine, and its specific role within the operations of the cooperative. The third chapter introduces the anthropologist himself – me – to account for how his encounter with this “specific role” of wine transformed the research questions for the study. The last two sub-chapters discuss the methodological foundations by which these research questions would then be pursued in space and time.

## **2.2. Making Wine Different for Anthropology**

### *2.2.1. Wine and Vine*

The subjects at the centre of this study are approached not on the basis of their various identifiers in terms of ethnicity, geography, religion, or by suffering any specific injustice. They are included in the study on the basis of their identity as agricultural producers, and are defined for this research by the primary commodity they produce: wine. Thus, the ethnography presented below provides a contribution to the literature on wine and viticulture. Beyond the field of anthropology, this is a literature that is extensive. Wine is a topic for historical geographers who trace the distribution of these phenomena (Dickenson and Salt 1982, Unwin 1996, Dougherty 2012). It is also so for historians, who primarily write on specific regions or topics (Guy 2003, Trubek 2008). Food scientists are picking apart the process of vinification so as to facilitate more precise interventions (Pretorius 2000), while some geologists continue to debate the significance of soils for wine (Wilson 1998). In philosophy, the concept of quality is often at the centre of concern, and the tendency is towards a defence of a realist conception of wine quality (Smith 2007, Burnham and Skilleas 2012, Scruton 2013, Todd 2014). Psychologists and market researchers likewise tend to scrutinise perceptions of wine quality (Jover et al. 2004, Sáenz-Navajas 2013). Some sociologists inquire into the institutional grounds for and effects of judgments of such quality (Benjamin and Podolny 1999, Teil and Hennion 2004, Ponte 2009), and others delve directly into the wider political economy of wine production (Overton and Murray 2013, Itçaina et al. 2016, González et al. 2017, Dans et al. 2019).

The above list could be extended. But this is sufficient for demonstrating my key point. Despite the extensive attention accorded to wine elsewhere – and despite those rich

symbolic connotations that would appear to make wine a prime topic for the discipline – anthropologists have written comparatively little that could be added to this list. One reason is that wine long remained a phenomenon primarily of that place about which anthropology was decisively *not* concerned, namely the European world (Unwin 1996, 141). Hence, the emergence of wine as a topic for anthropology is premised on the emergence of the Anthropology of Europe (Black and Ulin 2013), and it took until the 1990s for the discipline to furnish the first significant monographs on dedicated wine producers: Jeff Pratt (1994) provides a study from viticultural districts in southern Tuscany. Based on fieldwork in the late 1980s, Pratt presents a historically oriented account of transforming rural identities and livelihoods within the increasingly tight grip of formal economic rationality on agricultural production. From fieldwork conducted among viticulturists in the Dordogne (south-west France) in 1984 and 1989, in turn, Ulin (1996), analyses relations of power and dependency manifest between a cooperative of wine producers (who make wine considered “inferior”) and their more famous nearby neighbours (the estates of Bordeaux). Winnie Lem (1999), finally, has conducted fieldwork among small-scale viticulturists in Languedoc. Using ethnographic material gathered among the petty-commodity producers in the area and their (sometimes violent) resistance to the advance of capitalist social relations, she seeks to examine “rural resistance, class consciousness, and the politics of culture” (ibid: ix) in ways that would challenge the assumption of the French peasantry’s passive subjection to its imminent departure from history.

By contributing an ethnographic study from another location, the present thesis extends this line of research. But it also seeks to contribute to a shift of focus underway in the anthropological study of wine. For if these earlier monographs brought *producers* of

wine to the front of scholarly inquiry, doing so came at the price of a certain loss of focus on the product (wine). This, however, is not the case for recent publications, which brings wine itself – in the sense of the symbolic character and valence of the liquid – under scrutiny (Demossier 1997, Demossier 2011, Monterescu 2017, Demossier 2018, Monterescu and Handel 2019). *Terroir* is one such symbolic character, particularly prominent in this literature. Notoriously difficult to pin down, the key difficulty is that the concept of *terroir* straddles the boundary between the natural and the social as well as between the present and the past. James Wilson provides what is probably the best summary:

Terroir has become a buzz word in English language wine literature. This lighthearted use disregards the reverence for the land which is a critical, invisible element of the term. The true concept is not easily grasped but includes physical elements of the vineyard habitat – the vine, subsoil, siting, drainage, and microclimate. Beyond the measurable ecosystem, there is an additional dimension – the spiritual aspect that recognizes the joys, the heartbreaks, the pride, the sweat, and the frustrations of its history (Wilson 1998, 55)

I attend to producers of “natural wine”, which is a category that picks up on and modifies the idea of *terroir*. Below, I discuss how the idea of *terroir* has been made present on my field sites (see 2.3.5). In this preliminary theoretical discussion, however, the way in which *terroir* is discussed in the recent anthropological literature can serve to illustrate the different analytical strategy I pursue.

Take again Wilson’s definition. Sentiments of that kind make a prime target for sociological deconstruction. Such deconstruction will proceed along the following lines: where there is a popular perception that *terroir* names a “real” property, the

critical scholar starts from the assumption of its purely constructed nature (Nowak 2012, cf. Teil 1997). This makes the property available to an account of its construction, which in turn easily hands it over to a description furnished in the received vocabulary of political economy – of class, profit, interest. Ulin (2007) takes this approach, for example, when presenting the concept of *terroir* (and the “nature” associated with it) as a fetish that obscures the actual social relations surrounding the production of wine. Now, it is certainly true that *terroir* forms a part of economic strategies of a kind that can be analysed by this vocabulary (Sternsdorff-Cisterna 2013). But, as some interventions have already objected, “[a]ccounts that point only to the politics of *terroir* [...] fail to explain why people who already have abundant cultural and economic capital feel moved to undertake long hours of seemingly monotonous work, often in extreme environmental conditions, to produce wine” (Swinburn 2013, 47; see also Daynes 2013). Ulin himself has later softened his original verdict on *terroir* (Ulin 2013).

Insofar as a view to “politics” would have us treat indigenous concepts in bad faith, the starting proposal of this thesis is that there is indeed more than such “politics of *terroir*” at work around the wine of my interlocutors. This commitment proceeds on the assumption that existing accounts of *terroir* have been shaped not only by the phenomenon itself, but by established kinds of analytical strategies anthropologists have brought to bear on it. As Lambek observes,

Ethnographers commonly find that the people they encounter are trying to do what they consider right or good, are being evaluated according to criteria of what is right and good, or are in some debate about what constitutes the human good. Yet anthropological theory tends to overlook all this in favor of analyses that emphasize

structure, power, and interest (Lambek 2010, 1).

My discussion focuses not so much on *terroir* as on other concepts found among my wine-producing interlocutors, such as peasantry (Part IV), nature (4.2 and 4.3), work (4.4 and 4.5) and commodities (4.6. and 4.7.). Nonetheless, as an example, *terroir* illustrates the established analytical strategy I seek to eschew in each instance. This is not to say that I ignore conflict and struggle. However, I avoid interpreting the aforementioned concepts as if there is nothing more to them aside from their function within struggles for power (serving either to reproduce or to challenge existing power structures) (see also Besky 2013). I treat the winemakers' claims as if they have an intrinsic, integrity, with the power to define both worlds and values.

While accounts that focus on power and interest may provide stories that are “true” in a sense, they are unlikely to tell us anything “new” in relation to “civilizational first principles” (2015, vii. See 2.1). In the final sub-section of this chapter, I return to the theoretical debates that surround Lambek's statement, and in the next sub-section I attend to how anthropologists have pursued “new” stories (which could meet Tsing's request) for other topics and in other locations. At this point, I have shown two respects in which this thesis makes an original contribution to the literature. First, it does so by bringing up topics – wine and viticulture – that were long overlooked by anthropologists. In relation to the scant literature that does exist, the thesis adds a report from a different location. Second, the thesis makes a contribution by adopting a novel analytical strategy in pursuit of aims hitherto absent from research on wine and viticulture. If such aims have been so absent, however, perhaps that has to do with the object of inquiry itself? Is there something about it that does not invite that sort of inquiry? In the next section, I deal with such objections.

### 2.2.2. *Agriculture, Difference, and Different Comparisons*

This thesis is a work about a focal metaphor: the peasant. It is also a thesis about how some Italian farmers invoke this metaphor as a reference point when they model their own agricultural practice in a certain way. It is thus a thesis about agriculture, and about doing agriculture differently. But what does it mean to inquire for such difference? What issues are raised by doing so in a European setting? In this sub-chapter, I account for my own commitments in this respect. I begin by posing the question of what agriculture *is*, in order to show two prominent ways in which anthropologists may answer.

So, what is “agriculture”? The most conventional answer would come in the form of a cross-cultural definition, which tells us that agriculture is the human activity that combines cultivation (a bundle of practices that prepare soil, and then plant, care for, and harvest crops) with domestication (a bundle of genetic and morphological transformations of crops, which make them suitable for cultivation) (Harris and Fuller 2014). “Conventional” answers of this kind, however, are a prime target for anthropological critique. Ingold, for instance, argues that one central term of the aforementioned answer – domestication – is part of a way of construing agriculture as a step on the path towards “the human transcendence of nature” (Ingold 2000, 77). This is an established “Western” trope, which problematically inscribes farming into “a master narrative about how human beings, through their mental and bodily labour, have progressively raised themselves above the purely natural level of existence to which all other animals are confined” (Ingold 2000, 78).

The key element of this “master narrative” is the way in which one element (culture) is assumed to gradually encompass the other (nature) in a relation defined by control. This



is where the work of somebody like Strathern comes in handy. Strathern is most well-known for her work on a location – the highlands of Papua New Guinea – recently identified as one of several independent origins of agriculture (see Strathern 2017a).<sup>5</sup> But this is an “agriculture” that, if understood in terms of those who conduct it, does *not* fit the definition provided in the introductory paragraph of this sub-chapter. The agriculture in question, as Strathern demonstrates, is organised *without* reference to that nature that is so indispensable for the “Western” construct of the practice (Strathern 1980). In particular, the logic of control – whether “control of natural forces, the control of personal nature and control over the human body” (Strathern 1980, 202) – disappears from the ambit in which the cultivation makes sense.

Now, I began above by posing the question of what agriculture really is. The two ensuing paragraphs outlined two kinds of answers, in a way meant to exemplify the difference between what Candea (2018) calls horizontal and frontal comparisons. The “conventional” definition works in the former vein. It provides a fixed definition to which cases can be gathered and laid out next to each other, so that the anthropologist can map out sameness and difference between them. But the definition of “agriculture” remains fixed, in the form of a frame that delimits the range of cases to be compared. This frame is not itself part of the comparison. Not so for frontal comparisons. Frontal comparisons are still concerned with sameness and difference. But the coordinates of comparison are shifted, so are to be looked for not between “them and them” but “*us* and them”. Above, Ingold and Strathern exemplify the process of frontal comparison.

---

<sup>5</sup> Over the last several decades, the idea that one great “agricultural revolution” took place some 10,000–12,000 years ago has been abandoned. Instead, in the 1970s, the literature spoke of three moments and places of origin; in the 1990s, it was up to six; and until recently, the debate has circled around the possibility of 13–24 wholly independent places where agriculture “originated” (see Fuller 2010).

Ingold uses a more historically oriented inquiry than does Strathern in her more ethnographic (and explicitly ahistorical, Strathern 1980, 178) approach. But each works towards the same end: to expose the limitations of “our” concepts in relation to others, and thus force on us the imperative to rethink the definitions we bring to bear on the world.

Candea emphasises that both kinds of comparison are involved in any anthropological analysis. It is the frontal dimension, however, that distinguishes anthropology in relation to other social sciences. Work associated with the so-called “ontological turn” is characterized by taking this approach to its extreme (e.g. Henare, Holbraad and Wastel 2007). It can thus be used to exemplify the analytical strategy in detail. Here, in this context, the practice of ethnography is conceived as a method of “controlled equivocation” (Viveiros de Castro 2004), enacted by turning the anthropological question of “What makes subject A interpret B as C?” into the question of “How can B *be* C?” (e.g., Henare, Holbraad and Wastel 2007, 12). This enacts a shift, where the anthropologists’ concepts no longer operate as encompassing fixed terms, meant to integrate ever more data points into the reach of their scope; instead, concepts are put to work within a recursive process of transformation oriented towards redefining their sense.

The basic ambition of the ontological tradition – to take established concepts (“us”) and bend these out of shape through engagement with ethnographic material (“them”) – has deeper roots in the discipline than the purported “turn” to ontology admits (e.g., Burridge 1975; Scholte 1981). The deployment of frontal comparisons is arguably what it even means to “be doing what has always been called ‘anthropology’, properly speaking, rather than (for example) ‘sociology’ or ‘psychology’” (Viveiros de Castro

2015, 7).<sup>6</sup> At any rate, the utility of such analysis for generating “new” stories “beyond civilizational first principles” should be clear. Thus, in the present thesis, I proceed along the radicalised lines of inquiry associated with the turn to ontology. Take the two central concepts of the thesis: peasants and pastness. How can these concepts be employed so as to generate alterity? The answer is straightforward: instead of asking “what makes the wine producers interpret themselves as peasants [when really they are not]”, I ask in what *sense* it is possible for them *to be* peasants; similarly, for the issue of the past. Recall Giuseppe, and his desire to re-create the past. Instead of trying to demonstrate the discrepancy between his romanticising vision and the real past, my primary aim is to ask what it *would mean* to “take a step back” in a way that does *not* land in things “as they were”. The difference that I aim for is generated from such reconfiguration of sense.

Having now answered what it means to inquire for difference, I come to the second question I pose for this sub-chapter. What issues are raised by doing so in a *European* setting? In principle, there should be none. As two leading proponents of ontological anthropology insist, “the empirical material that occasions such reconceptualizations can be drawn from anywhere, anytime and by anyone” (Holbraad and Pedersen 2017, 7). Such clarifications are only partly reassuring, however. In practice, the ontological approach to anthropology has done little to shift the poles onto which “difference” has been traditionally mapped – a tradition we find, for example, where difference is employed to construct frontal comparisons that summon “indigenous” worldviews to challenge an allegedly “Western” nature-culture dualism (for the established tradition,

---

<sup>6</sup> Take, for instance, the scrutiny one anthropologist, otherwise scarcely appreciative of ontological anthropology, subjects to “our” concept of consumption (Graeber 2011).

see e.g., MacCormack and Strathern 1980; Descola and Pálsson 1996; Dove 2001; Green 2013). And as Ingold puts it in relation to the ontological radicalisation of such difference:

Anthropologists like to impress their friends with stories of their encounter with ‘radical alterity’ [...] This does beg the question, however, of how ‘other’ the people have to be in order that their alterity should count as radical. Simply to ask the question reveals the familiar calculus of sameness and difference that sorts people into cultures and subcultures depending on how little they have primordially in common. Everyone is different but some, it seems, are more different than others, and some are even *radically* different (Ingold 2018, 66).

The concern with radical difference is intimately connected to efforts at constructing frontal comparisons. The latter analytic strategy *necessarily* involves differentiating into poles – an “us”, and a “them”, whom are different from “us”. Now, these poles could be mapped onto the world in any number of ways. Nonetheless, anthropologists have had a tendency to inscribe the poles onto established essentialised ethnic groups. And, even more, they have tended to map the “us” in a very specific manner. Candea writes,

In drawing frontal comparisons, anthropologists may need to focus their audience’s attention on particular aspects of their ‘shared’ hinterland (western attitudes to objective knowledge, individual personhood or common assumptions about animals, say), they might even draw on a few classic references or choice illustrative quotes to underpin these generalizations, but they do not usually need to elaborate on or ground these descriptions very much more than that. It is sufficient for the device to pick out some elements which the readership will feel they recognize as familiar, without further elaboration of precisely how deep this

hinterland is or how internally divided (Candea 2018, 281).

Whether as the “Western” of Ingold or the “Euro-American” of Strathern, the effect is the same. Now, this means that the Anthropology of Europe brings us into the hinterland of frontal comparison – into the field for what Geertz called the discipline’s “negative-space writing” (Geertz 1988, 113). The challenge in this territory is to take the ontologists on their word, and to show that their “reconceptualizations” really can be brought about by empirical material “drawn from anywhere”. Some existing research on Italian agriculture already brings reports of radical alterity even where anthropology has not been wont to look for it (Van Aken 2014, Breda 2016). In this study, I probe further in this direction. I do this in a manner, however, where I also explore the possibility of redescribing such difference in other terms than as a “difference from “the West”. This amounts to a move in the opposite direction from some calls to “de-exoticise” the “Other” of anthropology (e.g., Kapferer and Theodossopoulos 2016). But the effect is similar, in respect to the levelling of an “us-them” binary entrenched by global colonialism. The inspiration for my approach comes from one of the earlier calls for an “anthropology of the West”, which holds that

We need to anthropologize the West: show how exotic its constitution of reality has been; emphasize those domains most taken for granted as universal (this includes epistemology and economics); make them seem as historically peculiar as possible; show how their claims to truth are linked to social practices and have hence become effective forces in the social world (Rabinow 1986, 241)

Instead of de-exoticising the Other, this is a call for *exoticising* the “us”. But this is a task to be pursued with care. The ontological approach is concerned with radical alterity, but it is a misapprehension to believe that such alterity is located on the level

of empirical entities (e.g., peoples) in the world. Alterity is a product of the mode of analysis itself (Candea 2018). Strathern herself acknowledges that the “us” by which she works (“Euro-Americans”, etc.) is an analytical construct (Strathern 1980, 178), and that “[t]o extract certain distinct ideas out of the encounter is not to judge the people as distinct, nor necessarily entail a comparison of whole societies” (Strathern 1988, 349). My own invocation of radical alterity does *not* involve postulating an essentialised group of winemakers who live in a parallel reality. At its simplest, the invocation is intended to showcase situations that invite reconfiguration (rather than simple extension) of an inherited analytical vocabulary.<sup>7</sup>

So much for the obstacles facing an ontological Anthropology of Europe. It is also the case that a Europeanist ontological turn presents distinct opportunities for anthropology. Italy, to paraphrase Herzfeld, writing of its neighbour, Greece, offers the discipline “a productive irritant” (Herzfeld 1987, 2). Like Greece, there is an overlap between the discursive constructs that construe Italian identity and anthropological theory. The country “makes our claim to be studying ‘them’ curiously unconvincing”, for “[w]e, too, are in the picture” (Herzfeld 1987, 12); yet the meeting between anthropologist and field site *does* induce a sense of difference, as of something that “[falls] disconcertingly between the exotic and the familiar” (Herzfeld 1987, 2).<sup>8</sup> There

---

<sup>7</sup> Strathern is open about how she constructs both the “Euro-American” and the “Melanesian” categories for heuristic purposes. Viveiros de Castro equivocates somewhat about his Amazonians. With Descola (2013) – a name to which the word “ontology” is sometimes associated – we have a case where difference is clearly associated with essentialised social groups. This is precisely the use of ontology I seek to avoid. While interesting in its own right, Descola’s work makes no further appearance in this thesis (for critical commentary, see Kapferer and Theodossopoulos (2016) and Ingold (2016).

<sup>8</sup> Strathern makes a similar point as to how the relation of “Balkan people” differs to Euro-Americans in ways different from the manner in which her Hageners do (Strathern 2011). Note that my position here presupposes that the anthropological conceptual repertoire can be situated (at least to a significant extent) within one broad but specific cultural history. Such a position is not without its detractors. Pina-Cabral (1992), in particular, has jettisoned such claims, insisting on situating the conceptual repertoire of the discipline only in the discipline itself. But as Candea notes, solutions

is an indubitable intertwining between the concepts employed in practices of analysis and those concepts (and practices) that are subject to analysis. But it is precisely this that may become a source of specific strengths. As Herzfeld puts it elsewhere, “the one area where the ethnography of Europe holds the greatest promise lies in the critical reconsideration of our theoretical resources” (in Asad et al. 1997, 715). Here, an opening presents itself for deepened scrutiny of Tsing’s “civilizational first principles”. Moving on from the wine and viticulture discussed in the previous sub-chapter, these last paragraphs have described the analytical approach employed throughout the thesis. This is also the theoretical background for the methods discussed in the next chapter. Before arriving at that point, however, the following sub-chapter discusses the concepts at the centre of the thesis: the peasant, on the one hand, and historicity-time, on the other.

### 2.2.3. *Anthropology and the Definition of Peasantries*

This thesis is a study of peasants. It starts out from how the word peasant – *contadino* – is employed by a group of wine producers. But how do anthropologists themselves employ the word peasant? What do *they* invoke when they invoke the concept of peasant? These questions mark the point where existing literature intersects with the present study, and this sub-section provides some answers.

When it comes to defining the peasant in relation to other social categories of their concern, anthropologists have sought to set them off from two other categories of people in particular. First, they have sought to differentiate from the “tribals” or “primitives” who were long the privileged object of anthropological inquiry. Where a

---

such as Pina-Cabral’s lose the “ability to contextualise anthropology’s own conceptual devices” (Candea 2018, 290).

venerable anthropological artifice would treat such social formations as isolates (Wolf 1982), peasants were treated differently already from the outset. Writes Shanin, “any images of peasant household or a peasant community with no ‘external’ ties are conceptual constructs, exceptions, miscomprehensions or caricatures” (Shanin 1987[1971], 8). Anthropologists have made notably fewer efforts to create such caricatures than they have for “natives” or “tribals”. Robert Redfield (who is often attributed the earliest modern ethnographic studies of a peasant community) had already noted that his informants could scarcely be treated as members of a self-sufficient community, and Kroeber argued that, with peasants, anthropologists were dealing with “part-societies with part-cultures” (Kroeber 1948[1923], 284).

The other, second, category of people whom anthropologists have sought to define peasants against is that of (“modern”) farmers. Here, in contrast to the ways in which peasants are separated from “tribals”, a measure of self-sufficient autarky emerges as the defining characteristic. Thus, the first analytic definition of peasants defines them by their belonging to “a system of small-scale producers, with a simple technology and equipment, often relying primarily for their subsistence on what they themselves produce” (Firth 1971[1951], 87).<sup>9</sup> Wolf (1955) would soon provide an influential refinement of such definitions. He added an emphasis that actual involvement in agriculture (rather than, e.g., fishing) ought to be part of what defines the peasant, then stressed a particular line of demarcation:

We may thus draw a line between the peasant and another agricultural type whom we call the ‘farmer’. The farmer views agriculture as a business enterprise. He

---

<sup>9</sup> It is Silverman (1979, 51) who proposes that this may be the first “analytical” use of the concept of peasant.



begins his operations with a sum of money which he invests in a farm. The crops produced are sold not only to provide goods and services for the farm operator but to permit amortization and expansion of his business. The aim of the peasant is subsistence. The aim of the farmer is reinvestment (Wolf 1955, 454).

This particular line of demarcation is by no means confined to scholars working in Marxian vocabularies. Also for Redfield, a peasant is somebody for whom “agriculture is a livelihood and a way of life, not a business for profit” (Redfield 1956, 27). Both statements are also characteristic of how this demarcation has traditionally been approached: by taking the profit-oriented model as a given reference point, and then collapsing all orientations, which are “not” for profit into a category defined primarily by this “not”.

As an object of study almost capable of defining the discipline, such peasants were a key concern especially for Europeanist anthropologists. Ostensibly a discipline for the study of humans, anthropology was long an endeavour concerned with humans to the extent that the humans in question were not European (Goddard et al. 1994). In the 1950s, Anglophone anthropologists made a belated arrival in Europe. And as they arrived, their steps brought them in a definite direction: to those belonging to the category of “peasant”, discussed above, purportedly tucked away in villages as isolated as possible (Minicuci 2003; Giordano 2012; Narotzky 2016). Today, however, such studies are decidedly out of fashion. Amongst recent monographs from Italy alone, we have examples such as Yanagisako’s (2002) study of family firms in the silk industry of Como; Heatherington’s (2011) study of the politics of nature conservation in Sardinia; Black’s (2012) study of the Porta Palazzo marketplace in Turin; Muehlebach’s (2012) study of volunteer activists in Lombardy; as well as Heywood’s

(2018) study of queer activism in Bologna. None of these works involve a sustained discussion of peasants.

Neither does the contemporary anthropological literature on Italian agriculture. The most prominent theme for recent work is cooperative forms of organisation, where workers (in various way) also manage the enterprises for which they work (Vargas-Cetina 2011, Rakopoulos 2014, Rakopoulos 2015, Rakopoulos 2018, Sánchez Hall 2018). A second theme is that of politically radical forms of food activism (Koensler 2016, Koensler 2018, Koensler Mandes and Zappa 2018, Koensler 2020). Perhaps surprisingly, this literature contains little discussion of either “analytical” or “indigenous” conceptions of peasantry. Rakopoulos’s work on mafia and cooperatives in Sicily is illustrative. In this work, Rakopoulos uses the words “peasant” and “*contadino*” with ease, which appears to align his own vocabulary to that of his local interlocutors. While this lets Rakopoulos present an excellent analysis of the cooperatives and their local context, it also puts the focus of inquiry on matters different from those emphasised in the present study. What do the “natives” mean when they speak of *contadini*? How do their claims relate to established academic certainties about peasants? While it may be that such questions are of no major concern to Rakopoulos’ interlocutors on Sicily, for the wine producers to which the present study brings us, they definitely are. Thus, the present study adds a contribution to the aforementioned literature by emphasising a dimension often passed by in studies on very proximate situations.

In many respects, the closest predecessor to the present study remains that of Holmes’s (1989) monograph on “worker peasantries” in northeast Italy. This last work is one “concerned with how the rationalizing imperatives of the modern world [...] recast rural

society and culture”, and whose “fundamental insight is that wage labour can emerge and spread in the countryside without participants cutting ties to agrarian holdings or divorcing themselves from the indigenous culture” (Holmes 1989, 204-205). These insights also underpin the present work. However, apart from my commitment to beginning the analysis from the starting point of an indigenous term (the “worker peasant” of Holmes is explicitly his own invention) the different time and place of my study also makes it attend to a different dynamic than that found in Friuli in the late 1970s. Rather than a study of enduring ties and recasting forces of modernity, my concern is with the active recasting of lives that creates (or recreates) ties to both “holdings” and to “indigenous culture”, to begin with. And they do so by means of a reinvented conception of peasantry. That is the focus of the present study.

If peasants are thus the focus for this study, the best way to situate it in relation to the existing literature is to begin with the above-mentioned *reversal* of anthropology’s original orientation on the peninsula. Why did anthropologists stop studying peasants? Why stop studying farmers *as* peasants? One might perhaps assume that this absence of peasant studies is due to the fact that there are no peasants around to be studied anymore. Maybe Pasolini was right about Italy and the disappearance of its “fireflies”? The answer is not so clear. Precisely as peasants were vanishing as an object for anthropological concern, rural sociologists and others were increasingly challenging the assumption that the European peasantry was “disappearing”. “[B]ehind this manufactured invisibility”, one of the academic protagonists of this turn puts it, about the vanishing peasant, “there is an empirical reality in which there are far more peasants than ever before” (Van der Ploeg 2008, xiv). So, was Pasolini *wrong* about the disappearance of the fireflies? Not unequivocally so either. What these debates show is

that this is not a straightforward empirical question, but a matter of how to define peasantries to begin with.

The debate about such definitions raged strongest in the “peasant studies” tradition: throughout the second half of the twentieth century, the peasant studies debate was defined by the tension between three paradigms: the modernist, Leninist (Marxist) and Chayanovian (populist, neo-Narodnist) paradigms (see van der Ploeg 2018, Bernstein 2009, Bernstein et al. 2018). These three paradigms differ most clearly in how they understand the difference of peasants and farmers. The modernist paradigm understands the difference as a matter of the degree of development, and seeks to ease the peasant along the pre-determined trajectory from peasants to farmers; the Leninist paradigm employs a similar logic of development and a similar ambition to ease it along, only it postulates a further step on the projected future trajectory, which it calls communism; the Chayanovian paradigm – of which the aforementioned van der Ploeg is a leading proponent – has traditionally eschewed the historical trajectory common to its competitors, and worked with “a generic and trans-historical figure of ‘the peasant’” (Bernstein 2009, 65).<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> As Brass (2015) notes, it is Chayanov who has exercised the most decisive influence on anthropologists. This was already so in the 1960s, when his works were first translated into English (Hedican 2009). Wolf picked up on Chayanov in his 1966 work, *Peasants* (Wolf 1966), as did Scott (1977) and Taussig (e.g., Taussig 1978). The hostile reactions from some Marxists towards *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (see Taussig 1987a) are a direct parallel to how Chayanov’s work was treated by the “Leninists” dominant in his native Russian context. Brass (2015) has issued a recent repudiation of the Chayanovian paradigm. It is misleading, however, to simply summarise the paradigm as one holding “that undifferentiated peasant economy was an innate organizational form, and that it would continue to exist despite ‘external’ systemic transformations” (Brass 2015, 188). The feature that has been definite for the adoption of Chayanov by anthropologists has been that it allows the peasant farm to be constructed as *different* from the constellation dominant in the social contexts where it is encountered. Usually, the constellation in question is capitalism. This means not only that the “analytic tools” used to analyse capitalist farming become inappropriate in the peasant context, but also that these tools find a limit of application even *in* capitalist contexts. Edelman has recently asserted Chayanov’s continued relevance in this respect (2005), and in an extended manner Taussig returns to Chayanov in his recent work on “the mastery of non-mastery” (Taussig 2018).

Similar conundrums about definitions are also found in the field of anthropology. From reading any single monograph, one often has the impression that the author is working with “the” definition of a peasant. In fact, however, there is a perennial uncertainty surrounding the term. “[I]t is difficult”, Carl von Dietze writes in his 1937 entry on “peasantry” for the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, “even to define the term, while the construction of a comprehensive theory of peasantry is well nigh impossible” (von Dietze 1937, 52). The same point has been continuously reiterated (e.g. Mintz 1973). Redfield is perhaps still the one who has put the implication with greatest clarity:

I do not think that any one definition of peasant society arises inevitably from the facts [. . .] Many a definition is defensible; each is a fixing of attention on some characteristics chosen by the definer as important; and whatever definition we choose, we shall find other societies similar to, but not quite the same as, those that are brought together by the definition we have chosen [. . .] The reader might choose one cluster of neighboring real societies within the field; I might choose another (Redfield 1956, 25-26).

This means that peasants and peasantries are not predefined objects that an ethnographer may choose to study in one site or another. Instead, the very delineation that defines who is legitimately included in the term is itself an enduring point of contestation by scholars who purport to study what they call (or explicitly *choose* not to call) peasants in one location or another. But even studies underpinned by this insight have seldom been oriented towards the question of what the people in such locations *themselves* “choose” to call peasants, and why they do so. As the debate about the concept of peasant took place among anthropologists and other scholars, the term was treated as extrinsic to the sites and peoples on which it was applied. How the people

designated as peasants would define themselves was treated at best as a supplementary consideration.

As we have already seen in the introduction above, the present research project brings us to people whose (contested) “peasanthood” is a matter of concern *for themselves*. What would happen if – and this is the defining move for ontological anthropology – we were to take their self-definition seriously, and recursively bring it back to challenge familiar definitions? This task is pursued throughout this study, from the introduction of my peasant interlocutors in Part II, to the genealogy of Italian conceptions of peasanthood traced in Part III, to part IV and its inquiry into how ideas and identities are enacted in the course of agricultural production. Doing so among present-day Italian wine producers gives this inquiry a recursive edge hitherto missing from the debate. This focus on conceptions of peasanthood is also where the present study strikes out on a different trajectory than that found in recent Italian work on agriculture.

In this section, I discuss definitions of peasantries, and their (changing) place in the Anthropology of Europe (with a special focus on Italy). While existing research on peasants (and related terms such as agriculture) is extensive, little space has been accorded the study of the *concept* of *peasant* itself. This is a gap amended by the present study, which will proceed constantly with one eye to indigenous terms, and another to inherited anthropological ideas. All this proceeds on the basis of the contingency of the analytical concept of peasant itself, which is an insight that may seem to contradict the self-assured definition of “peasantries” posited by for example Wolf (see above). In the following discussion, I clarify how this discrepancy is due to the way in which such analytic definitions were from the outset already tangled up in a set of associations having to do with time and the direction of history. By putting the contingent

underpinnings for how anthropologists define peasants in relation to how a group of people define *themselves* as peasants, this becomes the dimension that will move to the fore of analysis.

#### *2.2.4 Anthropology turning to (and from) the peasant past*

As a simultaneously central and uncomfortable concern for anthropology, peasants provide something like what Herzfeld calls a “productive irritant” (1987, 2), capable of bringing anthropological assumptions into view. The turn to (and away) from European peasants reflects not only the social structures of Europe, but the intellectual structures of the anthropological discipline.

To see how this is so, we can begin with the scepticism with which Europeanist anthropology was initially received. The discipline has always worked with European materials, and there is a sense in which, as Asad puts it, “no anthropology whatever can do entirely without the idea of Europe” (in Asad et al. 1997, 721). This “idea”, however, is not one that necessarily required fieldwork in the area so designated. Such fieldwork was long regarded as too trivial to serve its function as an anthropological rite of passage (Cole 1977). But as Cole suggests, there was something more at work in this early scepticism: a sense of anxious unease, produced when methods designed for the study of “primitives” were turned towards people as “modern” as the anthropologists themselves. Using a concept popularised later, this anxiety can be described as a matter of the “allochronous” structure of anthropological discourse, wherein a chronologically contemporaneous encounter between fieldworker and informant is articulated in a mode that denies (historical) “coevalness” to the latter (Fabian 1983). Thus, in a period perhaps less self-reflexive in this regard, anthropologists turned to peasants in a context where “[o]nly those peoples who appeared to be most marginal to the main-stream of

European civilization, and thus not fully European at all, were recognized as fit subjects for anthropological comparison” (Cole 1977, 352).

Along these lines, the “idea of Europe” came to intertwine with existing efforts to distinguish “peasants”, “tribals” and “farmers”. As I discuss above, these differences were often overlaid with a projected historical trajectory. Here, “Europe” could function as marking the time of the contemporary, to whose form of life those still in the past were rapidly converging. Take here Dalton, and an article published in *Current Anthropology* as late as 1972. European history, Dalton proposes, can be divided into three periods: before modernisation, early modernisation, and late modernisation. The supposed fact that in a global perspective “modernization has progressed furthest in Europe” (Dalton 1972, 387) also means that Europe is where you will find the most “postpeasants”. Dalton’s proposal, consequently, is that “to understand today’s peasantries in India or Peru it is useful to study European serfs in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and European farmers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century because we must know what Third World peasantries changed from and what they are changing into” (Dalton 1972, 385-386).

Even at the time, such suggestions were already enough to prompt Wolf into challenging the right of Dalton to go on to call himself an anthropologist at all (Wolf, comment in Dalton 1972). And over the following decades, the assumptions not about peasants but historical time were everywhere put to increased scrutiny. However, the consequences for the anthropological study of peasants would be significant. Writing in the 1990s, Olivia Harris noted how it had become “almost easier at present to speak of magic without self-consciousness or embarrassment than to talk of tradition” (Harris 1996, 8), and objections such as Wolf’s would become the common sense also among Europeanists. Herzfeld (1987), for instance, would reflexively show that the sub-field’s



traditional concern with the phenomena of honour and patronage owed its primacy as much to the disciplinary orientation to “backwardness” as to the prominence of the phenomena themselves.

On the matter of European peasants, this is where we have Susan Rogers and Elizabeth Krause’s almost identical experiences in 1980s France and 1990s Italy: both arrived in the field inoculated by the assumption that “[t]he peasant in Europe [is] gone as a figure involved in a viable production mode” (Krause 2005, 599). Yet both found that their native interlocutors would hoist endless talk of contemporary “peasants” upon them. At first, this prompted resistance. Krause confesses that she “tried hard to avoid seeking out peasants” (Krause 2005, 595). “After all”, she reflects, “I was a Europeanist anthropologist in the late 1990s. I was suspicious of themes that I viewed as Othering and dangerous because of their potential to lure me onto a trajectory in which I could find myself searching for some ‘authentic’ folkloric Italian” (Krause 2005, 596). Eventually ceding to the promptings of her interlocutor, Krause takes her solution from Rogers. Where the former resolved to write of peasants as “a potent and highly manipulable [. . .] symbol of French culture” (Rogers 1987, 56), the latter writes of the “social memories in which the social figure of the peasant persists in meaningful ways” (Krause 2005, 594).

The aim of such interventions was to construe “peasants” as legitimate objects for contemporary European anthropology. But this solution hinges on parcelling “symbol” and “figure” from *reality*. Academics define the reality, and the statements of interlocutors become a matter of their “imagination”. Worthwhile as these studies are, note how they work in the opposite direction from the analytic strategy set out in the preceding sub-chapter. Precisely as such, however, they serve to illustrate key

assumptions of the anthropological discipline itself at the time. Krause in particular recounts how her own self-conception as a “modern” anthropologist caused her to resist following up on the indications of her discussants. And she only yielded once she had found a way to revoke the allochronous framing for her discussion about the Italian peasantry.

Revoking one framing, of course, only inserts another. Extending Fabian’s earlier writing on allochronicity, Kevin Birth writes about the *homochronous* modes of representation, by which anthropologists enact “a displacement of those people who are ethnographically represented out of their temporality and their assimilation into academic discourses of history” (Birth 2008, 7). It is largely due to an unreflexive adherence to *this* mode of representation that anthropologists have found it legitimate to insist on a rift with the past “even when the actors themselves proclaim continuity” (Harris 1996, 8. emphasis removed). If Rogers and Krause make space for peasants within “an anthropology of modernity” (Krause 2005, 595), then this modernity remains – just as much as for Dalton – one from which real peasants are excluded. And where encounters with peasants were experienced as problematic, there (as Taussig wrote in relation to some previous efforts at historically conscious anthropology), “modernity is [. . .] deproblematized, the latest slice in the homogeneous flow of time” (Taussig 1987b, 157).

To sum up, with the help of another literary image from the indigeneous context, the 1950s was the decade when Anglophone anthropologists began making their first sojourns into Europe. It was also the decade when an important novel, “The Leopard” – *Il Gattopardo* – was first published. From this work, and from the mouth of a Sicilian aristocrat by the name Tancerdi, Italy takes one of its most famous and reiterated literary

quotations: “If we want everything to remain as it is”, the young prince observes, “everything will have to change” (Di Lampedusa 2017[1957], my translation). In crucial respects, it has played out thus for anthropological discourse on Italy ever since. Peasants and villages were accorded the temporal index of “pastness”, and this is what made them into appropriate subjects for anthropological inquiry. Everything has now changed as to what makes a person or place fit for ethnographic engagement. No longer concerned with remnants of the past in the present (Giordano 2012), presentness itself provides the site for anthropologists to go to work. But if peasants have faded into the background of concerns for *this* reason, and if they are admitted only by disallowing their own claims to being remnants of the past, then this very fact shows the extent to which things “stay as they are” in respect to how both peasants and pastness are framed. In essence, my analysis reverses that of Krause and Rogers – instead of finding a manner of accommodating my encounters to a familiar conception of reality, I let my interlocutors define the reality that anthropological discourse must conform to. Thus, in order to tell “new stories beyond civilizational first principles”, I return to the oldest topic of Europeanist anthropology as a manner of remaining the same in the hope that at least *some* things may change. The first locus for such change, as this discussion has revealed, is the anthropological framing of history and time. In the next sub-chapter, I turn directly to the anthropological debate on time, temporality, history and historicity.

#### *2.2.5. Peasant Nostalgia: History, historicity, time.*

The two preceding subsections – on peasants and on Europe – have pinpointed a specific site where unexamined assumptions structure the literature. In each case, these assumptions have to do with history and time. In the present study, the first appearance of these themes is found with Giuseppe, in the introduction. There, I spoke of nostalgia.

This is a word that anthropologists have an apparent propensity to broach by means of adding a specific predicate – from imperialist nostalgia (Rosaldo 1989) to structural nostalgia (Herzfeld 1990), colonial nostalgia (Bissell 2005), culinary nostalgia (Caldwell 2006), critical nostalgia (Cashman 2006), *ostalgie* (Boyer 2006), ethnographic nostalgia (Theodossopoulos 2016) and ecological nostalgias (Angé and Berliner 2020). In this diversity, it is sometimes hard to discern whether the word nostalgia names one thing or many (see also Angé and Berliner 2014).

In this study, I speak of *peasant nostalgia*. This is a concept by which I seek to broach a specific dynamic, which I do not attend to in a psychological or even sociological register. Instead, my concern is with the *ontological* underpinnings for the move I displayed already in the introduction: In what sense it is possible (as Giuseppe put it) to “take a step back” in a way that does not land in things “as they were”. That is, to bring back forms of life into the present from the past, in a manner that nonetheless remains selective. With peasant nostalgia, I thus inquire into a dynamic similar to that which Viveiros de Castro and Danowski raise in relation to indigenous peoples, where they note the extent to which “it is only deemed possible (and desirable) for an individual or community to *stop being* indigenous, and impossible (and repulsive) to go back to being indigenous”, for “[h]ow can someone desire backwardness as their future?” (Danowski and Viveiros de Castro 2017, 122, emphasis in original). Here, this points to the precise conundrum that also arises around the figure of the peasant. Geertz (1961, 6) may have noted the possibility that a process of *peasantisation* may come to counteract ongoing depeasantisation. Such a process, however, has seldom become the topic of anthropological inquiry – and never so in respect to the politics implied for what (as immanent to the context) becomes a movement against the trajectory of time.

As already seen in the introduction above, this is the fray into which my interlocutors and their wine enter directly.

Much literature has treated the “end of the peasantry” as a matter of history (Mendras 1970; Braudel 1991). In the situation I engage, the immanence of ideas about this end in the field turns it into a matter of *historicity*. The latter term – in a definition that follows a series of similar ones (Hirsch and Stewart 2005, 262-263, Stewart 2016, 80), marks a concern with how people “*in a given present* [. . .] relate to the past as a significant and often affectively charged aspect of their current lives” (Palmié and Stewart 2019, 2, emphasis in original). The ethnographer will encounter such historicities in places not entirely obvious. Where the anthropological discipline itself grew forth in a context where “history” is encountered as a genre of writing (Stewart 2016, 84), increasing attention has been accorded ways in which the past(s) is brought into the present by means of “embodied, nonnarrative, unstructured (that is, achronological), and even ‘unintentional’ and affective forms” (Hodges 2015, 518). It is not just a matter of writing and reading, then. “[A] dream, a song, a dramatic performance, a ritual of spirit possession or the perception of a landscape” can all be treated as matters of historicity, to the extent that they involve “contemplating the past and producing knowledge about it through these idioms” (Hirsch and Stewart 2005, 266). A bottle of wine – in the cultural contexts where its contents are so treated – can be treated in the same way. In the present study, this is one of the things I set out to do.

The literature on historicity has increasingly emphasised the need to eschew treating historicities as unitary phenomena marking cultural wholes (Stewart 2016, 83, cf. Pina-Cabral 1987), moving towards modes of analysis concerned with “the coexistence and hybridization of different historicities” (Hodges 2019, 406). Significantly for a study

set in Italy, research shows how “[t]he distribution of the Western notion of history is actually far from uniform even in the heartland of the West” (Hirsch and Stewart 2005, 266), a point repeatedly demonstrated in a variety of European settings (Hodges 2013, Knight 2015, Stewart 2017).<sup>11</sup> In this sense, it is arguably true that “we have never been modern” (Latour 1993). But then it is also arguably true that on the Italian peninsula, “the frictions of modernity have been played out more visibly and dramatically [. . .] than possible anywhere else in the world” (Forlenza and Thomassen 2016, 5). As one historian dares his readers, to only “try to imagine writing on the history of Italy in the last hundred years without using any of the words modern, backward, modernization!” (Mason 1988, 129). More accurately about both “us” and Italians – including the wine producers encountered in this study – might be the claim that we are *all* modern – but only some of the time. It is when put back in a more complex context of co-existence that it becomes possible to speak of modernity and the politics of time.

It is important to note that while time is an old topic for anthropology also as such – see the parallel synthetic efforts in Munn (1992) and Gell (1992) – it is not quite the same topic as that of historicity. Time in relation to history, instead, can be understood as the “manifold substance of ‘history’ itself” (Hodges 2008, 413), whose “modalities are a determining factor in how historicity is experienced” (Hodges 2015, 519). As proposed by Hodges, “[a]ll that exists of timespace resides and differentiates ‘within’ the living present” (Hodges 2014, 44), and “there is no *direction* in which flux of process is *moving*, and there is no *one* river of time that *flows*” (Hodges 2008, 415, emphasis in original. Cf. Knight 2016; Stewart 2017). To my mind, this provides a way in which a

---

<sup>11</sup> Even professional historians, who we might expect to constitute the paragons of modern historicist consciousness, arguably treat history in a manner more variegated than we assume (Hodges 2015, 524-525).

study can conceive the distance between two (or more) points in time as something as contingent and in need of explanation, as is their proximity. Doing so, in turn, is indispensable for turning *modern* time from a source of anthropological questions into an object for ethnographic inquiry (Bear 2014).

Such significance would follow from an influential characterisation of the manner in which “modernity” functions immanently, as a concept, which produces certain effects when deployed by actors operating in a given context. Philosopher Peter Osborne has dedicated extensive effort to studying modernity in this sense – as a concept that elevates the historical present over the past, opens the moment to a future indeterminate other than in its superseding of any present, and which ultimately conspires to the elimination of the present itself.<sup>12</sup> In this characterisation, modernity is read as real, but produced as real by means of specific operations of “totalisation”. That is to say, of operations that “abstract from the concrete multiplicity of differential times co-existing in the global ‘now’ a single differential (however internally complex) through which to mark the time of the present” (Osborne 2011, 28). To think along these lines is one way of turning time from an ontological given into a mutable phenomenon with political stakes. But doing so becomes possible only after first conceiving the co-existence of “times” in a manner that eschews *a priori* ordering them within a linear datable chronology.

To me, the theoretical positions discussed above amount to showing a manner of practically heeding Strathern’s warning as to how historical contextualisations of

---

<sup>12</sup> The “elimination”, Osborne argues, follows from the fact that the concept of modernity does not just designate a period in a line of such periods, but recursively refers back to the present time in which such periodizations are deployed. Thus, the present is ceaselessly displaced, as the instant when the concept is applied is sundered from itself by virtue of immediately becoming that “past” which modern time is defined against.

ethnographic materials easily “out-contextualise” the contexts opened by the encounter itself (Strathern 1990). Now, in the ethnographic context of this study, you *do* encounter such historicist time sequences at work, and these are part of what produces the peasantry as a past. But, also, other kinds of “fit” between past and present – as Machiavelli wrote, Italy “seems born to bring dead things alive” (Machiavelli, cited in Forlenza and Thomassen 2016, 8). The resources furnished by the debates on history and historicity provide an indispensable resource for attending both to the peasants’ death and nostalgic revival. In return, my study on wine and viticulture provides a further exploration of the dynamics in which some European invocations of “cultural proximity” fold the very texture of time (Knight 2012, Knight 2015).

#### 2.2.6. *Peasant Difference, Good Difference?*

In the first sub-chapter above, I state that this study aims to make a contribution to the literature on wine and viticulture. At this point, we have come a long way from that starting point. I have discussed what it means to inquire for agricultural difference, pointed to unexamined openings in the literature on the peasant, and broached the topics of historicity and temporality. In this final sub-chapter, I want to bring up yet another matter, indispensable if we are to bring the aforementioned threads together in the concrete setting.

Recall how ontological anthropology aims towards “the production of difference, or ‘alterity’, as such.” (Holbraad et al. 2014). But, as theologian David Bentley Hart puts it, whereas a hospice is “as such” *different* from a death camp, the question remains what might make one *better* than the other (Hart 2003, 72). Somewhat more prosaically, David Graeber notes that “when one observes that a loaf of bread costs five francs, and a steak-frites costs twenty, one is not simply observing that the bread and steak-frites



are *different*. One is more likely to be emphasizing the fact that one is worth *more*” (Graeber, 2001, 15, emphasis in original).

It would be one thing for me to look only at *different* constructs of peasantry, and how these constructs gain sense against different horizons of time. If we want to understand how the peasant ideas of the winemakers *make a difference* in the course of their lives and production, we need to attend also to what makes them *want* to enact peasantry. What makes one form of agriculture appear (or “be”) better than another; one wine not just different from another, but better? Peasant agriculture not different from industrial, but better? The past not just different but – at least in some respects – better than the present? Taken together, such questions lead our inquiry towards a debate quite apart from the ontological tradition: the anthropology of “ethics” and “the Good”. Nonetheless, I believe that in respect to the project pursued here, there is a great deal of congruence between the debates.

Before returning to that theoretical congruence in anthropological debates, note first that the focus on wine lets this study exploit a pre-existing congruence between the Good and agricultural products. This is due to a resonance in many European cultures where wine, to a degree almost unique among agricultural products, connects with constructions of “the Good”, and is found aside from any space that can be accounted for in terms of utility and survival alone. From the Italian peninsula itself, we find this in Virgil’s *Georgics* (c. 29 B.C.). The *Georgics* is composed of several books, through which the Roman author presents a number of incommensurable metaphysical views on the practice of agriculture. Ranging from images of farming as a practice of violence and conquest to images of it as a harmonious co-existence with nature, it is where Virgil dedicates his story to Bacchus – the god of wine – that some of the most bucolic

depictions of agriculture appear (see Nelson 1998). Virgil himself explicitly modelled his work on a yet older account of farming, which is surely the oldest ethnographic depiction of a peasant farm: Hesiod's *Work and Days* (c. 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.). In Hesiod's depiction of the farmer's seasons, the trials of the year are crowned at a summer picnic. Here is a peasant no longer depicted as incessantly eking out a living from the land, but found at the time of leisure, and there again it is precisely this time that is marked as "the time to drink bright-coloured wine / sitting in the shade, having one's heart sated with food / turning one's face towards the cooling Zephyr" (Hesiod *Work and Days* 592-594).<sup>13</sup> Even closer to the agricultural origin that can be traced from both Italy and Greece, we find the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Also here, as Gilgamesh himself is in pursuit of survival alone, it is Siduri – the goddess of wine and vine – who seeks to dissuade him. "The life that you seek you never will find", says Siduri, "But you, Gilgamesh, let your belly be full, enjoy yourself always by day and by night! Make merry each day, dance and play day and night! Let your clothes be clean, let your head be washed, may you bathe in water!" (The Epic of Gilgamesh 1999, 124).

In the preceding examples, wine is in each instance connected with moments of joy and pleasure rather than struggle. In the last instance, wine is even connected to an attempt to dissuade Gilgamesh from the perpetual struggle for survival itself. Now, my own interlocutors work among the vines themselves, and may seldom present their labour in the vineyard as an activity quite so pleasurable as drinking the wine. Nonetheless, they ascribe a deep sense of value and meaning to the agricultural production they engage in. Theirs is not the "culture of survival" sometimes ascribed to peasants (e.g.,

---

<sup>13</sup> Hesiod 2019. *Work and Days*. transl. Gregory Nagy. Center for Hellenic Studies, Harvard University. <https://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/5290>. Accessed February 11, 2021.

Berger 1999[1979]). The point of the quotations in the preceding paragraph is to indicate how this may be less a matter of how my interlocutors differ from their forbears, than about the extent to which some commentators have over-emphasised the overbearing role of necessity and survival even in “traditional” peasant contexts. Historical research indicates as much (Rösener 1992), in a way that is also mirrored in the ethnographic literature. Gudeman, for instance, reports on the marked events – baptism, marriages – where cultivators in rural Panama and Colombia engage in “expenditure of strength that brings no material return” (Gudeman 2012, 71). That is, expended in practices which contribute nothing to subsistence, even as they are of key significance for the peasants themselves. Here, the debate on “the Good” points attention to phenomena not encompassed by any crushing imperative of survival presumed to govern their lives. Instead, a field of inquiry opens as to how agriculturists themselves construct their sense of good and bad, and how this sense relates to the older realities the winemakers invoke when they speak of peasants.

This is where (to my reading) there is space for congruence with the otherwise distinct tradition of ontological anthropology. “We demand from explanations that they bring different elements into relationship”, Strathern (1985, 204) observes, “[b]ut such terms are not always reversible”. To speak with Lambek, the “we” of social theory has tended to accept accounts that explain “right and good” by reference to “structure, power, and interest” – but not the reverse. In an effort to do justice to criteria of right and good, Joel Robbins has proposed an outright “anthropology of the Good”, concerned with phenomena such as “value, morality, imagination, well-being, empathy, care, the gift, hope, time and change” (Robbins 2013, 457). According to Robbins, such phenomena, in a period of inquiry focused specifically on lives *robbed* of such good – by what

Ortner calls “dark anthropology” (Ortner 2016) – were long occluded as topics of inquiry. The fundamental reason for this dark turn, Robbins argues, lay in the self-doubt that a reflexive turn introduced as to the discipline’s claims to represent Otherness. As a sort of solution, the period of dark anthropology took for its object a “suffering subject” and proceeded apace on the basis of a sense of “the universality of trauma and the equal right all human beings possess to be free of its effects” (Robbins 2013, 456). Consequently, however, such dark anthropology eschews the traditional anthropological concern with *alterity*. Instead, it proceeds on the basis of being “secure in its knowledge of good and evil and works toward achieving progress in the direction of its already widely accepted models of the good” (Robbins 2013, 456).

This is a verdict that finds apposite support in the observations of some philosophers. As Erin Manning writes, “[n]egative critique’s work is to actively trace what the event cannot do. This is an acting, but one that knows, in advance, what the orientation will be [ . . . ] The stakes are clear” (Manning 2016, 203, see also Rabinow 2008, 20-25). Moving back to literature on wine more broadly, take here Winnie Lem’s monograph. Where she writes about the ways in which her interlocutors “assert their interests and to defend their livelihoods [ . . . ] pursued a diversity of means of struggle” (Lem 1999: 47), this “interest” (and the necessity for it to play out through “struggle”) is presented as a given. Here, the stakes of life are laid down in advance of analysis, and the ethnographer simply needs to map where (in the structures of power) to locate her interlocutors in relation to them. To my mind, it is in relation to analytical strategies such as this that it becomes significant to attend to how the conceptual devices drawn upon by ethnographers can already delineate such stakes ahead of ethnographic

engagement.<sup>14</sup> It is precisely in its efforts to eschew such analysis that the debate on the Good is underpinned by a concern similar to that in the debate on ontology: the inquiry for *difference*, beyond the “civilizational first principles” inherited in the anthropological vocabulary itself.

Just like the debate on ontology, however, the discussion on the Good (or ethics, more broadly) has scarcely dealt with the practice of agriculture (or with “nature”). As I stated in the introduction, I am myself particularly concerned with how this figure is *put to work* in the concrete process of production. This process of work is something the existing anthropological literature on viticulture has paid scant attention to in any case. Ulin’s monograph (1996) contains one chapter on work in the vineyard, but the account remains one of an “average” season, from which we learn little about skills used or the lands and plants encountered during the course of the work. Pratt (1994) provides some description of such matters, but his primary concern lies elsewhere, as does it for Lem (1999). In Demossier (2018), finally, one finds a wealth of information gathered from interviews and archives and historical materials and learns much about how the production of wine in a specific place and time functions both economically and discursively. But there is little to learn here of skill and everyday practice, and of how production is experienced *from the inside* (Ingold 2013). One might still learn some such matters by turning to the work of ethnographically oriented *geographers* who engage wine production (Brice 2014a, Brice 2014b, Krzywoszynska 2016). But the need to turn to geography for such information reveals how, on the topic of wine,

---

<sup>14</sup> This is where the analytic strategy of “etymology” – discussed below – comes in handy. Through etymological analysis, we can situate the analytic strategies within the specific cultural traditions whence they originate. With Lem, for instance, we have a story that draws on Marx – and thus, via Marx, a story that ultimately speaks in a manner concomitant with the self-understanding of the capitalist-industrial society it sets out to critique (Baudrillard 1975).

anthropology has handed over what is one of the key strengths of its discipline to scholars working in another.

I seek to rectify this relative abandonment. By means of data gained through participant observation, I bring to anthropology an account of the details of everyday life in and around the vineyards. “Tinkering towards the good” is an evocative turn of phrase, introduced by Law and Mol (2002, 99), which points to the connection I seek to make here between such concrete practice and the debate on the Good. The latter is a vocabulary that promises to bind several strands of earlier research to it. Adopting it, instead of stories that explicate ethnography by a received notion of structural “interest”, we may, like Krzywoszynska (2016) (working with Italian winemakers), end up speaking in a vocabulary of “care”; like Paxson (working with artisan cheesemakers), end up speaking of people engaged in “vocational project as also a moral project” (Paxson 2013, x); or perhaps, like Pandian (2009) working with the Piramalai Kallar caste of South India), speak about “cultivating virtue”. In my case, I write primarily of “the peasant” as a figure representing a form of virtuous agricultural practice. I say this now only when formulating these words at the end of a long project of inquiry. At this point, it is time to account for how this inquiry was actually conducted.

## 2.3. Sighting and siting the Peasant

### 2.3.1. New Peasants and Old

“So I picked up my phone”, Angelo said, glancing over his shoulder towards me “and I called my mother: *‘It’s the end of the world! It’s the end of the world!’* so I shouted!” Laughing, Angelo turned back to the dishes in the sink in front of him, picking up another suds-covered plate. He had been telling me about the very first time he had visited the village, at whose edge lies the cooperative at which he is now a long-term worker. A strikingly slim person in his thirties, he is a man with a thick black beard and a propensity (sometimes to the extent of bothering his fellow workers) towards laughter and making light of any circumstances. The scene that involved the phone call followed a brief explanation that he had been for a visit to his grandparents’ house, some 10 kilometers down the road. Then, when out for a ride on his bicycle, he chanced upon the village.

Handing me a plate to dry, Angelo continued: “So... that was back then, when I was a child. Then, as I told you, I was working in Milan, in this laboratory. And this was during the financial crisis, mind you, so I was lucky to have a job at all! But it was all... One day, I just couldn’t do it anymore. I went to tell my boss. And he took offence! He told me – ‘If you don’t like it, you can leave’. And so I did! And I went off to stay alone at my granparents’ house. . . One day I was out for a walk, towards the mountains, and passed this village again. And then this path right out there that goes towards the hills. Some time later I went back and asked if there was any work [to be had], but no... But they took my phone number, and then when the [summer] season came about they called me!”

Angelo is a long-term vineyard worker at the agricultural cooperative where this study is anchored. Here, I have shown his own presentation of his first reaction to the location. My intention in doing so was to introduce it to the reader by proxy. This introduction is what the next sub-chapter follows up on. But my designation of Angelo as a “long-term worker” already hints at the matters with which the later sub-chapters are concerned: the vineyards and their wine; the classification of those who work in and around them; the fact that most of these workers (as Angelo is) are outsiders to the village; and the history of the cooperative where these outsiders are gathered. With the primary fieldsite thus described, I show how (and in what sense) the trope of peasanthood emerged as the focus for this study, why it brought me to visit other sites, and by which means I would pursue my inquiries. Taken together, these chapters account for what, where, how and why the present study takes the form that it does.

### *2.3.2. On the road to “la cooperativa”*

“The end of the world”, Angelo had shouted about the place he had found. If this is so, then it is an end not too difficult to reach from the middle. A hypothetical reconstruction of how Angelo might have arrived here by car from his hometown shows as much. We begin in the economic powerhouse of Italy, and the centre of its most populous metropolitan area: Milan. Finding the highway south, we drive quickly in the direction of the Mediterranean Sea. The Po Valley— the original home of Italian large-scale industrial agriculture – extends its flat vastness in all directions, until the Apennines appear far ahead, barring the way to the sea. But keep moving, still, almost straight southwards. As you reach the foothills of the mountains, you find a city. Significantly less rich than Milan, and significantly smaller (with some 30,000 inhabitants, tiny compared to the 4 million of metropolitan Milan alone), this is nonetheless the capital



of the local area. The *Colli Tortonesi* – the “tortonese hills”, in the slightly clumsy English rendition – whose primary connection node with the outside world is indeed Tortona.

As you reach Tortona, turn east. At this point, the highway – which continues straight on, towards Genoa – will already be but a narrow asphalt road. You pass the house of Angelo’s grandparents on the right-hand side of the road. Then you pass a village (660 inhabitants) with the last grocery store and a post office with regular opening hours. At this point, there are several roads to choose from, for heading into the surrounding watersheds. But having chosen the right one, directions are easy: just follow the one road, as it leads in among the surrounding hills. But attention diverted from the matter of finding directions may have to be redirected to the asphalt beneath. “You have to go way south to find roads as bad as these!”, a local would comment when a flood (once again) brought the road back to its more usual state of disrepair. On each side of the road now, you find vineyards, fields of grain, vegetable patches, and the occasional stone house. The fashion and finance of Milan are long gone. Less distant, but still left behind, is the manufacturing region of the Industrial Triangle you have just traversed. Here, you find yourself in the land of farming.

Not *subsistence* farming, by any means. Almost every house will have a small garden, growing vegetables for household consumption. But many of the occupants commute to work in the town, and those who are full-time farmers all cultivate lands that are “an inseparable part of the capitalist system [...] selling and buying at prices laid down by commodity capitalism” (Chayanov 1986[1966], 222). Nor is this the location for producing high-value *specialty* crops, such as the wine from Barolo or the *lardo* of Colonnata: to the satisfaction of many. One neo-rural woman, originally from Milan,

and now living yet further up the hills than this study will take us, told me: “This area, despite being so close... it has been overlooked. Only now is it being discovered. And that really worries me! That soon, it will be impossible for somebody like me [without capital to invest] to manage”. Still at this point, however, it is an area that remains undiscovered. But not so as only to have been turned into yet another nameless site for *industrial* farming. “I like it here”, one local would explain to me, “in the plains below, you have just industrial monocultures. Kilometre after kilometre... Too boring! But then in the mountans, it’s the third world! Here, it’s a bit like a way in-between”.

As we move further up the road, the hills slowly narrow in on both sides. At the penultimate village before the valley comes to a close, and the road ends, you stop: here you find a collection of stone houses, with neither bar, grocery store nor office of any kind in view. While the village itself is mentioned in records dating back to 1187, none of the outer facades present today carry marks of any particular antiquity. Each house has either been constructed or renovated in the post-war era, and each is covered by soft monochrome paint. Many, furthermore, stand unoccupied most of the time, their owners living elsewhere and coming to visit only on occasion. Many of the commune’s 323 registered inhabitants (41 under the age of 18, 130 over 60), furthermore, live further afield in the surrounding countryside. This is the place where Angelo had picked up his phone to call his mother. And one might certainly see how the vista of fields, and the often deafening silence of the village might give the impression of an “end of the world” to a young boy from Milan. But at this point, if we continue our journey slightly forward to where there is a hand-painted wooden sign, we take a sharp right, up a yet narrower road.

This is the point where you will have reached the cooperative. Usually, locals refer to it only as *la cooperativa*. You will first pass the warehouse: a recently constructed wooden building, with space for thousands of boxes of wine. Not 30 metres further on, past a sharp bend, stands the *cantina* – the wine cellar – where the wine in the warehouse was vinified to begin with. Two sharp turns of the road again, ever upwards. Then a conglomerate of houses on top of the hill. The first is large, with space for a small butchery, bakery, storage room, and a large dining hall with an accompanying kitchen. Right across from it stands another large building, which holds an office, a store for direct sale of the cooperative's products, and an adjacent room for the processing of honey. A few metres further on, and there are two stables, right across from each other. On the left for the cattle, on the right for the pigs. You will find no more than two dozen animals of either kind, at any given time. This is also the space for the hens, even if these tend to roam whichever way they please. Just on the far side of the stables is a camping space for both camper vehicles and tents. Then, the last two buildings await: a small bathroom for camping visitors (with sauna attached), and a cottage of straw and clay, where short-term workers are offered a place to stay.

The cooperative is no commune for collective living, and the long-term workers all live in their own homes in the surrounding area. Nonetheless, up on this hill, one rarely has the impression of finding oneself at any end of any world. The number of people you find fluctuates greatly, following the seasons of the agricultural year. But on any given day, even in mid-winter, you are almost certain to find at least *somebody* there. I return to who that might be today in just a moment. First, a brief excursion to the past, and the origins of the enterprise you have found here.

### 2.3.3. *Laying the foundations, opening the door*

In and around the village, no agricultural field is bounded or signposted in any manner. But I cannot recall any occasion when a resident was not able to immediately name the owner of any parcel of land. So it was even where ownership would shift along an invisible line located between one row of vines and the next. A point that speaks to two facts: the first is the extent to which it has long been land that is regarded as the source of wealth. The second is the extent to which this land is privately owned: owned by local persons rather than outside corporations, yet definitely privately owned.

In the 1970s, three young men – Enrico, Cesare, Ottavio – elected to try something different. They were all native to the local farming community, with access to agricultural land and experience by such means. And, in February 1977, they formally put their resources together, and created an association – the original form of what has by now become *la cooperativa*. Wine was not the original focus. Cattle was, and Ottavio would later reminisce how they were so “obsessed” with the cattle that they even put the image of one of them on the label of the first wine they made for sale. But the basic purpose was clear: to find a way to make a living as full-time farmers.

This was a choice made in the middle of a still-ongoing process of Italian de-ruralisation. In this respect, it was clear to the founders that their choice involved moving against the current of time. In an interview with a local historian, Ottavio recalls in particular how “the school environment, not so much the teachers or professors, but the people around you, made you lose the desire to work in the countryside” (in Calegari 2001, 16, my translation). And this current of time was already manifest in their own lives. While Ottavio had never left the life of farming (and still never has), Enrico and Cesare were both making a living as workers in a nearby paper mill. The new

agricultural association, then, was a means of “return” to an ancestral occupation. As it was for the concrete techniques of farming. To this day, the agricultural cooperative is a producer of organic products. While Italy today is world-leading when it comes to the number of organic producers, this cooperative was among the very first. Yet the concept of “organic” [*biologico*] was wholly foreign to the founders’ native environment, and to the pesticide- and chemical-intense agriculture prominent there at the time (see Calegari 2001, 61-63). Thus, their move to organic production was a move onto a new and unprecedented terrain. At the same time, however, this novelty provided a space for reconnecting with the past. Recounts Ottavio: “By then, organic for us simply meant for us going back and doing what our fathers used to do; perhaps with more modern machines. It was the beauty, the pleasure of going back and not using these chemicals that we didn’t trust” (in Calegari 2001, 63).

This “return” to farming and to older farming methods, however, was by no means welcomed with open arms by the local community. The founder’s original hopes – to involve the community in their struggle for cooperative work and egalitarian organisation – were soon foiled. Having decided to work together in an area where modernisation had turned agriculture into a job done in isolation and alone, they themselves ended up isolated. To an extent, this sense of a “world apart” from the surrounding countryside remains. Apart from the immediate families of the founders, no native of the village has become a member or worker of the cooperative. Yet this separation from the local context did not lead to an isolation from the world. Quite the contrary, the need to find connections and build a network *elsewhere* makes the basis for the remarkable diversity that characterises the cooperative. Early on, an enduring motto was adopted: *La porta aperta* – the open door. Different contexts provide the

statement with slightly different meanings. But the basic sense is to assert the imperative of remaining open, and to at least give due consideration to whoever asks to come by for whatever reason. Whether to arrange a festival, to work (as did Angelo) or to conduct an ethnographic research project (as did I).

Thus, beginning in the 1980s, the village has become the home of a remarkable array of people. While Cesare passed away prematurely, Ottavio and Enrico remain actively working members of the cooperative. So are their respective partners (and one sibling). The rest of the 30 long-term workers (a somewhat fluctuating number) hail from elsewhere. Most of them from northwest Italy, but also further afield in the country. And they arrive even from abroad – from France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Romania, the Ukraine. From all these directions, the cooperative has become the place for a particular desired way of farming together, working together, organising their labour together. And a place for a way of life extending beyond the hours of work. Said one of the earliest settlers from abroad, reminiscing to me about time spent at the cooperative in the 1980s: “There was a lot of work, and they never paid me anything for it. For years I worked [part of the year, when present] for free. There was no money around for anybody, to begin with! But we lived together, ate together every day, went for parties... it was beautiful!”

The reader will come to know these persons better in the course of reading this study, and especially Chapter 4.5. discusses the implications of their “choice” to pursue this way of life. This is a preliminary ethnographic introduction. But in the final paragraph, it raises a key issue: How is labour organised at the cooperative? This is the topic I turn to now.

#### 2.3.4. *Managing a cooperative, cooperatively*

A running joke about my research, during the time of my own stay with this cooperative, went as follows: that I was there to figure out how the cooperative actually works, so I could finally explain it to the workers themselves. Often, there is almost a sense of the cooperative as a force moving ahead of its own accord, as if things work, without anybody ever really knowing why things happen, what will happen next, or even who will be around as they do. The typical answer, when I would return from an absence, no matter how short or long, and ask how things had been, would be a shrug, then “The cooperative moves ahead [*la cooperativa va avanti*]”.

A few things are very clear, however. After many years when “everybody did everything, whenever there was a need”, the last few years have seen efforts to create a more clearly delineated structure for the work. In particular, this has taken the form of separate “sectors” responsible for different sides of the cooperative’s activity: the vineyard, the cellar, the stables, the butchery, the office, the shop, the vegetables, the kitchen, hospitality, the campsite and the fields. Each worker belongs primarily to one of these sectors, but will also work in others whenever there is a need. The overall management of the cooperative is taken care of at a fortnightly assembly. This is where all overarching decisions concerning the cooperative are made. Every member is invited for every assembly, and decisions are settled on the basis of consensus (rather than majority votes).

At this point, I have already begun using two distinct terms for roles within the cooperative: workers and members. All members are workers, but not all workers are members. A rough categorisation of roles (outlined by me, not “official” within the cooperative) might separate people along the following lines: first, the *guests*, who may

have come for dinner, for a festival, or to stay at the campsite for a few days. Second, the short-term *unpaid* workers, who may be vocational students undertaking a period of work placement, “woofers”<sup>15</sup>, or similar; these participate in the work, are provided board and lodging, are often invited to social events, but receive no pay. Third, the short-term *paid* workers, who are seasonal workers recruited mostly for helping with the vineyard work in the summer; these receive a salary, and usually stay (together with the unpaid workers) in the straw house by the campsite. Fourth, long-term workers, who are paid, live in their own homes off the premises, but do not participate in the assemblies. Fifth, the members, who are similar in every respect to the long-term workers, aside from taking part in the assemblies.

All paid workers receive the same hourly salary, regardless of experience, sector, or role. The latter two categories – long-term workers and members – are those who (in each other’s eyes) make up the human side of “the cooperative”. Between the groups, there is no boundary of status or social pattern. Nor is the separation tightly guarded. All long-term workers are invited to become members, and only nine (during the time of my study) had elected not to do so. One of these explained her decision by emphasising the way that (at the assemblies) “They argue and argue, the same damn thing over and over again. And then the next time, the same argument again!” Another non-member agreed, adding that he “prefers to keep on my side, minding my own business, to enjoy my own time”. And indeed, the assemblies are both time-consuming and exhausting. I participated in most which of the assemblies that took place during

---

<sup>15</sup> “Wwoof” stands for (alternatively) World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms, or Willing Workers on Organic Farms. This is a scheme wherein persons are put into contact with organic farms, at which they can stay (for a longer or shorter period) and work in exchange for board and lodging, but not money. For many years, the cooperative has been receiving wwoofers, mostly when the extra hands of relatively unskilled workers are sorely needed for the vineyards in summer.



the course of my stay. Most of them happened after dinner, at the home of a member. We would gather, sit in a circle, and the discussion (following a preset agenda) would begin. And then continue on and on, often until midnight, after what for most participants had been a long day of manual work. Often, I observed one person in the circle nodding off into sleep at the very same time as others were loudly gesticulating and shouting at each other over one disagreement or another. Those who participate in the assemblies acknowledge the immense effort that goes into them. But also, for themselves, they emphasise the immense value it has for them to organise themselves, and to work “without a boss”.<sup>16</sup>

The salary the workers are paid for this work, despite being decided on by themselves at the assemblies, is slight. Less than five euros per hour. Nonetheless, in key respects, the quality of life is appreciable by any standard, particularly in respect to food and drink, which is a point often emphasised by the members. While the cooperative is not involved in subsistence farming of any kind, a high degree of *self-provisioning*, in respect to the basic necessities of life, enables a lowering of living costs. This is also a matter I return to below, especially in Section 4.5). But, at this point, we must first attend to the matter of how they are able to pay themselves a salary *at all*. The dynamics of this are not so straightforward that one can simply speak of “selling agricultural

---

<sup>16</sup> The interminable character of such consensus-oriented processes is recorded elsewhere in the literature (Graeber 2009, 287-358). In at least one case, frustration with this process had been a leading reason for a worker to leave the cooperative completely. I was able to meet this person and ask why, receiving an answer alluding to how the “lack of unifying will” is an obstacle in the ongoing “spiritual warfare” against “freemasons, or call them what you will”. I never heard anybody at the cooperative speak of either freemasons or spiritual warfare. The critique of the absent “unifying will”, on the other hand, brings to mind Schmitt’s “decisionist” critique of Bakunin’s alleged “proceduralism” (Schmitt 1985[1922]). This reveals something of the character of the decision-making process, which we can appreciate via Schmitt without subscribing to his critique thereof.

products”. This is what bring us back to the wine and, through wine, to the matters that propel the remainder of this study forward.

### 2.3.5. *Organic agriculture, natural wine, and making a living*

The cooperative is a multifunctional enterprise in the fullest sense: it grows vegetables, cereals, and rears animals; it processes its harvest into food, which are sold both directly at the premises and via a variety of commercial channels; it has a space for visitors to pitch tents, park their camper vans, or rent a room. And, in each case, significant efforts are spent to maintain the productive chain (from pigfeed to pig to *salumi* to point of sale) within its ambit. But there is one product that keeps pride of place: the wine. But, so: What *is* the place of wine within the cooperative?

One event in particular can serve to illustrate this role. This was in the winter, when things move slower at the farm. One day, a group of some twenty guests arrived, carried by a large rented bus from halfway across Italy (the Marches). They were expected. These guests were all members of an organic agricultural cooperative that specialises in the production of cereals (and the making of flour, bread, and pasta). Now, they had come for a meeting. As a member of the Piedmontese cooperative had explained when announcing their imminent arrival: “They have come from a reality which is in many ways similar to our own, to exchange ideas, experiences, and so on”.

The meeting took place in the dining hall – *mensa* – of the cooperative. The dining table was pushed to one side to make space for a large circle of chairs, just like at the assemblies of the cooperative. The Marchese visitors seemed familiar with the arrangement. And even though I had never met them, the visitors seemed familiar to me, after what was already several months spent in Piedmont: they had the same simple practical clothing, the same mix of age and gender, and the same traces on hands and

faces of long hours of work outdoors. One middle-aged man from the Marches, face fringed by gray hair, opened the discussion by explaining what they had come to talk about: “*How does one do it? Even to survive!*”. He went on to clarify what he meant, noting how “thirty, forty years ago”, there was no market for organic products (such as their own) at all. And added that developments in that respect have been enormous, which has also brought problems. Where they had always been trying to make “quality organic”, this has now increasingly been displaced by what can only be called “*quantity organic*”. He went on: “So, here’s the issue. Our organic products cost a bit more. And this has not been a problem. It *becomes* a problem, however, when next year a hundred producers suddenly arrive [offering “organic” products] and undercut your prices!”.

This introduction was met with a murmur of agreement from around the circle. Here, I do not present the debates that followed: debates on the viability of strategies such as direct sale, the just price, reform of the legal category of “organic”, political struggle in the form of protest, and so on. I merely note how Ottavio – the cofounder of the coooperative – explained how it has been possible for *them* to survive, and how this explanation brought no consolation for the cereal-producing guests. Remaining in his chair, Ottavio explained: “It is the territoriality [*territorialità*] that has saved the cooperative. This is something we learned from the French. And it is *wine* that has saved the territoriality! This is probably more difficult with cereals. You can make a lot of effort, making the best grain in the world, and nobody will pay you another cent for it! We sell a lot of wine now... The wine is the sap [*linfa*] of the cooperative! It is the wine that has saved [us]. The only thing that goes plus!” Thus: saved by “territoriality”, as learned from the French. Ottavio had been using an Italian rendering of a word the wine producers themselves otherwise speak almost exclusively of in the original language:

*terroir*. Both cooperatives were “organic” producers, yet only the Piedmontese hosts had access to wine as a privileged tool for conveying *terroir*. Leaving the meeting behind at this point, we need to attend to where this tool gained its powers.

*Terroir* is often glossed as “the taste of place” (Trubek 2008). Conjuring an image of “wine with a taste unchanged since time immemorial” (Demossier 2011, 690), the concept itself traces a decisively modern – and decisively French – trajectory. From the 1855 *crus classés* of Bordeaux, via Champagne *terroir*, it was in interwar Burgundy that *terroir* really crystallised (Guy 2003, Fourcade 2012, Demossier 2018). This is the period that saw the legal institutionalisation of the concept, found in the *appellation d’origine contrôlée* (AOC) system of 1935. In this original form, however, *terroir* did little to help the Piedmontese cooperative survive. Its primary economic function was to let certain well-established wine regions draw monopoly rents in a situation of intensifying global competition (Demossier 2018). Now, the cultivation of grapes for wine is a tradition with deep roots in the *Colli Tortonesi*, and the person undertaking the hypothetical journey from Milan would have had plenty of opportunity to view fields growing the local varietals: *Barbera*, *Croatina*, *Cortese*, *Dolcetto*. But despite some invocations of the antique nobility of the wines from this region (Pilotti 1997), this area has never had a place in the ranks of nearby Barolo, Asti or Gavi – locations that managed to make a name for themselves in the global hierarchy of *terroir*. Quite the contrary: “Some four, five years ago”, Ottavio was reminiscing, “I read in a German magazine... it said: ‘in the *Colli Tortonesi*, they do not make good wine’!”

The capacity for wine to “save” the cooperative stems from specific transformations that the concept of *terroir* has undergone during the last several years. From its original home in French wine, it now articulates not only a number of locations far beyond

France (e.g., Jung 2014). As it does for the *Colli Tortonesi*. Again Ottavio: “With the rediscovery of the *Timorasso*, so many things have changed!”: *Timorasso* is the name of a vine varietal, cultivated in the area since antiquity. Long thought lost, in the early 1980s the wine producer Walther Massa “rediscovered” a number of roots, growing in an old vineyard. Through the pioneering efforts of Massa – a man well-known among the locals for his shrewd sense for marketing opportunities – the *Timorasso* has been made into a marker for autochthonous tradition and local specificity, thus linking up with a segment of global consumers oriented towards authenticity, honesty, transparency and a hyper-particular provenance (Smith Maguire 2018). The cooperative, located 15 km away from Massa’s farm, was one of the first to begin cultivating this rediscovered “local” varietal.

The cooperative was likewise an early adopter of a set of techniques for vinifying its cultivated grapes, which are associated with yet another recent mutation of the *terroir* concept: “natural wine”. Natural wine is a phenomenon that belongs within broader concerns over aesthetic culinary “authenticity” (Black 2013). Like *terroir*, this story also begins in France. More specifically, it originates with Jules Chauvet (1907-1989), a chemist and winemaker from Beaujolais, who developed an imperative of non-intervention, by which to let non-human processes take as much space as possible in the gestation of the wine (Cohen 2013). In the course of his studies, Chauvet became increasingly certain that the local distinctiveness of a wine – its *terroir* – was really a matter of the yeasts unique to any given place. Thus, by means of a link to the already valorised concept of *terroir*, a comportment to Pasteur’s discovery emerged wherein it is “the winemaker’s mission [. . .] to protect wild yeasts” (Cohen 2013, 274). Thus, to make natural wine, you should use organic or biodynamic grapes, and you should not

add anything in the cellar – *especially* not the industrial yeasts commonly employed for making conventional wines. Sulphites can be added, but only in whatever amount is judged to be the absolute minimum necessary to prevent the wine from spoiling – “*SO<sub>2</sub>, it’s a poison!*”, as Chauvet put it (Cited in Cohen 2013, 269).

And thus it went in the vineyards and cellars of the cooperative. In the former, only sulphur and copper (and two annual doses of *piretro*, an organic insecticide) are applied for pesticide management, and in quantities well below the legal maximum for organic production. The cellar, in turn, is presided over by Flavio, who is one of the more diligent adherents of the approach. States the print on the black-and-white T-shirt he often wears for work in the cellar: “*No SO<sub>2</sub>. La Lotta Continua*” [No Sulphur Dioxide, The Struggle Continues].<sup>17</sup> It would not be true to claim that there are “no” sulphites added to the wine in the cellar; nonetheless, there *is* a “continuous struggle” to minimise its use. As for commercial yeasts, none are used. And, again, the result is a wine that links up with the preferences of a class of consumers oriented towards authenticity and hyper-specificity, largely located abroad (Norway and Australia are particularly important destination points for the wine of the cooperative).

To explain the place of wine in the cooperative, Ottavio had invoked a metaphor from the vines themselves. Wine is the *linfa* of the cooperative – the sap that brings it life, as sap does for the vines themselves. That this was the fact, however, would have a number of consequences for how the present study would eventually proceed. I turn to those consequences below.

---

<sup>17</sup> This slogan also involves a reference to an organisation of left-wing militants (*La Lotta Continua*), associated particularly with the period around 1968. I return to the significance of this historical period in the following section.

### 2.3.6. *An anthropologist, encountering peasanthood*

At this point, I have introduced the area, enterprise and people with whom this study began. In the course of doing so, I have touched upon several of the themes discussed in the preceding section, which is about the existing literature. In particular, we find ourselves in *Europe*, among persons involved in *agriculture*, who put a special emphasis on *wine*. These aspects are part of what brought me to this site to begin with. But, to see how the study then developed, we might need a few more details with respect to how and why my presence there came about.

Although I am European (Swedish) I do not come from an agricultural background. My family has been urban for generations, and my own upbringing was no different. Neither did wine have a prominent place in my native environment. By the time this study was initiated, however, both farming and wine had made themselves present in my life to some extent. First came the wine, as an interest developed after I began selling it as a part-time worker for the Swedish alcohol monopoly.<sup>18</sup> Then, during a period in my early twenties, when hitchhiking through France, I found myself participating in the grape harvest of Beaujolais. The experience left an enduring impression.

Years later, still, a number of theoretical interests had begun to preoccupy my thinking. In particular, I was concerned with how the ongoing ecological (and social) crisis is framed within conventional discourse on “sustainability”. Interpreted only as an imperative of human survival in an age of catastrophe, it seemed to me, such discourse lacks the transformative power gained from a vision of what we should want to *survive for* to begin with (see Krüger 2019). In anthropological work on sustainability and

---

<sup>18</sup> In Sweden, all retail of beverages stronger than 3.5% alcohol by volume is restricted to a strictly regulated government-owned chain of stores.

ecological thought, I found much the same thing. Tsing, for instance, seeks to demonstrate the need “to refigure survival as a collaborative project” (Tsing 2015, 280), and Khon concludes a major study with pointing to the need to learn its lessons “if ‘we’ are to survive in the Anthropocene” (Kohn 2013, 227). In neither case do we learn any lessons about the sense of surviving to begin with. It was eventually due to the connotations with “the Good”, already carried by wine (see 2.2.6) that the idea finally arose to bring these theoretical preoccupations to work in a manner that would also extend my brief but beguiling encounters with viticulture and farming.

Thus, my initial questions arose, questions about *who* these producers are, *how* they go about their production, and *why* they go about it in the way in which they do (see Part I). I had already come to believe that “acquiring specific skills may serve to access specific worldviews, and to document how ways of knowing are embedded in practice” (Grasseni 2009, 88). Thus, from the outset, I conceived my study as something that ought to be based in a form of apprentice-based research (Woodward 2008, Marchand 2010, Downey et al. 2015). Put simply, I intended to participate in the process of producing wine, from vineyard to cellar and beyond. How I ended up at this *particular* cooperative is a matter accounted for in the course of Part II of the thesis. But at the point where I first heard about it, and decided it would fit my interests perfectly, I had no connection on the inside. In early 2017, I sent an e-mail. No answer; then, a reminder from me. Then, a painfully slow process of correspondence began (“Yes, because we had to discuss your proposal at the assemblies before we could answer!” a member would explain much later). Until, finally, an answer: “Come, and we’ll see how it goes”. So I did, and it went so well that it has remained my primary field site since.



I already mentioned above how I would offer to participate in the production itself. More than the “apprentice”-based purpose for which I had first adopted this strategy, this turned out to provide a means for full-on full-time engagement. My preparatory readings had led me to expect that access to domestic settings would prove a challenge in a “modern” European setting such as Italy (e.g., Hockey and Forsey 2012). Situating myself in the process of work proved a way of circumventing the supposed boundaries of such a sphere. At my primary field site, I was soon invited to live in the spare room of one interlocutor. Whether with him or with others, I would then spend almost every day working with my subjects, almost each meal eating with them, almost every evening drinking with them. This was perhaps particularly significant for making my visits to other farms – and I discuss these below – ethnographic, rather than journalistic. There, where I would stay for only a few weeks, I was from the outset living in guestrooms of the domicile, eating with the families, picking up the children from school, and so on. I always kept pen and paper on my person and would jot down notes throughout the day. While interviews are often a more significant method in practice than is the more celebrated method of participant observation (Hockey and Forsey 2012), I conducted relatively few of these. For the most part, I would ask questions throughout the day, or as part of conversations over drink and dinner.

But what about these additional farms, or “subsidiary field sites”, as I have called them? How do they fit the scope of the present inquiry? The process here began not long after my arrival in Piedmont. I was already working, living, and eating with my interlocutors. It was not long, however, until I had the sense that these wine producers were less interested in the wine than I was. Admittedly, this feeling of mine was not fair to every worker at every point, as some were definitely passionate about wine. However,

Ottavio's statement to the visitors from the Marches (in the preceding section) is significant. For many persons, wine is not the focal point of their concerns; it is a *means*, which plays a part in enabling something else.

An illustrative example of this "something else" is found on the front side of the heavy old wooden door that leads to the dining hall. This hall is the heart of everyday life at the cooperative. Monday to Saturday, the workers all assemble here for their midday meal; to eat their own vegetables, their own meat, their own pasta, to drink their own wine, and to talk endlessly. And on the door, one of the members – a keen painter – has reproduced an image: a small fragment from a painting by the 16<sup>th</sup> century painter Pieter Bruegel. The fragment depicts a group of merry peasants, sitting at a long table, eating and drinking. The long table is not unlike that found inside the dining hall itself. Likewise, the implication goes, for the likenesses of the people therein and on the depiction.

With this image, the workers depict themselves as themselves by means of somebody else's depiction of others. Wrapped up in the image are the two interrelated themes for the study: first, the peasant trope, as invoked by the object of the depiction. Then the temporal dimensions at play within this trope, invoked not by the object depicted, as much as by the choice of reproducing a recognisably old and pre-modern image for the purpose of self-representation. The word *contadino* is a word in everyday parlance. To themselves, these workers *are* "peasants". Likewise, they *are* fragments of the past, not by birth, nor by being left behind by history in a village "as isolated as possible". They are so by having actively picked up a role that retains this temporal index. And here lies the primary significance of the wine: it is a tool, used to enable the enactment of peasanthood.

It was in this way, and over the immersive experience of ethnographic fieldwork, that peasanthood gradually emerged as the focal point for the present study. And I use “peasanthood” here rather than “peasant”, as from the outset it was clear that it could be problematic to import any pre-existing framing from the peasant-studies tradition. This was not a settled community of obviously recognisable “peasants”, whose lives and aspirations I could study *from* the given fact of their peasant status. I would have to do the reverse: conduct a study with a sociologically ambiguous group of people, whose lives and aspirations are shaped (to a large extent) by a shared concern with peasanthood. Peasanthood, here, is a key trope and a focal metaphor, which may be real *as such*, but not obviously so to an observer steeped in existing academic traditions. Thus, we turn to the second set of questions from above: What does peasanthood *mean* to these people? And how does their enactment of peasanthood relate to the certainty harboured by many others, that the *real* peasantry is really gone?

How to go about answering questions such as these? How to make “peasanthood” and the use of an indigenous term – *contadino* – the object for ethnographic inquiry? On the one hand, there are the people with whom research begins. With concepts, “it is what we make of it that counts” (Wagner 1986, 5), and that use ought to stand at the centre of inquiry. However, while that may be true, it is also a precocious sentiment to adopt for analysis. It risks ushering in a narrative that subsumes the indigenous use of a concept to an instrumental function identified by the analyst himself. So, the point is perhaps better put in reverse. As Gadamer puts it, “When you take a word in your mouth, you have not taken up some arbitrary tool which can be thrown in a corner if it doesn’t do the job, but you are committed to a line of thought that comes from afar and reaches on beyond you” (Gadamer 2004 [1975], 552). Both quotes hold true for the

workers of the cooperative. On the one hand, the workers themselves grab hold of the word *contadino*, and make it count in a certain way. On the other hand, they do not invent it out of thin air. It “comes from afar”, and grabs hold of *them* at the point of its deployment. Answers about my questions about the peasant trope, it was clear to me, would require following these threads from afar. In the following two sub-chapters of this part of the thesis, I attend to these respective dimensions of the present study.

### 2.3.7. *Beyond in space: the spatial connections of fieldwork*

Where to turn in order to understand the peasant trope that moved into the focus of my inquiries? To me, this question was brought to a decisive point after I had already been staying at the cooperative for some time. Recounting the occasion helps to illustrate the context for making it.

This is in the fall, around midday. Harvest is long since finished, but on the farm there are still plenty of things to do: repairs, preparing firewood for the winter, feeding the animals, anticipating the vineyard winter pruning, and so on. Thus, my jeans are as dirty as they ever were. I slip out of my muddy boots, and for what is probably the hundredth time slide one hand over my pocket to check that the notebook is where it should be. Yes, it’s there! I go to find a place to sit in the dining hall of the cooperative at which I live and work. Not a difficult task this time of year. Less than a dozen of us are expected to come for the midday meal, and most of those have yet to arrive. Waiting for Andrea, the chef, to bring food and wine, I pass the time flipping the pages of one of the wine guides that feature the cooperative and its wines. Then, *finally*, lunch.

Food, wine and conversation all flow freely. Notebook left in my pocket for the course of this meal, I do not recall the contents of the latter. But I do recall what followed. As people were getting up to leave, I approached Flavio (from the *cantina*). Somewhat

apprehensive, the approach; the joking, rapid talking and slang by which Flavio communicates are still hard for me to follow in Italian. But I do manage to convey my request: some weeks earlier, an outside guest had been present in this dining hall, a winemaker from all the way down in Calabria. I had been considering going there for a visit. Did Flavio have the phone number of the guest? I have hardly finished formulating my request before Flavio has initiated the call himself. Some chatter, some laughing. Then: “Of course you can come!”

At this point, I faced a choice. With which of the present-day paradigms for “spatialising” fieldwork would I align my study? I did not consider the village studies tradition with which Europeanist anthropology was inaugurated to be an option. Since the emergence of the multi-sited paradigm for fieldwork, such a paradigm has been thoroughly exhausted (Marcus 1995, Candea 2007). At least, this is so with respect to the analytic artifice with which it is associated, which would treat a locality (village, town) as an integral “whole”, in relation to which partial encounters with locals are interpreted. The two winemakers in the vignette above had a mutual connection that, reaching from one end of Italy to the other, pre-existed my own presence in the field. I sincerely doubt that either person had the numbers of all their fellow villagers saved on their respective phones, and there is no legitimate way of treating the local context as if it were the more relevant one by nature.

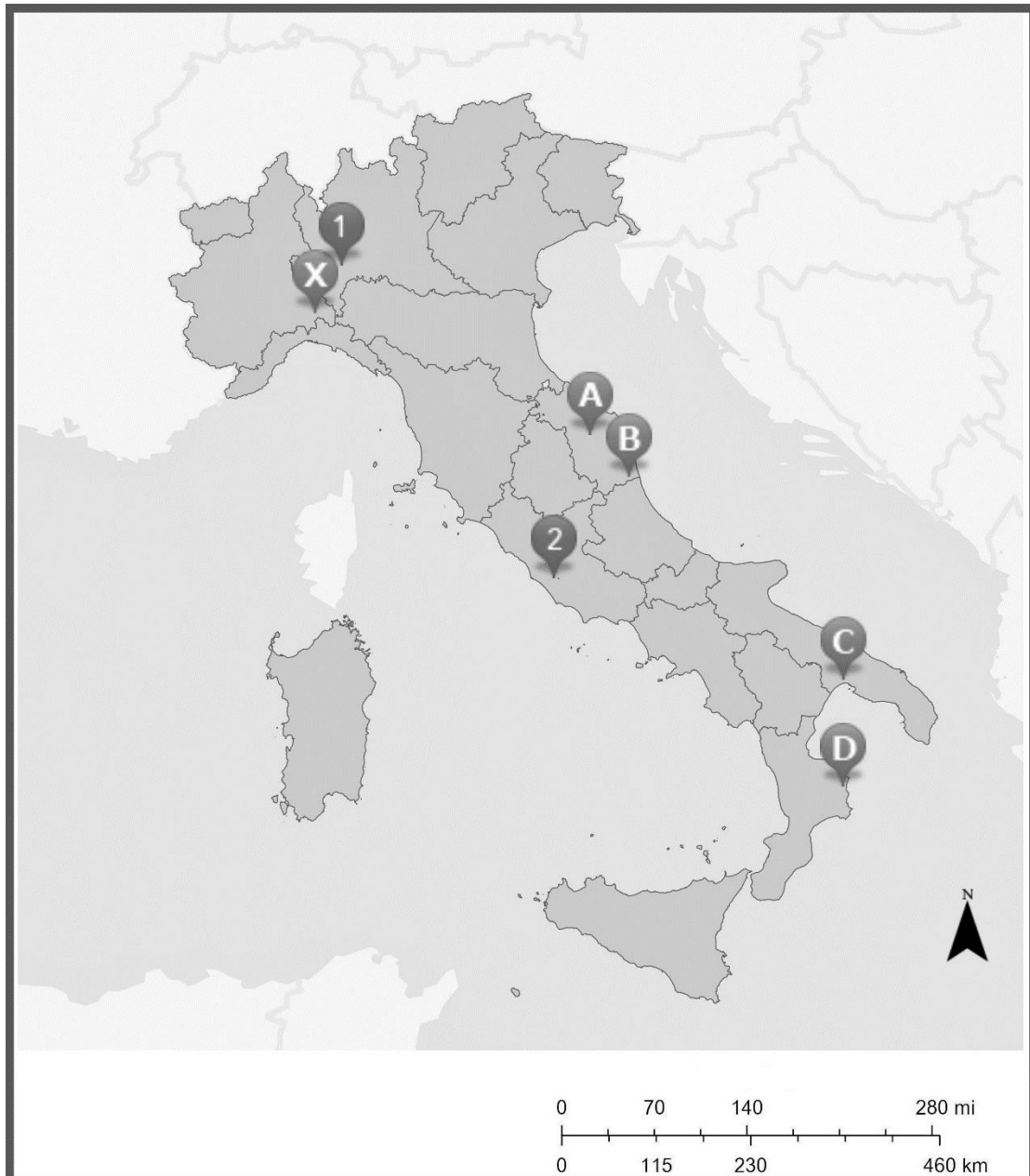
But things are perhaps not so simple anymore, and the orthodoxy of multi-sitedness has itself suffered pushback recently. The possibility of staying put has been reinvigorated in the form of a deliberate decision to confine fieldwork to an “arbitrary location” (Candea 2007, cf. Henig 2016). Candea, in particular, points out that just as it was the case in the “village studies” tradition, proponents of the multi-sited approach remain

beguiled by “wholes” that lure practitioners onwards in chase of one coherent encompassing account of a (delocalised) process of phenomenon. In the “arbitrary location” approach, instead, the very aim of giving a complete account of a total entity is eschewed. Precisely by disconnecting the field from interconnected wholes that reach across somehow bounded locations, the fieldworker can attend to how *incommensurable* structures and fields interlock or grind against each other in a space arbitrarily defined in relation to them. Instead of following a relation, I might have attended to the relations *and* non-relations that Flavio might have to the locals whose numbers are not saved on his phone. Perhaps I might even have learned something about how different ideas about peasantry structure those relations. But this I did not do, and off to Calabria I went. A more settled study would have made for another study, equally valid. Rather than finally holding one approach as superior to another, the point here is to attend to both the possibilities and limitations produced by such decisions.

After an initial visit to Italy in 2016 (recounted in Part III), fieldwork at the Piedmontese cooperative began in summer 2017. I continued to gather ethnographic material on location until December. In January, I left for my first sojourn elsewhere – to the east coast of Calabria, where I stayed at one family farm in Cirò. The town is a known stronghold of the *'ndrangheta*, but also one of the most renowned wine regions of southern Italy. Matteo – a native of the town – is the main force of the farm, which he works together with his wife. I was also able to interview the members of the local network of “natural wine” producers. Then, after two weeks visiting a wine producer further north in Calabria, I returned to Piedmont. In April, I left again to visit three further locations. First, I travelled to a family farm on the outskirts of Mottola, in western Puglia. The farm is operated by the local man Francesco and his German wife

Elizabeth, and I stayed for one month. Then followed another month of fieldwork in central Italy, where I divided my time between two farms in the Marche: first, the cooperative from whence the vignette that introduced this thesis originates. Then, I stayed on the farm that Corrado Dottori and his partner Valeria operate outside Cupramontana. After then spending most of the summer in Piedmont, I returned to Corrado and Valeria for the harvest of 2018. I managed to get back to Piedmont before the harvest had also concluded there, and so, by the end of the Piedmontese harvest of 2018, the main period of fieldwork concluded. This was some 15 months after it began. To date, I have managed one follow-up visit to Piedmont.

The persons in the spotlight of this study are not put there on the basis of their national or cultural origin, their religious belonging, their gender, or any other such trait. As we shall see, they differ widely in all these respects. Their inclusion into the study, however, corresponds with their manner of taking part in a specific world of wine. From this, a series of commonalities follow: they are all producers of wine, who own most of the land they work and who incorporate all stages of production (from vineyard to bottle) into their operations. Whether as cooperative or as family farms, they are self-managed and involve few people defined strictly as ‘employees’. The wine itself, furthermore, is *organic*, *natural*, and above all *critical* – these are all indigenous terms, which will be examined in due course.



*Map 1: Italy, with regional borders and field sites. X: Valli Unite. A – D: additional fieldsites. 1 and 2 indicate the locations of Critical Wine fairs central to the study: 1, La Terra Trema (Milan), and 2, Enotica (Rome).*

There is one condition for this form of analytical comparison, that has been indispensable for this study. We have seen this on display in two situations already. First in Giuseppe’s familiarity with the Piedmontese cooperative (“since 1987...”), and second with the Calabrian visitor in the dining hall. I have not selected or visited any



research site defined on only the basis of my own interests or other extrinsic criteria. The connections between the sites are wholly immanent, pre-existing my arrival. That is to say that, despite the spatial distribution across Italy, these people know each other. They have met, and when they speak of themselves as *contadini*, they also do so in a way that applies the term to the others. This is the sense in which I am dealing with a community.

If my study spans a number of sites, in a manner that eschews the strengths of an “arbitrary location”, it gains the advantage of a more thorough account of one phenomenon that research in the latter vein might now encounter in almost any location on the Italian peninsula. And I have indeed followed a connection that led me round a space defined by the borders of the nation-state of Italy. This, however, is not a matter of “methodological nationalism” (Chernilo 2011) but of co-production (Falzon 2009). “[A] valid ethnographic field need not correspond to a spatial entity of any kind” claim Cook et al., (2009, 68). The same applies to a community. Insofar as my research purports to study a community, however, the spatial distribution of this thing is less irrelevant than it is ethnographically interesting. Why all across Italy, and why not beyond? The answer has already been indicated in Giuseppe’s words from the opening vignette. The connection between the cooperatives became more intense, he said, with “Veronelli and with the Critical Wine events”. As we shall see, these events are what have tied these connections and relations across the nation. And, to a large extent, these events are where these winemakers have learned what it might mean to be a *contadino*. Thus, this is where the thesis begins, in the long section that is Part III. But that part involves some thorough historical inquiry. Thus, before we get there, we need to consider the possible uses of history for anthropology.

### 2.3.8. *Beyond in time: The historical foreground*

The trope of the *contadino* also “comes from afar” in terms of time. Just how far it has come is the concern of Part III. The question here is how to go about doing justice to this historical past in the context of an anthropological study. Along lines sketched in Chapter 2.2.5, above, history has become an increasingly important concern for anthropologists. But, with the move of the discipline’s object of inquiry from its traditional location “out of time”, George Marcus notes, the conundrum arises of how to do so without “[making] what is happening in the time of ethnography all too dependent on a past” (in Rabinow et al. 2008, 55). Or, I would add, to do the reverse and subsume the past within too-facile talk of “invented traditions” (see Sahlins 1999). My own solution comes in the form of adopting a “transversal” approach, in the form of an analysis that integrates “an anthropology of historicity, an ethnography of history, an anthropology of historicism, and historical anthropology as required” (Hodges 2019, 406). To this list, I add a method of anthropological inquiry pioneered by Herzfeld, which he calls “etymology” (1987). Etymology, here, involves tracing out the roots of contemporary phenomena, but not to establish their “real” essential character as much as the opposite – to “[dramatize] the socially and historically contingent character of institutions” (Herzfeld 1987, 22)

Etymology – in this particular sense, which extends to more than linguistic materials – is a method I put to use in almost every chapter of this study. This method intervenes whenever a dominant “Western” concept (land, labour, capital, peasant) is shown to be incapable of reflecting or describing indigenous categories of thought. This is the privileged moment for frontal comparisons – the encounter of “our” theoretical concepts with “their” reality (Candea 2018). But etymology then proceeds, neither by

equivocation (Viveiros de Castro 2004), nor subtraction (Biehl 2013). Instead, it begins to dissect both terms by tracing the roots of both backwards in time, asking where they come from, and what hidden assumptions each enfolds.<sup>19</sup> To my mind, this is where the full potential of an ontological anthropology of Europe comes to the fore. Often, both concepts – “ours” and “theirs” – can be traced to a common history, where each manifests a trajectory once possible for the other. Thus, etymological inquiry helps to explode the anthropological artifice of a singular European (or Western) past into one that reckons with the continent’s “multiple pasts” (Chakrabarty 2009, xiii). From the pasts revealed by the conjunction of ethnography and etymology, anthropological theory may gain new directions for its future.

Concretely, much of this historical anthropology proceeds by assembling work by historians and philosophers. In addition to this, following precedents for both historical (Williams 1973) and anthropological (Poyatos 1988) research, the present study puts a large emphasis on indigenous literature. In this case, indigenous literature is a term that encompasses the wine guides mentioned above. The key reason for this emphasis lies with the role of writing as a medium of historicity. Much of the discourse and practice that binds my sites together take the form of text, originally developed by specific writers in specific venues. Thus, a direct engagement with this literature has been indispensable for coming to grips with the language, which constitutes my interlocutors as part of a community to begin with. Beyond this, I have not conducted any additional archival research. Instead, I piece together disparate strains of contextual literature –

---

<sup>19</sup> The point of such inquiry for roots is not to fix concepts to a terminal definition; quite the contrary, it aims towards “dramatizing the socially and historically contingent character of institutions” (Herzfeld 1987, 22). The kinship to the genealogical method of Foucault is clear in this respect. While strikingly underutilised in anthropology, this method aligns with the aims of anthropology to the extent that “the genealogist’s task [. . .] is also the anthropologist’s” (Laidlaw 2014, 124).

ethnographic, historical, literary – on the basis of newfound connections created by the ethnography.

A remark on presentation. Peasantness is a central concern for all wine producers encountered in this study. But it is not the only thing that goes on in their lives. What to make, for instance, of one interlocutor’s claim that, “The meaning of life is to drink as much *cappuccino* as possible. Each time, *happiness*”? The *cappuccino* in question – its smell, its colour, its very existence – is wholly superfluous to the analysis of peasant imaginaries. Yet it is part of this person’s life, and of whatever makes social life the way it is in this place, my analysis singles out one slice of life for explicit analysis. Ethnographic writing may indeed involve “an effort to create a world parallel to the perceived world in an expressive medium (writing) that sets down its own conditions of intelligibility” (Strathern 1988, 17). Wary of the risk of losing the sense of this larger world of smell and colour rather than abstract concept, my ethnographic sections bring much to the “expressive medium” of writing that is superfluous to analysis proper. This form of writing, furthermore, “necessarily remains a matter of evocation rather than of analysis” (Herzfeld 1997, 23).

A final note on the most ancient of Europeanist topics: Hospitality. Hospitality has been construed as “the *anthropological innate*” and as “the unavoidable condition of possibility of ethnography” (Candea and da Col 2012, 3, emphasis in original; cf. Jackson 1995, 119). And so it has certainly been for my own ethnography. The role of the guest, of course, can be ambiguous. Like ethnographers in the nearby countries of Spain (Pitt-Rivers 2017, 77) and Greece (Herzfeld 1991, 47) I was awarded the occasional designation as “spy”. Unlike the real suspicion faced by these forebears, however, the designation was directed towards me only in open jest, as among friends.

The position from which I have gathered ethnographic data has been the position of the guest, and the relation to many of my hosts has been that of the friend (cf. Tillmann-Healy 2003, Owton and Allen-Collinson 2014). I consistently write of “ethnographic data” and “interlocutors”. But I do this as an artifice of analysis. It should be clear that neither word does justice to the experience and relations so represented. Anthropology may indeed be “philosophy with the people in” (Ingold 2002[1994], xvii). What I have consistently sought to do is to return the practice of philosophy to its native environment, which lies in proximity to the person who is the *philos* – the friend (Agamben 2007).

## Part III: La Terra Trema

*The distributed community of wine producers is connected across space by both personal bonds and shared ideas. This part of the thesis seeks to come to grips with the processes and ideas that have constituted these relations to begin with. As we shall see, both bonds and concepts have been deeply shaped by participation in a series of wine festivals, initiated in the early 2000s under the name of “Critical Wine”. At these events, wine was turned into politics, and politics into wine. The producer of the wine – figured as the contadino – was thus turned into a symbol for revolution. Doing so both invoked and transformed established ideas about peasantries. To come to terms with these transformations, the present part of the study forefronts a method of historical anthropological inquiry, which traces the etymology of the peasant trope throughout modern Italian history.*

### **3.1. First Encounters: Critical Wine and Radical Peasant Nostalgia**

#### *3.1.1. The First Encounter*

Autumn, 2016; an old industrial site in peri-urban Milan; and it is already dark. I file into the long line that winds its way forwards, through a large black gate in a concrete wall. The walls all around, in turn, bear the political graffiti that marks the presence of squatted occupations almost everywhere in the world. Few others in the line have come alone. Already here, outside, the air is a mix of cigarette smoke and chatter from the groups of friends gathered one after the other along the line of the queue, men and women alike. Few children are present, but there are several persons noticeably older than the 20-30 age span that nonetheless stands for the bulk of the people around me.

A long wait, but finally I arrive at the ticket counter. I hand over a crumpled ten-euro bill, and a young woman – tattoos covering most visible skin – passes me a wineglass and programme in return. On it, a black tractor is stamped, flying a pirate flag. So equipped, I make my way into the main hall of the festival. The hall is huge, ample enough to fit hundreds of people. But now it is filling up with an increasingly tightly packed crowd. I pause a moment, noting how foldable tables have been placed throughout the hall. These are arranged in long rows, one next to the other, so as to separate one space for us visitors from another space for those standing to meet us. Again, lines of people, only now equipped with wine glasses (black tractor stamped on each). All are waiting their turn to try the wine dispensed at whichever point they are queuing for.

Somewhat bewildered by the din of the hall, I consult the map in the programme. I then head to a table near the far end of the hall, where the map tells me I will find Barolo.

The name is that of a denomination of wine, possibly the most high-end and prestigious such in all of Italy. Mostly, I head there to drink some wine I normally consider outside my price range. But I already have an inkling that the presence of such producers here might go some way to explaining the very first ethnographic riddle I was trying to come to terms with: What has created this eclectic mix of people – of persons looking like those I would normally expect at a far-left occupation, mixed up with a bewildering array of others, some of whom look more like visitors at a high-end trade fair? A mix to almost make me laugh at times, as *almost* formally dressed men and women with suit jackets rub up tightly with compatriots decorated with piercings and home-made tattoos on their hands, waiting to be served more wine.

The basic set-up at this one table with Barolo is the same as for every other serving point: a decorated sign that carries the name of a wine producer, a varying number of open bottles on a small table, and then the producer of the wines standing there to serve and talk. My arrival at the corner that I was heading towards provides no immediate answer to the aforementioned questions. But I do get the chance to drink some very good wine. Ninety-two producers of wine are present, I count in the programme, as I head back into the din of the crowd around me, from all across Italy. All themselves physically present– no middlemen or hired representatives welcome. I try another wine. A finger-width of liquid in my glass. Then another and another, from one producer after the next. Often served to me after a long wait for the winemaker in question to finish his discussion with whomever has arrived before me. I do not mind the wait, as it lets me listen in on stories of wines and lands and vineyards.

After a few hours of this, the festival is in full swing. Cash and bottles exchange hands, and some visitors are already leaving – no longer always walking in quite straight lines,



and often carrying carton boxes filled with wine bottles on their shoulder. Needing some space to breathe, I find my way into a smaller parallel room. There, on a table much like the ones from which the wines are served, there are different things on offer: a petition where you sign your name to protest ongoing efforts to reform the Italian constitution, pin buttons with political slogans, and some books. I pick up one of the latter. A small softcover printing. A smiling man on the cover, in black and white, looking into the camera while holding a glass of wine in one hand. This is Luigi Veronelli, I understand from the title, as “The necessary subversion: Civil battles and political undertaking in Luigi Veronelli” [*La sovversione necessaria: Battaglie civili e impegno politico in Luigi Veronelli*].

I had commenced on my doctoral research project only weeks earlier, and at this point, I did not yet know the extent to which understanding the biography of the person on the cover would help resolve the riddle behind the eclectic mix of people at the festival. Nor the extent to which this biography provides insights crucial for understanding my future interlocutors. For the latter were, in fact, the primary reason for my presence in Milan that evening. Here, I was hoping that among the ninety-two producers present, I would find some with whom to conduct that ethnographic fieldwork that had yet to begin. At this point, the people around me were all strangers, and the event itself would present little time for establishing any enduring commitments. Nonetheless, it did bring me face to face, for the first time, with many persons I would come to know very well throughout the course of fieldwork. And this included being face to face with Veronelli, even if only as a photograph on the cover of a book. In a sense, Veronelli was the first person I came to know by name, as well as the only person at this event with whom I had a sustained discussion – even if only in the form of reading his words.

This part (Part III) of the present study is a sustained inquiry into some of these “words”. Or, more precisely, into the sense of a particular peasant trope to which Veronelli rendered an indispensable contribution. My primary focus – in line with the research questions declared above – is on the particular frame invoked by my wine-producing interlocutors when claiming that they *are* peasants. I show how the peasanthood by which they identify themselves is the one staged at festivals such as the one in Milan in 2016 (which belongs to a specific series of similar festivals, discussed below), and that this first exploratory visit of mine thus directly confronted me with the dimension of their lives that is the focal point for this entire study. In order to analyse this trope, the following chapters take “meaning as the constitutive and organizing power in cultural life” (Wagner 1986, ix), and assume that “the whole power of a trope of any kind – metaphor, metonym, synecdoche – lies in the identity it states, however it came to be stated” (Wagner 2001, 20). This means that I inquire for the *sense* involved when peasanthood is invoked, at the point where the claim is made that somebody *is* a peasant. It also means that when I do so, I eschew “framing” the sense through comparison with a presumed literal ground (whether in the form of who the peasants really are, or in the form of an inquiry into the real “interests” that underwrite the invocation). Instead, I attend to a process through which “frames are invented out of one another” (Wagner 1986, 9). Veronelli took part in reinventing one frame, which was itself a reinvention of yet other frames. By following this series of transformations, we gain hold of the contemporary sense of peasanthood in its full significance and complexity.

A fortuitous opportunity for pursuing this line of inquiry opens from the name that the organisers of the 2016 festival (which I attended) had themselves chosen for it: *La Terra*

*Trema* – The Earth Trembles. In 2016, this was thus the name for a festival in an anarchist/communist-occupied space that celebrates wine and the peasant world. But this name is also a reference to a major mid-century cultural artefact: Luchino Visconti's 1948 film by the same name. The film is about the oppressed, the re-assertion of enduring forms of oppression, and the need for collective deliberate action to resist the hold of the oppressors. But just as the 2016 festival references a film released some 70 years prior, the 1948 movie involves a reference to a representation furnished some 70 years earlier still. In this case, we arrive at the 1881 novel, "The House by the Medlar Tree" [*I Malavogila*], written by Giovanni Verga. The novel itself is not called *Terra Trema*. Nonetheless, the novel was a major cultural event, which contains the general storyline that Visconti's film would also later follow. The name of the festival frames it within this chain of references.

The anthropological study of history and historicities has come to emphasise the significance of periodisations – the discursive marking of distinct epochs of history – for present accounts of the past (see Hodges 2010). If we let 2016 mark the period that is contemporary to ourselves and the winemakers, then the years 1881 and 1948 correspond to well-established contemporary periodisations of the Italian past: first the period of "Liberal Italy", located in the period between unification in 1861 and the first World War, then the "post-war" years and their rapid rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. In each period, the meaning of peasanthood was reworked, in a way that innovated upon (rather than displaced – "obviated" in Wagner's (1986) terms) received meanings. Part III of this thesis – the present part – is an etymological unpacking of how the trope that defines what it means to be a peasant has been transformed along this chain.

In this exploration in historical anthropology, my focus is not with either the precise years or cultural works mentioned above. While I structure the present part of the thesis based on the years of these events or works – 1881, 1948, 2016 – my concern is with the period of history to which each belongs. I argue below that the transformed sense of the *contadino* in each period can be made intelligible in relation to forms of historical consciousness, each associated with either *progress*, *revolution*, or *crisis*. I begin with Veronelli himself and his contribution to the contemporary. We then jump back to 1881, to begin moving chronologically forwards. When we arrive back at the contemporary once more – in the 2016 chapter – we are equipped with the resources by which to understand the wine festival itself, its significance in the larger Italian context, and what it means for the wine producers present there to present themselves as *contadini*.

## 3.2. Luigi Veronelli: Making wine into art, art into politics

### 3.2.1. Wine as Historicity

Let us begin by moving back to the festival. Or, more precisely, to the book I acquired in the auxiliary room of the main hall. Here we are again at the festival, me with a newly acquired book in my hand. Luigi Veronelli. Who was this person, and what is a book on his political work doing at a festival like this? To gain a grip on both the symbolic potential loaded into contemporary Italian wine, as well as the political connotations for which this potential is sometimes harnessed, we need to examine the contributions made by this key 20<sup>th</sup> century cultural operator.

Born in 1926 in Milan, Veronelli would make a name for himself as a person with a great capacity for lexical invention, which he applied to the world of Italian food and wine. Among his voluminous publications and correspondence, perhaps the twelve volumes of his *La biblioteca del gastronomo*, which began to appear in the 1960s, stand out the most. But Veronelli also co-hosted the very first cooking show broadcasted by Italian national television (*A tavola alle 7*, which ran from 1971-1976) (Pensieri 2015). Through labours such as these, Veronelli was to exercise an influence that is difficult to overestimate. Take here the testimony offered by the mayor of Bergamo, at the opening of an exhibition dedicated to Veronelli's life and work:

The vast collection of wines is not only the heritage of a man that represents a 'part of the history of our country' [...] Veronelli's wine is thinking and philosophy, which becomes a way to describe Italy, the Italians and the concept of Made in Italy [...] He had a special love for wine – 'the song of the earth to the sky' – and he was the first to contribute to its reaching a status of cultural excellence (Gori 2014).

This contribution to bringing Italian wines to the sphere of “cultural excellence” was discursive, first of all, as found in his countless reviews and publications on wine (and food). But his discourse also recursively shaped how Italian wines are produced to begin with. Most clearly, this took place in the region whose representatives I first approached at the Milanese festival: Barolo. Now counted among the areas producing the most high-end ‘fine’ wine found on the peninsula, this was an area where Veronelli had a direct relation to several key producers (Monti and Salvemini 2014, O’Keefe 2014, 57). As early as the 1960s, wine from Barolo was sold under the name of single vineyards (O’Keefe 2014, 56); three decades later, when this was becoming increasingly common across the peninsula, Barolo was already mapped, zoned, and meticulously classified. Such transformations of the productive process are indissolubly tied to the process that transformed wine from an everyday bulk drink into something akin to a work of art, and in this sense into a product of “cultural excellence”.

I use these terms – “everyday” and “art” – not in an analytical sense, but with reference to indigenous categories. Where the anthropology of art has long problematised the assumption that a discrete cultural category of “art” can be expected anywhere (Coote 1992, Gell 1995), such problematisations tended to underplay the dynamics at play in social contexts where the category of “art” does exist (Svasek 2007, 14). Contemporary Western societies are such contexts. In this same context, however, foods and intoxicants were traditionally excluded from the domain of art, and thus from the category of things that require serious aesthetic contemplation. This was also the case for wine, and “[w]hat caught the attention of our ancestors was [. . .] mostly the effects

of the beverage” (Demossier 2018, 88).<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, in much of Europe, the time of such ancestors is long gone. Instead, wine has come to mark a category almost of its own: it is a drink, and its “effects” are that of an intoxicant. But where the majority of intoxicants are ingested in order to transform subjective experience, wine also figures as an object of perception – an intoxicant whose sensory properties themselves stand at the focus of the attention its ingestion transforms (Scruton 2007).

To this culturally specific mode of drinking wine, its consumption is akin to an aesthetic experience – an experience of art, often likened to that of listening to music (Charters and Pettigrew 2005). What this means is that the liquid substance is accorded a signifying power. And while “art” can signify any number of things, the discourse and practice within which wine is constituted as art does so in a specific register. A typical account, taken from the author and filmmaker, Jonathan Nossiter, may look as follows:

I’m convinced that wine is among the most singular repositories of memory known to man [. . .] it is the only animate vessel of both personal memory – that of the drinker (or maker) and the subjectivity of his experience and the memory of that subjectivity – and communal memory. That is, it is communal to the extent that a wine is also a memory of the *terroir*, which the wine expresses as an evolving, active taste. As a communal memory, it is above all an expression of place as a communal identity, the history of the civilization of that place and the history of the relationship to its nature (Nossiter 2010, 13-14, emphasis in original).

---

<sup>20</sup> In respect to pre-modern understandings of wine, this statement needs to be qualified. The “effects” were effects on corporeal health as much as of intoxication. Such effects, in turn, were understood as exercised by the sensory properties of the drink itself, rather than by any compounds working mechanically on the body from beyond the reach of perception. See Grappe 2006.

Here wine is construed as a vessel of memory. It is the repository of a past, in which the drinker participates at the point of ingestion. That is – to recall the discussion on the anthropological literature above – wine as a matter of *historicity*, any bit as much as an account written in text (see 2.2.4). Now, this is seldom the way the wine producers themselves treat wine in their everyday lives. But the wine for such meals also tends to be that that they themselves consider their worst. “No wine producer can afford to drink their own [good] wine!”, one such producer would tell me, laughing. The statement is an exaggeration. But, for the most part, wine for the midday meal is just wine – an enjoyable drink that draws no particular attention beyond just that. At the point where the “good” wine has been selected, bottled, labelled and brought to a festival (or other market), however, it has been “staged” on the sphere of such art (see Svasek 2007).

The distribution of people who concern themselves with wine staged in such a manner is not homogeneously distributed throughout the population (Overton and Murray 2013). This goes some way to explaining the presence of persons carrying the couture of the *bourgeoisie* in the occupied space of the 2016 festival. But if we assume that most come to the Social Centre following the wine (and so their presence was explained to me, much later), we still lack an explanation for what has brought wine there to begin with. Now, the crucial thing to note here is how *wine-as-historicity* differs from text not only as a different way for invoking the same past. Instead, it may work as a vehicle for a different way to relate to dimensions of the past that differ from those related in dominant (written) historiography. Precisely this “difference” may become bound up with projects aimed at establishing a future significantly different from the present.



That this different way of relating to the past “may” become bound up with radical projects, of course, does not mean that it necessarily will. To see how this has actually happened in this concrete case, we come back to Veronelli himself. We gain a concrete clue from a written excerpt, precisely where the topic again becomes that of Barolo. Veronelli writes: “Centuries have passed. My peasants have made billions of gestures on the land of the vineyards and in the care of the vines. For centuries and centuries the earth has made its own the horror of that Milanese event that reveals itself at the tasting of wine” (in Rota 2014, my translation). Here, Veronelli takes *terroir* in a novel direction. Gone is the imagery of green bucolic fields unchanged since time immemorial (see Demossier 2018). Instead, we have a hidden “horror”. This innovation is key for understanding the creation of the link to the politics of the Social Centers. To illustrate, I provide a textual (not liquid) representation of the events in question:<sup>21</sup>

The year is 1028. A spiritual plague has gained hold of Latin Christendom. Heresy. A religious awakening, outside the control of either prelates or kings. Across Orleans, Arras, Champagne, Aquitaine swept the wave, and everywhere the plague is said to have arrived across the Alps, from Italy (Duby 1980, 130). If so, the vector of infection is clear: the routes of trade and pilgrimage that connected the West and East of Latin Christendom. As these well-trodden paths twist their way towards France, they pass the castle of Monforte, perched above the hills that now produce the wine of Barolo.

By the 1020s, the area had become a focal point of infection. Reports of this state of affairs began to spread, some of which have reached the ears of the bishop of

---

<sup>21</sup> The following paragraphs are indented so as to set the scene apart from my overall narrative, and should not be confused as being a long quote

Milan. This bishop – a man by the name of Aribert – is concerned. As one of the faithful of the sect is summoned before him, these fears are anything but abated. The group at Monforte, Aribert learned “did not eat meat, held all their possessions in common” (Moore 1970, 29, emphasis removed). Furthermore, there is no separation of those who work from those who pray and those who fight. Instead, “everyone worked with his hands, no one expected to be fed by others, no one toiled in the service of a master: the line of demarcation between the workers and the others, the lords, judges, protectors and avengers, was eroded” (Duby 1980, 132).

Aribert has heard enough. In 1028, the castle at Monforte is sacked, and the remaining heretics brought to Milan for further interrogation. But, even as captives, they preach their faith loudly to all who would listen. A choice was given to them: repudiate the false beliefs, or be burned alive. Many chose the latter. In the purifying heat of the Milanese fires, the heretical plague at Monforte is wiped out of existence.

Around the turn of the last millennium, a form of life had been created – a collection of people, in the middle of feudal Europe, who enacted a way of life with no lords or judges or even property. In these respects, there is a direct parallel with the way of life enacted in the ambit of the Social Centres. In 1028, this life was wiped out of living existence, and from any further presence in the historical records. But not from the existence of living memory, perhaps. This was what Veronelli insisted: “Those who returned brought with them the horror. From that moment the Barolo of Monforte has an edge in it which is lively, restless, aggressive, which is the witness of Barolo of Monforte d’Alba” (Veronelli, in Rota and Stefi 2012, 47, my translation).

A textually oriented historian – whether in the business of recreating the past “as it was”, or in tracing unfolding causal chains – would be hard pressed to connect the heretics of Monforte with the resolutely secular squat in Milan. But as we already found Taussig observing, there may be “a far more interesting and complicated fit between the rendering of the past in the present than this causally sequential model assumes” (Taussig 1984, 87). To Benjamin’s mode of historiography – with which Taussig himself works – “[t]he present becomes intelligible as it is aligned with a past moment with which it has a secret affinity [...] The Roman Republic and the French Revolution, though nearly two millennia apart, are more closely linked than 1788 and 1789, separated by only a year” (Peters 1999, 3). Similarly, on the level of the communist and anarchist hopes that animate the present-day spaces, there may be a secret affinity to the heretics a millennium apart. In this case – and this makes it the starting point for a historically oriented *anthropology* – this secret affinity with the past was first explored by these present-day actors themselves.

The resonance is not given, of course. This proposal for how wine may become a means for “folding” the texture of time (see Knight 2015) owes its existence in large part to the conceptual labours of Veronelli himself. Furthermore, it is that which is named in the title of the book I acquired at the festival – the *politics* of Veronelli – which explains the actual trajectory along which the resonance was eventually staged. Over many decades of labour, Veronelli had kept his politics and his public work on food separate. It was only in 1999 that he eventually brought these dimensions of his work together in public, as the anarchist magazine, *A: Rivista anarchica*, published an open letter from Veronelli, titled “Letter to extremist [extreme] youth [*Lettera ai giovani estremi*]. “Only today, more than seventy years old”, the letter begins, “I see clearly: power has used –

with a veritable reversal of purpose – what was in our dreams, instead of making man more free with progress, science, machines, culture, etc., made enslavement faster and more certain” (Veronelli 1999, my translation)

It was in this revolutionary spirit that Veronelli turned to associates close to the Italian *centri sociali* – occupied urban spaces, squatted by persons mostly affiliated with anarchist or communist networks (Mudu 2004; see 3.5.). That is to say, to places affiliated with the “extremist youth” to whom Veronelli addressed his letter. His proposal was for them to stage a series of wine festivals, giving this initiative the name Critical Wine.<sup>22</sup> The response was enthusiastic, and the first festivals were organised in 2003. In Verona, in Rome – and in a place in Milan called *Leoncavallo*, where, 13 years later, I would stand at the tenth edition of the festivity, eyeing through a recently purchased book about the political thinking of Luigi Veronelli.

Critical Wine was a great success, Veronelli himself claimed shortly before his death in 2004. The festivals themselves continued and have consistently gathered wine producers from some of the most high-end areas of Italy into some of the most politically radical spaces on the peninsula. Thus, a fusion ensues: festivals not just about wine, or about politics, but about wine as politics, and politics as wine. And this not as a matter of throwing two discrete things together, as much as a matter of transforming the meaning of both.

---

<sup>22</sup> I never found anybody who could account for why the event was given a name in English. Only one (rather cantankerous) man, explained it by insisting that Italians are habituated to being subjugated, and so chose a name in a dominant language as a way of reproducing their own habitual subjugation. This is an explanation perhaps less valuable as an insight into the name itself than as an example of modes of discourse prominent in these circles.

Those Italian winemakers who would eventually become my interlocutors all have a direct connection with these festivals.<sup>23</sup> Months later, when I introduced my project at what would become my primary field site, one of my interlocutors responded with a phrase coined by Veronelli. At another field site, elsewhere in Italy, I was told how it was Veronelli who had provided the “fundamental imaginary” for their winemaking practices. I could go on with such examples, but the fundamental point is: my interlocutors’ understanding of their wine, and of their own role as wine-making peasants, is deeply shaped by these events and the modes of discourse promulgated through them.

Above, I have discussed a key cultural operator – Luigi Veronelli – first with respect to his role in constituting Italian wine as a vehicle for historical consciousness, and then in bringing this history to a politically radical context. This is indispensable for understanding what wine producers such as my primary interlocutors understand themselves to be involved in *doing* in the course of producing and selling. In part IV of this study, I attend to what this looks like in detail. Here, in Part III, however, I remain with this central trope. So far, I have only touched upon the peasant figure itself. But it is absolutely indispensable to this story. It is the peasants – the *contadino* – about whom Veronelli writes that they “may be the first protagonists of the revolution” (Veronelli and Echauren 2008, 12, my translation). Wine was the symbol of this revolution. But the winemaker is part of it not *as* winemaker, but *as* representative of the peasantry. To trace the implications of this notion, we now need to turn to the etymology of the peasant idea throughout the history of modern Italy.

---

<sup>23</sup> Almost all have attended these events themselves, to celebrate and to sell wine. The only exceptions are those members of the cooperatives (in the Marches and Piedmont) who have never gone themselves. In these cases, however, most of their fellow members have.



### 3.3. 1881: The peasant trope in light of Progress

#### 3.3.1. *Peasants before (modern) History*

“Well into the 20th century”, Krause writes in connection with her Tuscan fieldwork in the 1990s, “the peasant continued to stand for the most degraded, backward internal Other within the Italian peninsula” (2005, 597). When the peasant is “stood” (for something) at the 2016 event in Milan, this is certainly no longer the case. But this contemporary significance of peasantry is not an eradication of such earlier connotations, as much as they are transformative obviations thereof. To see how this is so, we need to inquire into how the trope first began to “stand” peasants in such a manner. Where and how did this construct of the “backward” Italian peasantry originate? What are the hidden presuppositions built into such a representation of it? These questions are what bring us to the period of Liberal Italy. But insofar as they ask for what is already a transformation, we must begin by moving further back still, to look at what kinds of notions Liberal Italy innovated upon to begin with.

In Italian, today, the word used that stands for peasant – *contadino* – is of Latin provenance. Meaning “man of the lord”, the word originates in a Roman tradition that construes those so designated as “subordinated, mean, ugly and unable to control their own destiny” (van der Ploeg 2008, xiii). Now, by the time we arrive at the “horror” that Veronelli alleges was laid down in the soil of Monforte, such constructs had become significantly qualified by the hegemony of Christian metaphysics – a metaphysics for which any hierarchy is ultimately contingent rather than natural, and for which also the lowliest of the low are ultimately (in the eyes of an almighty God above) equal even to their kings and lords (Freedman 1999, 28). Thus, the existing orders of the world needed a new ground of legitimacy.

The solution that became hegemonic throughout Latin Christendom was formulated in its north-French cultural heartlands. From the 1020s (precisely when the events at Monforte took place) we have the words of Adalberon, bishop of Laon: “Here below, some pray, others fight, still others work...”; those of Gerard, bishop of Cambrai: “from the beginning, mankind has been divided into three parts, among men of prayer, farmers, and men of war” (cited in Duby 1980, 13). Here, we encounter the construction of society as a reciprocal and mutually beneficial exchange between those who pray (*oratores*), those who fight (*bellatores*) and those who work (*laboratores*, peasants). Making an appearance as early as the ninth century (Le Goff 1980, 53), this tripartite social imagery can be encountered as late as the twentieth (Freedman 1999, 22). The tripartite order is thus an imaginary that construes peasantry in one particular manner, and which despite its elite origins would become prominent among all layers of society (Gurevich 1983, 183-186).

The prominence of this imaginary did not mean that its logic of reciprocal social harmony was unproblematically realised. The trope itself could be seized upon by the subordinated to challenge their subjugation – Adam himself was often depicted as a labouring peasant (Freedman 1999, 28). In the millennial movements of the Middle Ages (such as that at Monforte), the prospect of a future dissolution of hierarchy in the heavenly paradise lost the boundary forestalling its realisation in an earthly here and now (cf. Cohn 1961). Likewise in the comportment of the mighty, whose degree of real compliance to the tripartite notion of mutuality and respect between lords and peasants seldom coincided with the ideal. We find this in an agrarian treatise completed in 1304 outside Bologna, which instructs landowners to keep their peasants occupied also in times of slack and (invoking the vineyards that are also the focus of the present thesis)



advises them not to stray too far from their lands, insofar as “[t]he presence of the lord is the fruit of the field; and he who abandons the vineyard will find that it abandons him. The importunate voracity of the workers fears nothing if not the presence of the lord, and that scares them” (in Laurent 1984, 569). By the 16th century, in a treatise from the same area, contempt towards presumptive peasant sloth finds an even more acerbated expression:

Today the peasants are as astute as wolves, as malicious as sin, as full of rottenness as the horse of Gonella [...] because neither conscience nor reason commonly governs him [the peasant], being an ox in discourse, an ass in judgment, a hack in intellect, a mare in coarse feelings (in Laurent 1984, 574-575).

At this point, we can return to Krause’s observation about how enduring the construction of the peasantry was as “the most degraded, backward internal Other within the Italian peninsula” (2005, 597). In order to identify precisely what must have changed for things to be different when my interlocutors present themselves as peasants at wine festivals such as that in Milan, this sub-chapter set out to inquire for the origins of this construct. One insight is that several of the elements that go into the peasant construct encountered by Krause go deep. But while there is a good deal of degradation involved in the statements reproduced above, there is yet no association with this degraded state and any *backwardness*. These terms ought not to be conflated. It is perfectly possible for peasants to be degraded without being backwards, and backwards without being degraded.

To see how the connotation of backwardness was constructed, we need to note what more was missing in this context. Historian Georges Duby, writing on elite imaginaries about peasants, observes that the (medieval) tri-functional image of social stratification

“belongs to the time of myth, not to the time of history” (Duby 1980, 42). About the peasants themselves, Pina-Cabral similarly notes that “peasant society did not construct an image of history [. . .] neither of a synchronised, sequential, historical past nor of an unpredictable, open-ended future” (Pina-Cabral 1987, 721). The remainder of this chapter advances the proposition that an “image of history” of precisely that kind is presupposed wherever any social group is allotted the designation “backward”. It then goes on to trace how the Italian peasantry would be bound by such a trope. By the time we eventually arrive at the contemporary situation, the same connotation of backwardness remains. What has changed – as we see in Chapter 3.5, is that the significance of *backwardness* has transformed. But before we reach that point, we have several steps to move through first.

### 3.3.2. *Peasants, history, nation-building*

These matters are what brings us to the period around 1881. “Liberal Italy” is a name often accorded those years, stretching between Italian unification in 1861 and the First World War. Verga himself was a liberal, when liberalism was the dominant ideology of the unified state, and even if liberalism was never wholly hegemonic on the peninsula, it was still “against the backdrop of the early liberal state that later alternatives developed” (Forlenza and Thomassen 2016, 46). This is the period in which the “degradation” of peasantry was constituted as a matter of backwardness.

Verga’s novel *I Malavoglia* offers an entry point to the processes that are our concern here. First and foremost, this is in respect to the fact that it is a *novel* at all, which exemplifies the *mediations* involved in furnishing the transformed peasant trope. This new trope was not the one through which a peasant may have articulated his peasant identity in relation to another peasant. Where “[p]easant society lives on the margins of

literacy” (Pina-Cabral 1987, 723), Verga’s book is a piece of writing. Thus, it presents a story that can travel and be “told” in an indefinite number of times and places, in a manner essential for the formation of modern national consciousness (Anderson 2006). In the novel, parallel narrative lines are presented, in a manner where their coexistence presupposes a connection. The novel thus constructs a narrative frame presupposing “clocked, calendric time”, which (transposed to the domain of nation-building) enables the construction of a people in terms that are “as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history” (Anderson 2006, 26). Novels, then, provide a vehicle for transmission of this new cultural form for imagining the people, in relation to which the part of the people who are peasants can be accorded a specific slot.

At this point it is helpful to take stock of the actual political economy of agriculture that was now re-imagined in new historicising terms. Firstly, it is clear that Liberal Italy marks a period difficult to situate on any supposed developmental trajectory leading from the autarkic peasant household to intensive capitalist farming. Marx, when discussing the “classic form” of primitive appropriation (the forced expropriation of the peasants from their land) in England, had already noted that “[i]n Italy, where capitalistic production developed earliest, the dissolution of serfdom also took place earlier than elsewhere” (Marx 1999[1876]b). We can easily glean the process in the historical records. Land was sold for money in the 8th century, and by the 11th century this market was expanding steadily (van Bavel 2008); Italian peasants were “expropriated” in the 13th century, feudal ties were dissolving by 1400-1500, and the peninsula was subsequently the home of the peasantry which, among all those in Western Europe, were most dependent on selling their labour for a wage (Aymard 1982).

In later historiography, of the kind we also found exemplified by an anthropologist like Dalton (see 2.2.4), such changes would become identified as the first steps on a trajectory to modernity. This later identification, however, would take place in light of what has been referred to as “the Italian anomaly”, that is, the fact that the process in question “had no revolutionary consequences whatsoever in Italy, either in the short or the long run” (Aymard 1982, 175). Instead, we find a history in which the merchant class (which had long expanded at the expense of the nobility) was bound by a moral economy that expected them to temper their pursuit of profit through consideration of the well-being of their dependents (Laurent 1984). Furthermore, more than half the agricultural land of Italy remained bound up by arrangements that precluded its unimpeded sale on land markets (van Baven 2008) and, as we arrive in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, some 60% of the labour force were “still” toiling the land (Malanima and Zamagni 2010, 1).

After its hurried early steps down the trajectory of historical progress, it would seem, Italy had fallen so hopelessly behind its European neighbours that the majority of its population were still “living in the past”. That things “would seem” so, of course, hinges on a specific manner of seeing them. And this way of seeing – this kind of *historicity* – is what I am contextualising here. This anthropological inquiry into the past is concerned with the etymology of the peasant trope, such as we set out to search for it from its manifestation in the 2016 festival in Milan. Thus, my emphasis is on the historicity through which the dominant ideologies of “Liberal Italy” would situate its own historical moment in relation to the past. Such historicity is that through which the figure of the peasant would acquire a new range of associations, interlocked with ideas of the nation and of progress.

Existing research has traced the broader transfiguration of historical experience throughout the 19th century: the extent to which the concept of “modernity” was now put to work immanently within historical processes; to which the sense of a journey into an open-ended future created an asymmetry between the “space of experience” and the “horizon of expectation” (Koselleck 2004); to which the constructs of sovereign states and individuals were imagined in terms that sharply separates the present and the past (Fasolt 2004); to which, finally, an idea of historical progress precipitated a decisive temporal reorientation of political discourse, so that:

The future illuminating the past and giving it meaning constituted a telos or vantage point called, by turns, ‘the Nation,’ ‘the People,’ ‘the Republic,’ ‘Society,’ or ‘the Proletariat,’ each time dressed in the garb of science. If history still dispensed a lesson, it came from the future, not the past. It resided in a future that was to be realized as a rupture with the past, or at least as a differentiation from it (Hartog 2015, 105).

To a large extent, these characterisations of a change in historical consciousness apply to Italy as well. Although not entirely so, however, and here we require more specificity. It is the case that Italy’s 19th century “rediscovery of the past and the transformation of past objects into contemporary semiophores were based on the idea of progress” (Körner 2009, 89). But it is also the case that its “trajectories toward the modern were never articulated as a complete and radical rupture” (Forlenza and Thomassen 2016, 247), so that the “pathway to the modern was [. . .] articulated as an attempt to revive something lying dormant in the past.” (ibid.). And this is where we come back to that idea of the peasant, which Veronelli would later innovate upon so as to furnish the peasant trope that my interlocutors enact upon wine festivals and fields alike. We find this with a double articulation constructed in relation to the figure so designated: on the

one hand, the identity of (then) present-day “modern” Italy would be defined in relation to a shared peasant-past; on the other hand, the identity of (then) present-day peasants would be set off from modern Italy, so that “peasantness” came to take on its enduring association with pastness.

Some responsibility for this process rests directly on the shoulders of anthropologists, and we can illustrate this conceptual transformation by focussing on a branch of the history of our own field. The discipline of anthropology, first of all, had a solid presence on the indigenous stage.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, its disciplinary output received a great deal of public attention – not least for its affiliation with the ascendant bourgeoisie of Liberal Italy and their challenge to clerical power and metaphysics (Puccini 1981). In particular, the clerical metaphysics of time would be subject to a dedicated challenge. The resources for doing so were themselves not indigenous, but primarily imported from the anthropological debate in Great Britain (Puccini 1981), and from what Trautmann (1992) has called its “revolution in ethnological time” – that is, its transformation of the clerical separation of Adam from Christ by a mere 4000 years, to the modern conception where “the bottom dropped out of history and its beginnings disappeared into an abyss of time” (Trautmann 1992, 380). What this transformed time now had a scope for was a process of slow and linear evolution leading up to the present as its apex. Concomitantly, forms of both natural and social evolutionism had a strong hold on 19th century Italian academia (Körner 2011, 161).

This manner of framing time and history can take a great number of concrete forms, which do not need to have anything to do with peasants. In Italy, however, this was how

---

<sup>24</sup> The first Italian chair in anthropology had been created in 1869, together with the world’s first museum of anthropology (Taylor and Marino 2019).

such time was made concrete. One decisive year was 1911. A year that marked the fiftieth anniversary of Italian unification, it was also singled out for arranging the First Congress of Italian Ethnography. The time was one animated by a desire to find the true heritage of the still young nation – a common past, which could unify the great diversity of Italy (Harris 2012). The 1911 congress, thus, marked the starting point for a new project: that of documenting the rural peasant world of the peninsula itself, in order to salvage the memory of a past now both common and to all appearances rapidly vanishing (Bertolino 2011). One person present at the congress exemplifies the implications: the ethnographer Lamberto Loria, who had spent most of the 1890s in New Guinea. An avid photographer, Loria created the first significant collection of portraits of the people native to the island. Now, almost as a personification of the process whereby a temporal framing first articulated in the colonial encounter would be applied to the logic of social stratification in Europe (Osborne 2011, 16-17), Loria made a smooth transfer. From the task of photographing the “primitives” of New Guinea, he turned his camera to the task of recording “the primitive life of those men who populate the mountains and valleys of Italy” (Loria, cited in Harris 2012, 318). That is to say, he turned to peasants, construed as living manifestations of the past.

This meant that the national peasantry was allocated a temporal slot opposite the national present and future – including, increasingly, the future of agriculture itself. Already, the 18th century was a watershed in this regard, insofar as the century saw a change in conceptions of land (among the proprietors). No longer was land something that should offer subsistence for a community somehow connected to it, but increasingly something that should provide the means for economic profit (Laurent 1984, 567). The text *Ragionamento sopra i mezzi più necessari per far rifiorire*

*l'agricoltura*, by Ubaldo Montelatici, is illustrative as a precursor. Published in 1742, the text encouraged landowners to replace “traditional” low-output agriculture with production informed by modern European agronomy (Farolfi and Fornasari 2011). Simultaneously, clerical and communal landownership was increasingly passing into the hands of the aristocracy and the bourgeois. That is, into the hands of groups keen to reform agriculture and – based on models located in northern Europe – to “modernise” it (ibid.).

The development of this process can be concretely gleaned in a somewhat forgotten side of the biography of a person otherwise well-known: Camillo Benso, count of Cavour (1810-1861). The person himself – popularly known just as Cavour – is well-known as perhaps the primary protagonist in the struggle of Italian unification, and as the first prime minister of Italy. But he was also the proprietor of an agricultural estate in Piedmont. For all his political involvement, the count was not one to neglect these agricultural lands. With an eye to emerging global markets for agricultural goods, Cavour became an early proponent of using *guano* in agriculture,<sup>25</sup> started his own fertiliser factory, and would exercise a large influence on the journals through which new agricultural knowledge was disseminated at the time. “Piedmont produced Cavour, and Cavour awakened Piedmont”, the historian Mario Loria writes, and “[h]is initiative in fertilizer production and use, as in politics, was another link in that chain of actions and reactions from which the modern nation of Italy arose” (Loria 1967, 177).<sup>26</sup> At any

---

<sup>25</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *guano* – accumulated bird droppings utilisable as manure – became an important component of European agriculture. This *guano* was excavated in South America in a veritable colonial “guano rush”, and the devastation left behind by its extraction in South America was a prerequisite for the expansion of large-scale commercial agriculture in Europe (Clark and Bellamy Foster 2009).

<sup>26</sup> The historiographical vocabulary used here was more common at the time of Loria’s writing. My intention is not to adopt it, but to draw attention to its presence in the indigeneous context.



rate, the vision of the agriculture proper to this “modern” nation of Italy was (in Wolf’s vocabulary) that of the farmer, not of the peasant.

In the broad outlines, this – to recall Krause from above – is how the figure of “the peasant” came to stand as the “backward internal Other” of the peninsula. The figure came to stand as such, I argue, for a mode of historical consciousness associated with the idea of progress. This sub-chapter traced the introduction of this idea on the Italian stage and shows how the peasant-construct that the anthropologist Krause encounters in the 1990s is one that her own disciplinary forebears are at least partially responsible for. The same, of course, applies for the peasant-construct around which the *Terra Trema* I visited in 2016 was organised. But then, there is also more to the anarchist-communist festival than just progress. This “more” is found, for instance, where Veronelli himself argues the peasants “may be the first protagonists of the revolution” (Veronelli and Echauren 2008, 12, my translation). That is, the peasant of the festival is not just a figure of the past, but also of a possible revolution. The latter concept is what now brings us to *Terra Trema* as the film of 1948, which is directly invoked by the name of the festival.

### **3.4. 1948: Peasant backwardness against revolutionary progress**

#### *3.4.1. Peasantry at war's end.*

Luchino Visconti. *La Terra Trema* of 1948. Unlike Verga's novel, this is an immediate reference point alluded to by the name of the 2016 festival. Therefore, a few more details are in order. The film in question depicts a group of poor fishermen, in a village on the coast of Sicily. We follow the increasing frustration with which one fisherman – 'Ntoni – faces the exploitation enacted by middlemen who buy their fish at unconscionable prices. Convincing his family to take out a loan with their house as a bond, 'Ntoni purchases a boat by which to fish independently and (hopefully) sell his catch directly in the nearby city of Catania. But, disaster hits, in the form of a shipwreck. 'Ntoni and his family survive, but have to submit to the hated middlemen yet again. Downcast, he rues his defeat and the futility of individual action in a struggle that needs to be collective. At the very end of the film, we watch the middlemen laughing in triumph, as the camera pans over barely faded slogans by Mussolini on the wall behind them.

While loosely following the plot of Verga's novel from some 70 years before, the film is both a product of and a commentary on the time that was its own. Most immediately, this is gleaned from its association with the Italian communist party, who funded the film in hopes of a depiction conducive to its ambition in the 1948 national election. While Visconti soon developed larger ambitions for his project and returned the money, his aim remained that of transforming Verga's novel into a political allegory (Sitney, 1995). The director now envisioned the film as but the first instalment in a trilogy, which would trace the misfortunes shared by the primary producers of Sicily – its fishermen, miners, peasants – and then climax in a film on peasant revolt and land

reclamation. *La Terra Trema* itself was thus but an opening, which depicted both class exploitation and the inadequacy of individual efforts (such as that of ‘Ntoni) to extract one’s person from its grips. The faded but legible fascist slogans on the wholesalers’ walls, thus, are indicative of a perspective for which (to recall Lampedusa’s phrase) post-war Italy was a country in which things remained the same, even as everything had changed. The only adequate response was collective action for structural change. In this vein, as one commentator puts it, “what Visconti has done is to rewrite Verga in the light of Marx” (Nowell-Smith 2003[1967], 36).

For the present study, the lesson of the 1948 *Terra Trema* lies with its evidencing *that* and *how* “revolution” was an important concept at the time. The notion of revolution is invoked yet again when staged at the *Terra Trema* festival of 2016. So it also is on the farms of the wine producers. This is rarely the revolution of any particular party or ideology. The “anti-capitalist” character of the agricultural practice is often emphasised – as already with Giuseppe, in the introduction – and few images recur more often than that of the red star (on walls, wine bottles, or elsewhere). Between these two points in time, however, there have been monumental shifts. If my concern in the next sub-chapter is with how the peasant has been construed as a revolutionary figure in the 2016 context, what we find there is a construct that can only be grasped in relation to how the peasants were *not* construed as such in prominent ideologies of mid-twentieth century Italian politics. The present sub-chapter explores this “not”.

“Revolution” is a historicising concept, with its own etymology (Koselleck 2004). Its “immanent” effects are my concern here, in the sense of how it has directed the way in which historical actors themselves orientate themselves to their surroundings. Below, I explore how the concept of revolution would structure the comportment of the two

dominant factions of Italian politics: the Christian Democrats (*Democrazia Cristiana*, henceforth: DC) and the Italian Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano*, henceforth: PCI). But to commence this exploration, we first need to gather up the threads of longer structural changes in the domain of Italian agriculture, much as I do at the outset of the preceding chapter.

The preceding chapter in question (3.3.) already traces some of the agricultural transformations that took place during the period of “Liberal Italy”. To these changes we can now add a process that never really “took place” in the way it did in much of northern Europe: industrialisation. As an ideological vision, the project of industrialisation had gained a certain prominence during the 1870s (V. Zamagni 1993). The industrialising process was long confined to the “industrial triangle” lying between the points Turin-Milan-Genoa in northwest Italy and, until the 1930s, factories recruited primarily from the surrounding countryside (V. Zamagni 1993, 183). Thus, the simultaneously moral and physical displacement of “peasants” that we find in connection with Britain’s industrial revolution was far less pronounced in the early industrialisation of Italy.

Until the 1950s, as one commentator puts it, Italy remained a “predominantly agrarian society, a backward or undeveloped country among its more metropolitan industrialised neighbours [...] ‘semi-traditional’ or ‘semi-agrarian’” (Forgacs 1990, 16-17).<sup>27</sup> The practice of agriculture, of course, can itself be put through a process of industrialisation, and chemical fertilisers were increasingly widespread from the 1890s onward (V.

---

<sup>27</sup> Forgacs (1990) emphasises that such representations are misleading to the extent that they underplay the difference between South and North. My overall point, following the preceding section, is with the historiographical vocabulary itself, rather than the scale on which it is applied in any given instance; that is, with what it *means* to be “backwards”, rather than whether or not the person called such really fits the description.

Zamagni 1993, 62). And as Liberal Italy came to its definite end with the advent of fascist rule in 1922, the ambition of shaping agriculture in the mould of industry gained increasing force. But despite arduous efforts, the fascist dream of alimentary autarky proved difficult to realise (Helstosky 2004). Even with the Second World War, the structure of Italian agricultural production changed little (V. Zamagni 1993, 257). Whether on family farms, as sharecroppers, or as landless labourers (stereotypically in the north, centre and south, respectively), almost half the population remained peasants (Absalom 2000, 609).

The end of the war, however, follows a double historical rupture. First the rupture by which the rise of fascism would supplant Liberal Italy. Then, the subsequent rupture by which the fall of fascism left much of the nation disorientated. “To Italians”, Forlenza and Thomassen (2016, 155) put it, “time seemed entangled in a perennial and somewhat meaningless circularity [. . .] an eternal present, a broken teleology, a climate of antithesis that defied and denied a purposeful historical linearity” (Forlenza and Thomassen 2016, 155). In this situation, changes afoot in the world of the peasantry would come to play a crucial role for the transformation of the historical consciousness of all classes of the nation.

The lives of the sharecroppers, firstly, belies any images of the peasantry as composed of isolated family units and villages. The country roads of central Italy had long seen heavy traffic by “wanderers” of various kinds, and the sharecroppers themselves were involved in a system of intense rotating hospitality, where they would gather for winter evening occasions known as the *veglia* (Ginsborg 1990, 25). Now, at the end of the war, a new kind of traveller was traversing the country roads: communist trade unionists. Thus “transforming the *veglia* into a political occasion” (Ginsborg 1990, 108), the

sharecroppers entered a series of initiatives by which to redefine their relations with the landowners. As for the landless labourers of the South, things would be even more disconcerting in the eyes of anybody tasked with maintaining the established order. Post-war conditions were everywhere harsh, but, in the South, this would spill over into outright peasant unrest. Historian Paul Ginsborg provides a memorable image of how this might look:

In October 1949 the Calabrian peasantry once again marched on the great estates [. . .] Entire villages set out in procession, women with their children, some of the men on horseback and the red banners of the Communists often carried next to the portrait of the patron saint of the village. From the slopes of adjoining hills different columns of peasants would wave their banners to each other, as a greeting and as encouragement. When they arrived at the estates of the great landowners, the peasants meticulously pegged out and divided the land, and the work of preparation for sowing could then begin (Ginsborg 1990, 124).

Then in Melissa (Calabria), in October 1949: police open fire on the peasants, killing three people and wounding fifteen (Ginsborg 1990, 124). The repercussions were immediate. As the plight of the southern peasantry was brought to both national and international attention, the peasant movement itself surged and spread to nearby regions.

At this point, it is important to recall the focus of the historical anthropology presented in this part of the study: to trace the etymology of an Italian *peasant trope*. Thus, my concern here is not so much with this southern unrest, directly, as much as with the reactions it provoked elsewhere. The southern events became a concern for actors far removed from the local context in which they took place, including actors whose main concern was with national politics. In the latter context, they would contribute to

ongoing negotiations about rural politics, to the renegotiation of the meaning of peasantry, and to processes that would decide who holds the reins of state power to begin with. By means of such mediation, the southern events would have implications for farmers all across the peninsula.

What we find as we turn from peasant unrest and towards national politics, is a coalition government composed of representatives for the different anti-fascist forces (Socialist, Communist, Christian Democrat). But already at this time, there was little ground for commonality in the coalition. Tenuous bonds formed by a common struggle against fascism soon began to fall apart, the discord taking the form of a clear bifurcation between two parties: the “clerical” faction associated with the DC, and the “communist” faction of the PCI (Forlenza and Thomassen 2016, 190). The former subsisted by means of an unstable compound of pro-American and pro-Vatican forces, the latter by means of a solid and enduring allegiance to Moscow. Each trajectory of allegiance (West or East) had great significance for how the peasantry would fit into the political practice of either faction. To come to terms with the peasant trope at this moment of unfolding, we need to come to terms with both. I discuss each in turn, beginning with the trajectory connected to the East.

#### *3.4.2 Italian Communism, progress, and the ambiguity of the peasant class*

The task for the following paragraphs: to explore how the relationship between peasantry and revolutions were construed within the ideology of the dominant *pro*-revolutionary political force in mid-century Italy. Which is to say, to come to terms with the communism of the PCI. But such communism was no homegrown Italian ideology (even if, as we shall see, it was significantly qualified by the national context). Thus, in order to come to terms with the ideology in question, we turn first to the

dominant contemporary ally of the PCI: the Soviet Union. What role was accorded the peasantry in this latter context?

We find this in Lenin, where he set the tone for his agricultural politics by providing the observation that,

The old peasantry is not only undergoing a process of ‘differentiation,’ they are being completely destroyed, they are ceasing to exist, they are being squeezed out by absolutely new types of rural population – types which serve as the basis of a society in which commodity production and capitalist production predominate (in Lenin and Christman (1987[1966]): 16).

The Russian “peasantry”, in this view, was undergoing a process of “differentiation” – an increasing polarisation between poor and rich cultivators. But more than a matter of acerbating inequalities, in Lenin’s view, the process in question involved a qualitative transformation. The countryside was transformed into a battleground between rural capitalists (large landholders) and rural proletarians (landless farm workers). Accordingly, it would soon be unnecessary to treat “the peasantry” as a historical force, which needed to be considered in terms different from those applied to the general capitalist-proletarian class struggle (Mitrany 1951). To Lenin and his followers, this disappearance was no cause for lamentation. His views on the peasantry as a force for historical progress were largely consonant with those of Marx. The French peasantry, Marx held, can be likened to “a sack of potatoes” (Marx 1999[1852]), and there is little hope for progress to be found in what he called the “idiocy of rural life” (Marx and Engels 2000[1848]). As such sentiments were put into practice in the Soviet Union, depeasantization itself, as Shanin, observes, was construed as “a reliable index of Progress, i.e. of a truly excellent world coming into being” (2009, 86-87).



Now, back to the Italian context. The link from these Soviet conceptions about peasants to the politics of the PCI was strong, but not immediate. In the 19th century, Italian socialists had developed a distinctively benign position on small peasant cultivators, in a way, which had already been a cause for conflict with German (later Russian) representatives of the movement (Zangheri 1991). Then, the post-war period saw the birth of a communist programme articulated in relation to an idiosyncratic intellectual native to the country itself: Antonio Gramsci. While Gramsci's distinctive theoretical profile was largely unappreciated by the time of his death in 1937, he had already developed a long-standing relation to a man by the name of Palmiro Togliatti – a man who headed the PCI from 1927 to 1964, and who maintained a strong grip on the party's ideological profile. As 1944 brought Togliatti back to Italy from his long exile in Russia, he himself brought with him Gramsci's writings as a resource for which to develop the distinct political philosophy of the PCI (Liguori 1991, Müller 2013).<sup>28</sup>

There is a double reason for Togliatti's significance at this point. First, because he was instrumental in the process that at all gave Gramsci an ideological role in the post-war context. Second, because Togliatti – himself editing and publishing Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* – played an active part in deciding what this role would actually entail. For Gramsci was a complex author, whose thinking had undergone significant changes during the course of his life. Gramsci is now famous for inquiries that engage peasants

---

<sup>28</sup> While this is often obscured today, many key Gramscian concepts were initially developed as ways of analysing the immediate Italian context. That is, they articulate a national self-consciousness, which was in turn developed within a specific mode of historical consciousness. Gramsci's "passive revolution", for instance, was a reference to the process of national unification discussed in the preceding section. To Gramsci, the process of unification was a revolution, but only a partially completed such, insofar as the bourgeoisie class had failed to complete its historical task of expropriating the feudal landlords. The Gramscian concept of "hegemony", in turn, pinpointed the problem standing in the way for Italians to complete this revolution, and construed a "war of position" as the means for tackling the problem.

and popular culture, and which would throw into doubt the taken-for-granted beneficence of progress and escape from “rural idiocy”. For most of his life, however, Gramsci had conceived of history as a linear trajectory of progressive emancipation from the past (Davidson 1984). The task of turning the passive revolution into a real one, in this logic, became one of helping Italy “catch up” with its neighbours along a shared path of progress (Forlenza and Thomassen 2016, 93). “Like Lenin had wanted Russian workers to become Germans”, one commentator puts it, “Gramsci wanted Italians to become Americans” (Müller 2011, 62). This, at any rate, was the kind of “Gramsci” that the PCI put at the centre of its own ideological project.

Consequently, in practice, the role that the PCI accorded the peasantry came to differ little from the role accorded them in Leninist ideology.<sup>29</sup> As is often the case, we see this at work most clearly where orthodoxy is upheld against those who would challenge it. Just as the example of the anthropologist Lomberto Loria served to exemplify the idea of progress in the preceding sub-chapter, at this point we can turn yet again to anthropology. This time, to a person by the name of Ernesto de Martino, who was arguably the one to advance the “only general challenge to the most basic premises of Communist cultural policy to be advanced during this period” (Gundle 2000, 60).

---

<sup>29</sup> In this statement, I summarise the outcome of a process that was complex and contested. Especially the communist organic intellectual Emilio Sereni – partisan, scholar and PCI politician – had been the proponent of a different programme. “The land to those who work it [*La terra a chi la lavora*], went the key slogan of Sereni’s programme, thus construing small peasants as potential revolutionary subjects also *as* peasants (Zangheri 1976, Di Siena 1978). Togliatti himself acknowledged the revolutionary significance of the peasantry. Nonetheless, he would insist on construing these peasants only as *allies* of the industrial class. The historical task of the PCI remained that of articulating the revolutionary potential of the latter (Mattone 1973). When, in 1955, a communist association for peasants (*Alleanza nazionale contadini*) was founded, it was perhaps already too late. The union would remain a concern for only a minority of peasant cultivators. The PCI itself, furthermore, would remain tied to the USSR’s official position on the (lack of) relation between peasants and revolutions.

Himself a member of the PCI and a faithful reader of Gramsci, de Martino found one point in particular on which he wanted to challenge his Sardinian predecessor. While Gramsci should be lauded for his interest in “folklore”, de Martino argued, the former would still often write about such folk beliefs as but an obstacle for the realisation of Marxist goals (Cannarsa 1992, 85). As a means of providing a “historicist correction of Gramsci” (Zinn 2015, 7), de Martino himself proposed the concept of “progressive folklore” (cf. de Martino 1949). The concept did not involve advocating all and any aspects of popular culture. What it did do, however, was develop a way of articulating the concepts of “revolution” and “peasant” together, and no longer just as antonyms. The response that would assert the orthodox historicity of the PCI came from Cesare Luporini. “Progressive folklore” is nonsense, Luporini asserted, since progress is a matter of emancipation achieved along a trajectory moving forwards in history. Traditional folk customs are but obstacles to such emancipation, and popular culture of that kind “could never be progressive and were vestiges of the past that should be completely transcended” (in Gundle 2000, 60).

The preceding paragraphs inquire into how the relation between the concepts of “peasants” and “revolutions” were construed in the discourse of the PCI. That is, in the discourse of a political group whose efforts even ushered in a period of real “hegemony” in the domain of Italian “high” culture (Gundle 2000, 43), and who would long occupy the political space of those committed to advancing the task of revolution. Not so much the task of peasants, however. In a striking contrast to how the peasant is construed at and around the *Terra Trema* of 2016, the dominant PCI-position peasants were decidedly not revolutionary actors. Except possibly when engaged in the process of becoming something other than peasants. These were sentiments broadly shared by the

left. We find them in the 1967 words of the socialist politician Manlio Rossi-Doria when expounding the significance of the enormous rural de-population of the post-war years:

We must not lament the fact that they are abandoning agriculture and leaving their villages; on the contrary, we must celebrate, because this means that finally the men of the South will find a way of living worthy of human beings, and not of non-humans as they were in the past” (Manlio Rossi-Doria, cited in Ginsborg 1990, 231-232).

For my ongoing etymological inquiry into the state of the peasant trope at the 2016 festival, the most significant lesson in the preceding paragraphs is this *not*. We have learned some significant elements of this not – how it has to do with an inherited association of peasants, with backwardness on the one hand, and association of the revolution with historical progress on the other. Somehow, by the time we arrive at the contemporary situation, *these* coordinates must have changed.

Before moving forward, we need to remain a while longer in this post-war context. For whatever measure of cultural hegemony the PCI might have had, the party remained politically subordinate for the entire duration of its existence. The dynamics of agricultural politics, instead, were overseen by the Christian Democrats. The reason the latter were so successful in holding on to the reins of power, in turn, has much to do with their success in brokering a tenuous alliance between the peasantry and capitalism. The ideological orientation for which this alliance was sought out to begin with, furthermore, needs to be understood in relation to how the concepts of revolution and progress were articulated with the ideological profile of the Christian Democrats.

#### *3.4.3. Christian Democracy, and turning peasants into farmers*

To come to terms with this section on fraction in Italian 20<sup>th</sup> century politics, we need

to retrace our path back to the immediate post-war years. On May 31, in 1947, the anti-fascist coalition government collapsed. An election –for which Visconti’s *Terra Trema* was originally commissioned – was declared to take place in 1948. The PCI was confident in would attain great results. This would not be so. Their share of the vote, even when coupled with that received by the socialist party, amounted to no more than 31%. The DC, who received 48.5% of the vote, seized a hold on state power that they were not to relinquish for half a century (Ginsborg 1990, 118).

Decisive here was Alcide de Gaspari, who led the DC from 1944 to 1953, who like his antagonist Togliatti would exercise a great control over the party that was his own. As prime minister (already from 1945), de Gaspari had turned to the Americans for help with the most pressing problem for post-war Italy: reconstructing industry. While the industrial infrastructure was in surprisingly good shape despite the war, the country lacked both raw materials of its own and money with which to import such (V. Zamagni 1993, 321, Harper 1986, 42). The Americans remained undecided all the way up to 1948 (Harper 1986, 119.). But precisely as the communists were making notable progress, a resolve based on the “twin tenets of anticommunism and massive foreign aid” emerged, which materialised in form of the Marshall Plan (Harper 1986, 159). The Americans had no qualms about intervening in the forthcoming election. As ship after ship of US aid arrived, and as these deliveries were turned into public spectacles, the warning was added that they would immediately cease if the communists were to win the election (Ginsborg 1990, 115). Historian Paul Ginsborg describes the consequences:

[...] the Soviet Union was as much the point of reference for the working-class movement as the United States was for the capitalist class [but] the myth of imminent liberation by the Russians could not hold its own for long against the

promise of immediate material salvation from the Americans; for whereas the one was pure illusion, the other was rapidly becoming a reality (Ginsborg 1990, 87).

Thus, the DC would achieve a convincing victory in the 1948 election. Where the minister for agriculture had been a communist, the position was now filled by a representative of the Sardinian landowning nobility. As the 1949 peasant revolts described above commenced, institutional receptivity to peasant plight had undergone a decisive deterioration (Ginsborg 1990, 124). But in this respect, De Gaspari's increased proximity to the Americans would result not only in a hold on state power, but also a shift in ideological profile. For the Americans harboured no particular loyalty to the feudal proprietors (who had been a key ally of DC around the time of its gestation), and who were now (following Mao's victories in China) on the alert for peasant unrest. Emboldened by his new allies, de Gaspari made a break with the old landlords, and set out to enact an agrarian reform on a scale so massive as to be "one of the most complex processes of transformation of agriculture that the economic history of Europe had until then known" (Bernardi 2016, 43).

The agricultural reform was initiated in 1950. But if its consequences were as massive as its ambitions, this is not because the overt ambitions of the reform were themselves realised. We see this as the changes in question appear in the background of anthropological work on Italy from the following decades. A key pillar of the agricultural reform was land distribution, where the great domains of the feudal proprietors would be partitioned and distributed among the (often landless) agricultural labourers. However, as John Davis (1973, 147-148) notes in his monograph on Pisticci: the local reform board had acquired 2280 hectares of land, and received 1448 applications for settlement. But, even as 1158 of the applications were deemed to

concern suitably qualified persons, only 322 farmers were able to settle in Pisticci itself. Half of these, furthermore, were awarded lands smaller than three hectares in size, with little in the way of technical equipment. In a similar vein we have Silverman's efforts to study the repercussions of the reforms' structural change on the moral ethos of southern peasants. Having set out to study such moral changes in a village in Basilicata, she found that no change of ethos could be discerned. This was no proof for the independence of structure and ethos, however – the problem was that the structural changes in question had never been realised to begin with (Silverman 1971).<sup>30</sup>

Davis himself argues that, in practice, the “Agrarian Reform devalued the position of the peasant cultivator” (Davis 1973, 156). While the reform did distribute landownership more broadly, the land so distributed was seldom sufficient to fully provide for its new proprietors. Rural depopulation (of the sort we found Rossi-Doria embracing) thus continued unabated. Which is not to say that the reform was not a success in the eyes of its architects. For its directors, the agricultural reform was a “Cold War weapon” (Bernardi 2016, 50), and it was at least partially intended as but a way to split the radical peasant movements until depopulation itself could provide a permanent solution to the peasant problem (Ginsborg 1990, 134). “Everybody a proprietor, nobody a proletarian!” went one slogan of the DC party of the time (Piazza 1974, 51, my translation). The Truman administration in the US had regarded the creation of an

---

<sup>30</sup> Silverman's aim was to give empirical substance to her earlier challenge of Edward Banfield's “amoral familism” hypothesis (Silverman 1968). Banfield had sought an explanation for the poverty and “underdevelopment” of Italy's southern peasantry and claimed that an ethos of uncooperative and self-involved “amoral familism” was keeping the peasants confined in their emiseration. Silverman's position towards Banfield was essentially the same as Davis' (1970): Banfield was right that the poor peasants tended to be uncooperative. But he got the order of causation backwards. The peasants were not poor because they were uncooperative – they were uncooperative as an *effect* of the harsh exploitation that kept them in poverty to begin with. The idea behind Silverman's (foiled) study was to look at what happens when the exploitation in question is lifted.

“independent, individualistic landowning peasantry” (Bernardi 2016, 49) as the best bulwark against Soviet penetration into Italy, and in Italy itself De Gasperi acknowledged that the overriding ambition of the reform was that of “[turning] agricultural labourers into free small farmers” (De Gasperi, cited in Forlenza 2010, 345).

In effect, the agrarian reform was an intervention to seize hold of the peasants’ dream of land ownership. This dream would then be articulated through a process of development rather than revolution, and the DC party would insert itself deeply into the institutional web through which an individual might pursue this dream. Where the PCI succeeded in establishing a base in the peasantry of central Italy (Sánchez Hall 2018), the DC could construe itself as the “party for the *Mezzogiorno*” (Forlenza 2010), that is, for the rural south. As Ginsborg writes about the radical peasant movements of the late 1940s, this would mean that the “values of solidarity, of self-sacrifice and egalitarianism, the attempts to overcome familism and distrust, developed by the movement amidst all manner of difficulties and contradictions, were firmly emarginated. In the subsequent history of the South, no such attempt to build an alternative political ethos is to be found again” (Ginsborg 1990, 139). Here, we are a long way from the revolutionary peasant on the vineyards of my interlocutors and the *Terra Trema* of 2016.

#### *3.4.4. Peasants and the backward slot of History*

The chapters above continue our transversal etymological inquiry into the roots of the 2016 revolutionary peasant of Veronelli and of Critical Wine. We began in the South – with peasant revolts that freely intermixed communism and utopianism with religion and mysticism (Ginsborg 1990, 126), whose protagonists would freely fly the flags of



communism next to those of catholic saints. On the stage of national politics, by contrast, a response to the southern unrest would emerge from a contextual split between those who would attach themselves to one flag, and decidedly not to the other. In either case, the figure of the peasant was *not* made the focus for any revolutionary project.

Above, I show how we can understand the coordinates for this lack of articulation by means of attending to the conceptual conjunction between two concepts: revolution and progress. This recalls the preceding chapter (3.2), and its inquiry into how the concept of “modernity” was articulated immanently within the Italian context. As Osborne (2011) argues, “modernity” constructs politics around the vision of a human collective hurling from a determinate past into an open-ended future. At any given time, the collectives’ movement from the past into the future is identifiable on the basis of how the present moment differs from the moment past. But in order to be applicable in any given instance, the concept of modernity thus needs a manner of substantively identifying pastness. This previous chapter (3.3.) traced the way in which pastness came to be identified with peasantry.

The modern concept of revolutions has long been deeply linked with the forms of historical consciousness associated with such modernity. Its origins go further back, however. Prior to its modern reconceptualisation, the word revolution was used to express ideas about a quite literal “revolution” of modes of governance, each supplanting the other in a great predetermined cycle (Koselleck 2004, 43-57). The events in France in 1789 mark a decisive transformation to this sense, as ideas about uprisings and civil wars were intertwined with the ideas about history I explore in the preceding sub-section. The word “revolution” came to evoke ideas about a collective

singular hurling “forward” along a trajectory of historical time, and such time itself could then become a reference point for defining precisely how conflicting political positions – “progressive” or “conservative” – actually differ (Koselleck 2004, 143). Thus, we also have the slots of the PCI and the DC respectively, slots opposed to each other, but opposed *within* a shared framework that decides both the nature of the opposition and the (backward) position of the peasant population.

When it comes to peasant unrest in particular, the aim of the DC was to ensure that “progress by revolution” does not take place. Progress itself, however, became both the aim and the means for avoiding such dangers. This is the way it was for the American allies of the DC party, who through their aid programme provided the material infrastructure necessary for agricultural modernisation – machinery, fertilisers, high-yield crops – but also propaganda films that would warn their viewers not only about the dangers of communism, but also about the horrors of “tradition” (Bernardi 2016, 48).<sup>31</sup> These are precisely the material as well as conceptual infrastructures we find the winemakers today renouncing, in sum. The PCI, by contrast, was dedicated to the task of “progress by revolution”. But this conception of “revolution” was articulated together with the concept of historical progress described in the preceding section. Precisely insofar as the category of “peasants” retained its indexical association with pastness, then the official ideology of the party did not let it construe peasants as

---

<sup>31</sup> Davis (1973, 147) complains that the agrarian reform remained “traditional” in its assumptions. But in its emphasis on adapting agriculture to capitalism, it was decidedly not “traditional” in the Catholic spirit of valorising peasant cooperation and solidarity over competition (Ginsborg 1990, 129). While the DC relied on its alliance both with the USA and the Vatican, its connection with the images of saints flown by the marching peasants was contested also by actors who saw in their ideological profile more Americanism than Catholicism. In a manner similar to the diversity of the PCI (represented above by Sereni and de Martino), such complaints were also voiced by actors internal to the DC (e.g., Giuseppe Dossetti and Augusto del Noce). Since exploring such dissent goes beyond the scope of this study, see Thomassen and Forlenza (2016).

revolutionary actors, or of peasantry as a model for the future. Thus, in the PCI construct as much as that of the DC, “the peasant” was a figure poised before its imminent end, and its revolutionary programme was thus no solid forbearance of the radical peasant of the *Terra Trema*.

This chapter (3.4.) begins by following a connection from the 2016 event where my fieldwork began. The connection was found in the name – *Terra Trema* – that led to a 1948 film. This chapter explores the context of the film, which provides indispensable insights into the conceptual etymology of an Italian trope about Italian peasants. But the primary results of this inquiry are to demonstrate how different this context was from what we encountered in 2016. In the next chapter, I move on to the etymological line of descent that would differentiate itself from this mid-century context, in order to end up at *Critical Wine* and its radical peasant nostalgia.

### 3.5. 2016: The peasant trope in front of Crisis

#### 3.5.1. *Bringing the past to the present*

We move from 1881 to 1948 and on to 2016, and from Sicily to Milan. Our tracing of the etymology of the contemporary *contadino* has brought us a long way. A way where we return at its end to the place and time where it began. And there I stand, at the end of the festival that was my very first fieldwork encounter.<sup>32</sup> It is daytime now, and a Monday. The festival has gone on for a full weekend. I have spoken to visitors and to winemakers, but never to any of those involved in organising the festival. On this day, finally, I had a proper interview scheduled with a member of the organising team. As I arrived back at the *Leoncavallo* to meet my prospective interviewee, however, I found only a steel gate, shut and barred. I had not seen a living person in the entire industrial area, and all around are but empty passages and grey concrete walls covered with graffiti. From somewhere deep inside I sense the bass of music playing, but nobody opens when I knock. I take a walk to study the graffiti, then try the gate again. Foiled once more, I decide to leave. But then, as I have already turned to be on my way, I hear a door opening. *Finally.*

Two women who appear to be in their twenties step outside, one leading a bicycle. At first, they appear bewildered to find me out there, but I manage to communicate the reason for my presence. Laughing, one of the women brings out her phone in order to make a short call. Within minutes, my prospective interviewee appears at the gates to let me inside. He is a slim bespectacled man, wearing black, in his late twenties or early thirties. “You should have come and talked to us during the festival, now we are all

---

<sup>32</sup> In Chapter 4.6. below, I provide a more extensive ethnographic description of a festival in this tradition.

busy taking things down!” I follow through dark corridors, back towards the main hall of the fair (“Perhaps we should have scheduled the interview differently, then”, I think to myself, saying nothing). Instead, we sit down to talk. Having commenced on my doctoral research projects hardly two months earlier, I lack any focus that might keep the discussion from meandering from this topic to the other. From the festival itself (“A great event!” says my interviewee) to organic wines (“It is important to work in a manner which cares for nature. The whole certification thing is something else. That makes no difference at all here. If somebody tells me themselves that they work in a good way, I should be able to trust that person. No?”) to Luigi Veronelli, whose picture was on the book I had purchased two days earlier (“A legend! Very important. Especially in the beginning of Critical Wine. Even if we have moved on a bit from that now”).

The word *contadino* made no appearance in this discussion – as I indicated above, the full significance of the peasant concept only dawned on me at a much later stage of fieldwork. But each of the points touched upon in the discussion – festivals, organic agriculture, trust, Luigi Veronelli – would turn out to be central for the present study. Each topic returns in Part IV, below. In this chapter, the aim is to conclude the etymology of the trope itself. At festivals such as the one just concluded – what does it *mean to be* a peasant? My primary concern thus remains with the concept itself, and the way in which it has been formed through reworking elements inherited from the “1881” and “1948” constructs.

This last leg of our journey sorts out disparate roots that have become entangled in the present-day Social Centres. It is thus divided into a series of sub-chapters. First, I attend to the broader context that takes the form of the structure of agriculture itself and its

“official” politics over the last several decades. I then trace a parallel trajectory, found in how the culture of food and wine has developed since the 1960s onwards (this is where we find our way back to Veronelli). Then I turn to the Social Centres themselves, and their roots in non-PCI radical politics after 1968. Finally, I proceed to undertake a philosophically grounded analysis of the modes of historical consciousness that connect these changes. This, I argue, takes the form of a displacement of the inherited idea of progress by the new prospect of *crisis*.

### 3.5.2. *The end of the peasantry – or?*

This is a sub-chapter on structural changes in Italian farming, leading up to the present. Above, I already discussed Italy’s mid-century agricultural reform; how the reform both contributed to defusing radical peasant unrest, and how it created a peasantry of small landowners, often too small to subsist on agriculture alone.<sup>33</sup> 1957 marks an exacerbation of such tendencies. The year is that of the Treaty of Rome, when Italy joined the nations who initiated the European Economic Community (a predecessor of today’s European Union), which elected to provide economic support only to larger farms (Bonanno 1989, 96). In the same year, the Italian state itself scrapped the generous credit terms (introduced by the agrarian reform) for all holdings judged not to be economically viable (Ginsborg 1990, 134-135). While the locus of power for shaping agricultural policies on the Italian peninsula thus shifted (partly) beyond the borders of the nation itself, the ideological logics dominant on both the national and the European stages were largely compatible. Farms were seen as economic units of production, and

---

<sup>33</sup> Thus, we have the conditions behind the class that Holmes (1989) calls “peasant-workers”, landowning agriculturists who are able to survive as such only by means of complementary incomes from jobs in industry.

the key for maximising their economic contribution was seen to lie in *modernisation* (see Lem 1999).

“Productivism” is the name subsequently awarded this paradigm of agricultural policy, focused on “an intensive, industrially driven and expansionist agriculture with state support based primarily on output and increased productivity” (Lowe et al. 1993, 221). The quantitative increase of productive yields was the aim, and the means were technological modernisation, intensification, specialisation and concentration (Morgaus-Faus et al. 2013, 10-13). Up to the 1980s, this paradigm remained hegemonic, and the European Commission’s Mansholt Plan of 1972 even posits it as an explicit goal of policy to eliminate small farms from Europe. Accordingly, the years 1955 to 1975 saw a fivefold increase in the use of agricultural chemicals in Italy (Berardi 1983), and large capitalist farms have consistently been gaining (literally) ground on the small holdings of the nation (Bonanno 1989). Perhaps not enough so for the architects of the policy paradigm, however. In policy circles all the way up to the 1980s, Italian small farms (managed according to a peasant logic rather than a farmer logic, in the vocabulary of Wolf) were regarded as a very real and almost insurmountable “obstacle” to proper modernisation (Fonte and Cucco 2015).

One might speculate that it is likely no accident that Chayanov coined the concept of economic “self-exploitation” when writing about smallholding peasants. Despite the diminishing return on their activity, the peasants (some of them) held on. As we arrive at the 2016 event, a statistical comparison with the case of France is illuminating (see European Union 2018): as Western European countries with roughly comparable populations (67 million in France to 60 million in Italy), we find that their utilised agricultural area nonetheless differs significantly. Compared to Italy’s 12,598 thousand

hectares, France utilises 27,814 thousand hectares of agricultural land. But if in France more than twice as much agricultural land is cultivated as in Italy, the proportions are reversed if we turn to look at the number of farms: France has 456,520 farms, while Italy has 1,145,710.<sup>34</sup> Much of the reason for this is revealed by the proportion of farms classified as “very small”: 18.9% in France, 50.6% in Italy. When compared to much of Western Europe, the agricultural landscape of Italy is thus still that of a “large number of farms, characterized by small size, reduced use of industrial input, specialization in permanent crops, [and] large use of family based labor” (Salvioni et al. 2013, 227).

What decidedly *has* changed, however, is the way in which this structural longevity is politically construed. The MacSharry reform, which was adapted in 1992 in order to replace the Mansholt plan, mentioned above, is a case point. The working document on which the reform is based begins by explicitly positioning itself towards pre-existing policy: “The Common Agricultural Policy”, the document begins, was “created at a time when Europe was in deficit for most food products. Its mechanisms were devised to meet this situation” (European Commission 1991). These mechanisms, the document goes on to explain, were now generating a series of consequences perceived as undesirable: environmental damage as well as rural depopulation. To rectify this, the authors call for a transformed policy, in line with a recognition of how farmers have a broader role to play in the rural fabric than as mere food producers. A farmer also acts, for instance, as a form of “environment manager” (ibid, 10). It follows that policy ought to create sufficient incentives for these farmers to remain on their land. “There is no

---

<sup>34</sup> In fact, only two member states of the European Union (Poland and Romania) have a larger number of farms than Italy.



other way”, the report insists (in a radical reversal of the Mansholt plan’s ambitions) “to preserve the natural environment, traditional landscapes and a model of agriculture based on the family farm” (ibid, 9-10).

Where the mid-century productivist paradigm had favoured “intensification, specialisation and concentration”, the post-productivist turn posited a valorisation of “extensification, dispersion and diversification” (Moragues-Faus et al. 2013, 14).<sup>35</sup> As “Fordist” economic strategies of scale (premised on competing on the basis of price) were displaced by “post-Fordist” efforts to construct added value along global value chains (premised on competing on the basis of quality), the “obstacle” of Italian small farms suddenly appeared in a new light. So much so that the “gap in modernization in the Italian system, once seen as a weakness, showed its possible strength” (Brunori et al. 2013, 22). At least since the early 2000s, we find a well-established “made in Italy” consensus, where the production of “quality” is pivotal. Quality, in turn, is construed as a characteristic embodied in “traditional recipes, local biodiversity and artisanal manufacture” (Brunori et al. 2013, 23).

The implication of this end for the “disappearance of the fireflies” – in this case, the end of the peasantry – are not straightforward. On the one hand, we find here a new valorisation of agricultural characteristics associated with peasantry, such as the small scale, multifunctionality, and manual labour. As I show below, this economic stage is precisely what provides my interlocutors with the resources for their own efforts to construct themselves as peasants. On the other hand, if we turn to the specific

---

<sup>35</sup> For the debates on whether or not ‘post-productivism’ is an appropriate term for describing presently dominant paradigms of agriculture, see e.g., Evans et al. (2005). I use the term on the assumption that it is appropriate, but the question of this particular terminology is in any case superfluous to the narrative presented in this section.

vocabulary shared by both Redfield and Wolf (see 2.2.3), neither scale, multifunctionality, nor manual labour are in themselves what defines “peasants”. What distinguishes the peasant from the farmer is that the latter views his productive activity as a profit-oriented economic enterprise like any other, while the former does not. And, in this respect, the 1980s may be said to present us with a fundamental “end of the peasantry”. Now, even as a difference of scale between farms remained, a difference in terms of orientation (“capitalist” or “peasant”) did not – left was but a wealth of (small or large) “entrepreneurial farms” (Fonte and Cucco 2015, 68). Here, with the rise of “non-industrial” and small-scale forms of capitalist farming, we find an end of the peasantry more profound than what the large industries were ever able to enact.

Anthropologists have tended to take this dominant institutional view as their own. This is what we found in Krause’s experience of fieldwork in 1990s Tuscany (see 3.3.1). In an analytic sense, she confidently asserts, the peasant “[is] gone as a figure involved in a viable production mode” (Krause 2005, 599; see Part II above). But if the narrative above appears to prove her right in this, is it really so? I wrote that this was a period when it “may be said” that the dichotomy between peasants and farmers was superseded, and I did so for good reason. For, again, things are not entirely so straightforward. Turning the claim about the non-existent peasants around towards the scientific paradigms (that define production modes to begin with) Krause’s claim would be demonstrably wrong. Precisely around this period, the 1990s, the assumption of an ongoing global “depeasantisation” was put under increased scrutiny. Agricultural sociologist Van der Ploeg, for instance, would come to argue that what had happened during the period of “modernisation” was that the protagonists of agricultural industrialisation had found peasants a troublesome breed, wherefore they elected to

treat agriculturists *as if* they were all agricultural entrepreneurs. Thus, sweeping aside the need for inquiring whether this was *really* the case, the peasantry was less ended than rendered invisible, covered by modernist “virtual realities” (van der Ploeg 2008, 19).<sup>36</sup>

The fact that there is a well-established paradigm for which there definitely are “real” peasants in Italy today, of course, does not mean that this paradigm is correct. But it is true that from national statistics we have no way of knowing. Any kind of farm is simply collapsed into the category of “agricultural enterprise” [*impresa agricola*] (Sotte 2006a, Sotte 2006b), meaning that “there is no agreement today as to how many ‘farms’ there are in Italy and how many of them are ‘entrepreneurial’” (Fonte and Cucco 2015, 269). But, then, even were we to inquire closer into these farms through the facts on the ground, the furore surrounding the debate around the continuous peasantry shows how we remain where Redfield left us – where no “definition of peasant society arises inevitably from the facts”, and where “[t]he reader might choose one cluster of neighbouring real societies within the field; I might choose another” (Redfield 1956, 26; see 2.2.3).<sup>37</sup> This state of affairs, of course, offers opportunities along a different line of inquiry: What is the conceptual infrastructure beneath such definitions? What

---

<sup>36</sup> Interestingly enough, Van der Ploeg’s position is developed in dialogue with precisely Wolf’s (1955) manner of making distinctions between peasants and farmers. For a perspective that articulates this distinction in terms of degrees of integration into the market, van der Ploeg argues, temporalised geographies of Dalton’s kind (see Part II, above) paint the world precisely upside down. According to van der Ploeg, it “turns out that developing world peasants are probably even more ‘fully integrated’ than their European counterparts and that this high degree of ‘integration’ (or high degree of market dependency) is their main problem. Thus, perhaps European peasants are far more peasant than many farmers in the developing world and this explains why they are somewhat better off” (van der Ploeg 2008, 40).

<sup>37</sup> The debate remains structured by paradigms identifiably Chayanovian, on the one hand (e.g. Van der Ploeg), and Leninist, on the other (e.g. Bernstein). See Bernstein (2014), Van der Ploeg (2014) and Bernstein et al. (2018).

underwrites an observer's choice of one definition rather than another, and how do such choices recursively shape the facts on the ground that they define?

### 3.5.3. *Peasant producers, urban consumers*

The latter question – about the underpinnings of a chosen definition – is of the kind already pursued in the preceding chapters (3.3 and 3.4). Rather than working from an analytical (etic) definition of peasants so as to trace the different fortunes of the class, the question is now about difference on the level of what it *means* to be a peasant. But I approach question indirectly, insofar as senses of peasantry are understood as defined in relation to specific constructs of history and time. To clarify this (and to do so in a manner that scrutinises “theory” as an object of inquiry located within the ethnographic context itself) brings us back yet again to the post-war time that the preceding paragraphs set out from. From there, we need to trace two parallel lines connected with the historicising media of representation that represent the peasantry of my winemaking interlocutors at the *Terra Trema* 2016: the culture of food and wine on the one hand, and the culture of radical politics on the other.

Above, we left behind a post-war Italy “still” profoundly agrarian in character. As the 1960s rolled into place, changes were already well underway. Subsequent historiography often marks the period as the one that saw the decisive transformation of an agrarian Italy into an industrial one – not a periodic marker convincing in every respect, but the time emerging was indeed one at whose heart “stood the Fordist factory, dominant not in numerical but in symbolic and technological terms” (Ginsborg 2003, ix). As Ginsborg characterises the time, this was an era when the FIAT 500 was a “dream machine”, and consumption was characterised by its “relative homogeneity [. . .] by its utilitarianism, and by its attention to the newly discovered joys of home

living” (Ginsborg 2003, 83) But more than what such claims reveal on their own accord, we glean here a radical restructuring of the everyday life of Italians. Above all, this economic transformation is connected with the creation of a class of consumers, in possession of a newly constructed “free time” – *tempo libero* – that might be expended in the consumption of goods, including cultural goods such as sport and television (Gundle 2000, 102).<sup>38</sup>

As the temporal structure of everyday life was so transformed, so were the conditions for new modes of historical consciousness to take hold. Where these conditions were presupposed for the later construal of the *contadino* of Critical Wine, a reluctance by the PCI to engage this new temporal structure at the time of its emergence arguably contributed to its failure to advance the project of revolution further in this era. As we saw above, the basic self-conception of the party was of itself as an actor whose task consisted of leading a collective singular (people) forwards along the trajectory of history. From Gramsci, the party had made the struggle for cultural hegemony into a centrepiece of its strategy. But it is crucial that Gramsci had developed his notion of hegemony in closer dialogue with Benedetto Croce than with Marx (Roberts 1987, 274, cf. Forlenza and Thomassen, 2016, 93),<sup>39</sup> at those points where Croce treats cultural history “always within the frame of the nation-state and the national culture and always as a history of cultural elites” (Forgacs 1990, 6). To a large extent, the PCI regarded this

---

<sup>38</sup> Consumerism, of course, did not appear entirely out of nowhere. For discussions of earlier prefigurations, see Forgacs 1996 and Gundle 2002.

<sup>39</sup> Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) was a prominent Italian scholar and philosopher, intimately associated with the period of Liberal Italy (see Pipyrou (2016)). While often overlooked today (at least outside Italy) his influence was once towering, and to some accounts laid out the assumptions which would remain dominant among the Italian intelligentsia for decades (Forgacs 1990, 6). Clearly, whatever influence he exercised extended across the political spectrum. The communist Gramsci developed several of his key concepts in dialogue with Croce’s writings; the fascist state-philosopher Giovanni Gentile was one of Croce’s closest students; the anarchist Luigi Veronelli claimed to have arrived at his own political convictions when attending some of the last lectures Croce gave before his death.

“elite” culture as the object on which to stake its ambitions for hegemony (Gundle 2000, 22). The concerns on which the new Italian ‘free time’ was actually expended, instead were regarded with suspicion: sport was a distraction from real social problems (Gundle 2000, 64), comic books were “corrupt and of American deviation” (Gundle 2000, 97) and television was “a tool of enemy propaganda” (Gundle 2000, 98). Insofar as the PCI *did* establish a period of hegemony in the space of bourgeois “high” culture, they did so precisely around the time when such culture was of increasingly marginal political import.

It is to this sphere of consumption through which we must trace the figuration of the radical peasant. First, we turn to Veronelli himself. Recall how his early labours were those of a critic and author on the topics of food and wine. This is a genre with a long history, which came into its own in wake of the French revolution (Mennell 1996, 272), and in Italy itself, we have works such as *La scienza in cucina e l’arte di mangiar bene*, from 1891, and the *Guida gastronomica d’Italia*, from 1931.<sup>40</sup> But, when the 12 volumes of Veronelli’s *La biblioteca del gastronomo* began to appear in the early ’60s, they did so in a context where such writing could play a pivotal cultural role. Likewise for TV-shows. Beginning with Veronelli’s older predecessor, Mario Soldati, and his *Viaggio nella valle del Po* (from 1957-1958), a series of “enogastronomical” programmes were produced and broadcast on national television.

---

<sup>40</sup> The 1584 work by Orenio Lando is also notable. This book tells the (fictional) story of a “Saracene” traveler to Italy, who has the regional particularities of the peninsula revealed to him by means of its variety of cuisines. In essence, this is the narrative form that (particularly in works directed to “travelers”, that is to say, tourists) structures gastronomical writing on Italy up to this day. See also Fourcade (2012, 537-538) for the social context of how the independent “wine critic” emerged in the 1950s.

Crucially, neither Soldati nor Veronelli wrote about food and wine as entities divorced from their social and natural context. Their agricultural products were presented as synecdoche for their social and natural contexts of origin. What these authors did was travel the Italian countryside in order to capture (in film and in writing) the vernacular foods of a peasant world. A form of amateur ethnography, in short –and insofar as both believed the peasant world in question was rapidly being brought to an “end” by the onslaught of modernisation, a form of salvage ethnography (as reflected in the title of Veronelli’s renowned *Alla ricerca dei cibi perduti* [in search of lost foods], from 1966). The new Italian practice of expending “free time” in the consumption of commodities, thus, was not antithetical to the emergence of new forms of historical consciousness. Instead, we see precisely new ways in which the past was attached to commodities, and “invoked” in and through their consumption. By indexing foods to the peasant world, and retaining the connection already constructed between the peasantry and the national past, the consumption of food and wine became matters of everyday historicity. This indexicality remains with us to this day and is particularly significant for how the products from all the farms in this study are construed in the local context.

There is a profound irony in this valorisation of the peasant past, of course. For the preconditions of such valorisation – from roads and refrigeration to food guides and televisions, and to a class of consumers who read guides and purchase food for their fridges – coincides precisely with the same modernising process explicitly held as undoing the object valorised. The contradictions involved in such translation of peasant foods to commodities, which began here, but is still ongoing, is a prominent topic in the anthropology of Italy to this day (e.g. Leitch 2003; Grasseni 2005). But, if it is easy to subject such translations to critique, taking them only as matters of appropriation and

reification, the critical edge present at least in the works of Soldati and Veronelli is often overlooked (or dismissed) in the literature. There is already an activist tenor found in Soldati's groundbreaking account of his 1960s-1970s search for "authentic" wine, and this is anything but hidden. He writes:

I realise that my dream is that of a counter-revolution. But it is a dream that we absolutely cannot do without. Perhaps to the same extent that we can transform this dream of genuine and artisanal wine into a reality, we will also be able to stem, and then to cancel, the frightening progress of the pollution of the air we breathe, of the water we drink, of the rivers, beaches and countryside, all the poison that threatens us with death (Soldati 2017, 240-241, my translation).

As we follow the trajectory of this culture of food and wine further along the 20th century, we find something more, which to some accounts is "uniquely Italian" (Leitch 2003, 457). This is where we come to a connection with radical politics. Take what may have been the two foremost venues for structuring the wine market in particular: *Vini d'Italia* and *I vini di Veronelli* (see Odorici and Corrado 2004). On the one hand, such guides are devices for directing consumer choice in a capitalist marketplace. In this case, however, each also had an association with radically anti-capitalist milieus. *I vini di Veronelli* was of course associated with Veronelli, whose politics have been introduced above (and to which I return, below). *Vini d'Italia*, in turn, was part of the *Gambero Rosso*, which originated as a monthly supplement to the communist newspaper, *Il Manifesto*.

The very name *Gambero Rosso* was an allusion in two directions. On the one hand, it was the name of the tavern where Pinocchio (in the old story) was cheated of his golden coins by unscrupulous hosts, on the other it was an "ironic nod" to the dominant



“pleasure-allergic Left” (Parescoli 2003, 33). Later, in 1987, one of the initiators of the *Gambero Rosso* – a man by the name of Carlo Petrini – would gather delegates from 15 countries in order to sign a manifesto. The declaration, first published in the *Gambero Rosso*, begins:

Born and nurtured under the sign of Industrialization, this century first invented the machine and then modelled its lifestyle after it. Speed became our shackles. We fell prey to the same virus: ‘the fast life’ that fractures our customs and assails us even in our own homes, forcing us to ingest ‘fast-food’.

Homo sapiens must regain wisdom and liberate itself from the ‘velocity’ that is propelling it on the road to extinction. Let us defend ourselves against the universal madness of ‘the fast life’ with tranquil material pleasure (Slow Food n.d.).

These are the opening words of the Slow Food Manifesto, and the starting point of the “Slow Food” movement. While Slow Food is often construed (and often rightly so) as a “movement” concerned with little else but bourgeois hedonist consumerism, the basic question animating this “uniquely Italian” trajectory was, rather, how might “the appreciation of food and wine be articulated within a wider leftist and, more generally, oppositional discourse” (Parescoli 2003, 34). We also see this commonality where Veronelli himself marks the difference and similarity of his position to that of Petrini’s:

Because he a Marxist and I an anarchist, we would have had the same, identical purpose: to make the poor become wealthy and to curb the power of the rich [. . .] He would have defended, loved, the Marx, the Engels, the Gramsci; me, Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin (Veronelli, in *Altreconomia*, 107, my translation).

To think of such work on food and wine as political requires thinking “politics” in a manner that does not reify the latter itself as a matter of parliaments and protests alone.

It also requires taking an interest in popular customs, in a way in which the dominant self-identifying “revolutionary” actor (the PCI) did not. Both the thinking on politics and interest in popular customs are presupposed where the radical *contadino* of Critical Wine has been constructed. If this combination was long absent, the social space where it would finally eventually emerge was already beginning to take shape when Soldati and Veronelli were undertaking their pathbreaking work in the late 1960s. To account for the last strand along which the historical anthropology conducted here leads into the present, I turn next to the history of these spaces.

#### *3.5.4. 1968 and the Radical NOW*

In this section, we move from the politicisation of food and wine to the specific milieu in which the wine of the winemakers in this study was staged in the context of the *Terra Trema* 2016. Historically, we must trace this political space to the protests associated with the year 1968. The period was here also one of unrest, led by actors very different from the qualified workers at the centre of communist imaginaries of revolution (stereotypically, students). It is with this time and context that the space for the *Terra Trema* 2016 originates: Social Centres, spaces permanently occupied by actors belonging to the radical left. It was in Milan that the first wave of occupations appeared, and some 50 or so Social Centres had been established by 1977 (Ginsborg 1993, 382; Mudu 2004).

Challenging any hegemony exercised by the PCI on the sphere of radical politics, a host of radically left but non-party alternatives emerged – of “feminism, environmentalism, anarchy, and Communist groups that criticized the Communist Party from the Left and from outside the parliament” (Parescoli 2003, 31). And the difference here was not only one of ideological content, but also of the form through which politics is articulated.

The PCI favoured a strategy that called for collective sacrifice ‘now’, for the sake of distant future liberation, and “Communist Party events were mostly noted for their extreme asceticism and overtones of Catholic morality” (Leitch 2003, 449). In the politics of 1968, by contrast, sensual hedonism moved to the front, and political intervention was increasingly oriented towards the immediate present – *now*.

Many of these early Social Centres would soon falter. The *Leoncavallo* itself is one site that survived, but increasingly became a self-involved site where the already initiated could spend time in debating how to liberate members of the Red Brigades from prison, rather than in engaging with the local community (Membretti 2007). Then, in 1985, a second wave appeared (Mudu 2004, Mudu 2012). It was in this period of occupations that many of the characteristics that unify the Social Centres into a diverse but interconnected whole first appeared: the practice of self-identifying on the basis of the acronyms “CSOA”, or “CSA”; public meetings as the privileged means of organisation; self-financing, primarily through the sale of snacks and beverages for events. Finally, these Social Centres had (and have) shifting but close associations with networks “close to the extreme political left and made up of either communists or anarchists” (Mudu 2004, 922). This is also to say that they do not possess any definite connection with one or the other. Consequently, among the “politicised punks” frequenting the Social Centres, previously disconnected radical traditions would intermix and mingle (Mudu 2012, 413).

That said, here we have not quite yet arrived at the 2016 “present” that is the contemporary time for the ethnography. And we have not quite traced the articulation between these spaces and ideas about peasanthood, of the kind intimated already in the work that writers such as Soldati and Veronelli had initiated in the preceding decade. In

the last period discussed, however, things were changing which brought food producers – peasants – up front. As the 1990s rolled into place, events in faraway locations would act as a decisive catalyst. The specific date was 31 December 1993, and the place was Chiapas, Mexico. There and then, Zapatista rebels issued the First Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle. Largely unanticipated, a challenge to the global world order erupted, and did so invoking ideas about small farmers, land reform, and libertarian socialism. The response from the Social Centres of Italy was strong and immediate (Membretti and Mudu 2015). In the wave of “alter-globalisation” protests that would follow, these same Social Centres were key sites for mobilisation.<sup>41</sup> And, at this point, as peasant farming and revolutions conceptually converged, there was also a conjunction of the trajectory of Veronelli to that of the Social Centres.

I have already presented Veronelli’s 1999 “Letter to Extremist Youth” as a political breakout moment. Notably, the very range of what the letter counts as politically meaningful is broad. Craftsmanship is presented as a radical revolutionary practice, “a thousand dimes more revolutionary than any act of violence, and more outrageous and detrimental to capital and power” (Veronelli 1999). Thus, he asks the extremist to which the letter is addressed to go out and study and recuperate the vernacular crafts of their local regions, in particular those related to the cultivation and care for agricultural products. As he would clarify elsewhere: “the revolution is not in factories and plants – at least, it cannot start from there, where they are slaves – the revolution, its possibilities, are in the fields” (in Veronelli and Echaurren 2008, 57, my translation).

---

<sup>41</sup> As tensions came to something of a boiling point in connection with the 2001 G8 meeting in Genoa, the young man shot dead by police at close range was himself a regular of a Social Centre by the name *Zapata*. In the very same days as the final words were added to this section, Valli Unite released a wine titled *Gira Zapatista*, decorated by a label depicting a group of people wearing baclava of the *zapatista* kind.

This, to be clear, does not call for a return to any kind of “untouched nature”, such as that celebrated in ecocentric ideologies. Rather, Veronelli’s understanding of “the respect” for the nature in question is that expressed by “those who work well, those who use the harvest [...] the olives, the grape harvest” (Veronelli and Echauren 2008, 39-40, my translation). That is, the “nature” in question here is the human landscape associated with the figure of the peasant.

It was in this spirit – of a revolutionary celebration of peasantry – that the first festivals of Critical Wine were convened in several Social Centres (including, as noted above, the *Leoncavallo*). The visitors and producers who gather at these festivals number in the thousands, and surely come for a great number of reasons. There is a logic to the staging and performance of both producers and visitors, however, which makes sense in a way that transcends the individual subject. And all this amounts to a story of what it means, at this particular moment, according to this particular logic, for a person to be *a peasant*. The horizons of significance that underwrite this meaning, finally, are again the horizons of historical time. To conclude this discussion of the contemporary shape of the peasant trope, I turn directly to the significance of these horizons of past and future.

#### 3.5.5. *Modern History, as Progress turns to Crisis*

“There are cogent arguments”, historian François Hartog argues, “for situating the modern regime of historicity between the two symbolic dates of 1789 and 1989” (Hartog 2015, 104). This is the “regime” whose Italian inception I traced above (in Section 3.3), and whose contribution to the lack of articulation (in important political ideologies) between peasants and revolutions I explored in Section 3.4). In place of this older regime, Hartog argues, a “presentist” regime of historicity has gained prominence,

characterised by “the sense that only the present exists, a present characterized at once by the tyranny of the instant and by the treadmill of an unending now” (Hartog 2015, xv). While I have titled this section with a symbolic date later than 1989, Hartog here names those implications I have sought to trace in three Italian contexts (agricultural politics, food and wine, and Social Centres). What I have teased out is that that has changed (from the period depicted in Section 3.4.), in order for the figure of the peasant to articulate with the concept of revolution. The answer, as we have seen, connects with transformations of history and time.

I have already noted Koselleck’s argument that the modern experience of history is premised on a certain asymmetry between the space of experience and the horizon of expectation (see 3.3.2). This experience, in turn, is premised on a certain perceived velocity of social change, a velocity that is fast, but not too fast. In this vein, Bryant and Knight (2019, 72) observe that we often find that a comportment in terms of expectation underwrites “communal orientation to the future”, and that “expectation appears to be the orientation most amenable to narrative in the mode of historical time”. Or, as Baudrillard puts it, a “degree of slowness (that is, a certain speed, but not too much) [. . . is] needed to bring about the kind of condensation or significant crystallization of events we call history” (Baudrillard 1994, 1).

Where the concept of (historical) progress could once serve as a reference point for synchronising the multiplicity of real times, another coordinating concept has now come to the fore: Crisis (Jordheim and Wigen 2018).<sup>42</sup> The concept of crisis has been tied to the modern sense of history from its inception (Roitman, 2013). As it ascends to

---

<sup>42</sup> Crisis, here, refers to a broader sense of time and history, rather than to the crisis of any specific object or entity (such as finance, ecology, etc.).

a place of primacy, however, the very coordinates of history change, as does the relation of the present to its past and future. “Uncanny” is the word that Rebecca Bryant uses to describe this present, structured by its relation with “futures that cannot be anticipated” (Bryant 2016, 20). Janet Roitman, in turn, notes how crisis “evokes a moral demand for a difference between the past and the future such that prognosis and the very apprehension of history are defined by the negative occupation of an immanent world: What went wrong?” (Roitman 2011). We can already see this in Soldati, and his admission of his “counter-revolutionary” hopes to reverse the trajectory that had sent Italians down a mistaken path. And we see this even more explicitly in the Slow Food Manifesto. Published in close proximity to Hartog’s “symbolic year”, the manifesto addresses an “us” of people having collectively taken a wrong turn somewhere, which is then specified as pertaining to industrialisation.

What changes through all of this is also the frame of reference for actions within history. Modern historical consciousness, as discussed above, underwrites the way in which political positions can at all be designated as either “progressive” or “conservative”. As the temporal coordinates that are presupposed by such identifications unravel, however, political possibilities come to emerge in a “static space” of simultaneously co-existing alternatives (Rosa 2013, 50), and thus “the present becomes littered with the detritus and memory of former existences: forgotten, repressed, ‘outmoded’ ways of life that in various ways and for different reasons may then be re-temporalized into alternative projects” (Hodges 2001, 210).

The politics we find here is one that is difficult to situate within the immanent coordinates constructed by the concepts of “progress” and “revolution” explored above. Soldati’s dream is revolutionary – but it is that of a counter-revolution. Not so much

anti-capitalism as in the first instance but anti-industrial, meaning that the index by which the dominant “revolutionary” actor (the PCI) understands the direction of revolutions is obviated. But what has changed here is *not* so much the way in which peasants are presented as embodiments of the past. Instead, what is challenged is the initial presumed connection between “revolution” and historical “progress”.

Take again the 1999 letter that Veronelli addressed to his extremist youth. Veronelli himself knows (he writes) that his presumptive readers are predisposed to search for what is always new, always different. So, what sort of reception could he expect when calling for such people to study and recuperate the vernacular crafts of their local regions? What Veronelli insists is this: that, contrary to how they have come to appear, “tradition” and novelty are by no means opposed. At least, that is, if tradition is understood not as a “pedestal”, but as a “stepping-stone” (Veronelli 1999), not as a museum for reified products put on display, but as a resource that is active, alive, and potentially always new. Somewhat paradoxically, if the project of modernisation took its form from its own propulsion away from “tradition” and into a brave new future, then a *rejection of this rejection* of pastness is itself a radically novel reconfiguration. It is in this sense, as Veronelli addresses his “extremist” readers, that “if we want to go very, very far, we have to take a step back” (Veronelli 2004). The resonance with Giuseppe’s insistence on the need to “take a step back”, but not to things “as they were” should, I hope, be clear (see Section 1.1).

There is one indigenous Italian scholar who puts his finger on these matters better than anyone else: Giorgio Agamben. Perhaps this has to do with his proximity to the events discussed here: in 1964 he played a small role in a film by his friend Pasolini, and in 2005 he was scheduled to appear at one of the earliest Critical Wine events. At any



rate, in a text from the same period Pasolini published his own essay on the death of the fireflies, Agamben claims that “[t]he original task of a genuine revolution” is above all “to ‘change time’”, and that “[t]he vulgar representation of time as a precise and homogeneous continuum has thus diluted the Marxist concept of history” (Agamben 2017[1978], 99). Here, Agamben construes the temporal dimension as the decisive structuring element to the kind of “historical materialism” that – like that of the PCI – “pursue[s] an empty mirage of continuous progress along infinite linear time” (Agamben 2017[1978], 115).

This, in turn, points to one reason why the Social Centres (unlike the PCI) proved so receptive to festivals, revolutions and pastness all at once. We see this in the underpinnings for which the centres are characterised by acting as sites for self-provisioning of the “services” from which the neoliberal state has retracted (Pitti 2018; Zamponi 2019) in the form of “direct social action” (Zamponi 2019, 384). This is no longer the PCI strategy of moving a collective forward in history. It is in this *now* without future that the past is no longer that which is irrecoverably “left behind”.

Again, in connection to Agamben, finally, we glean some of the significance of the change of medium for telling stories about peasants and peasantry, which we have followed from a novel to a film to festival, wine and food. The latter remain devices of hedonist enjoyment (in the present) as much as symbols of the past. But, perhaps precisely, therefore, they help make the past present in a new way. For, as Agamben puts it, “for everyone there is an immediate and available experience on which a new concept of time could be founded. This is an experience so essential to human beings that an ancient Western myth makes it humankind’s original home: it is pleasure” (Agamben 2007[1978], 114).

### **3.6 Concluding first encounters: From festival to field.**

#### *3.6.1. The Enduring Beginning*

I left Italy and the *Leoncavallo* on the Tuesday that followed the festival. I brought no wine back with me. But I did carry the book on the political struggles of Veronelli. I would soon acquire yet another small Italian book, published in 2012, which contains the autobiography through which one winemaker tells his story about his own path into the world of wine. In this latter book, you find the following account of the first edition of the same festival I had myself just visited:

[The first festival] at Leoncavallo is something that will remain forever in our hearts. These three days are literally magical. An incredible, contagious, electrifying energy, you can breathe in the stands and in the corridors. Everyone is possessed by it. Meetings, music, debates, tastings, everything is simply as it should be. Above all, we understand that we are not alone. That there is a semi-unknown reality, submerged, of enterprises, people, winemakers, farmers who think the same way, that act with an eye towards consumers and nature, who do not want to comply with the rules of wine industry (Dottori 2012, 43, my translation).

The author in question would later become one of my key interlocutors. In person, he would sometimes be decidedly less optimistic. I recall one afternoon, many months later. The author and I had consumed more than our usual share of wine for lunch (I do not recall why, it might have been raining too much for us to return to the vineyards). Leaning back in his chair, my interlocutor let out a deep sigh, followed by a statement of exasperation: “It was a special moment... The time of the anti-G8 protests in Genoa, of no-global, all that”. Then: “Now, the energy has disappeared a bit. All came to

nothing [ . . . ] But if you speak to people around my age, who make *Vino Naturale* in Italy today... to me, to Flavio [at Valli Unite]... everybody was hugely influenced by these events”. This “influence” has been decisive for his comportment both on and beyond his farm. The “nothing” that everything was said to have come to, thus, at least partly belongs to the perspective of a particularly pessimistic afternoon. Doubtlessly, however, things have changed.

In 2014, a writer and journalist by the name of Simonetta Lorigliola – an associate of Veronelli, who was herself involved in the gestation of Critical Wine from its very beginnings – published a short summation of what the project (in her opinion) has now come to. “Did the imaginative heritage and disruptive power of [Critical Wine] die with its end?”, she asks, and did Veronelli “bury his ideas of a liberated gastronomy with his ashes? Are we left with only inert memories?” (Lorigliola 2014, my translation). She concludes: *No*. The project provided a “Veronellian” toolbox, of concept and ideas and practices, which can be picked up again, and put (once again) to wholly new and disruptive use. The language here is that of the engaged activist rather than the ethnographer. Yet it manifests one “indigenous” self-conception that it is possible for an ethnographer to develop and follow up on. Taking the toolbox itself as a specific peasant trope, my concern in the remainder of this study is with the tools that belong to it: the practices that (in this construct) define the (possibilities of) the peasant.

As we move forwards, what has been achieved so far? What this Part III of the study has contributed is an etymological account of a form of (radical) peasant nostalgia, organised in relation to a specific peasant trope. I introduced the trope by means of introducing Veronelli, and then conducted a transversal analysis of its trajectory along three steps (Sections 3.3, 3.4, 3.5). Throughout this analysis, I have traced three

intertwined but distinct domains of transformation. I have discussed *structural* changes to Italian agriculture, *representations* of these changes, and constructions of the *historical role* of the peasantry.

The last dimension has been the most significant. First, in Section 3.3, “1881”, I discuss how “the peasant” was both constituted as backwards and (concomitantly) put under the shadow of an imminent end. The context for this was the process during which the peasants of the peninsula were construed as a national peasantry, and the nation construed as a collective singular moving from its (peasant) origins towards the horizon of an open-ended (but non-peasant) future. In the following section (3.4: “1948”), I discuss how such images of peasantry, nationhood and time would come to interact with certain conceptions of revolution. In particular, I discuss how the dominant ideology of the dominant “revolutionary” actor, the PCI, retained much of the 1881 imaginary, thus furnishing a self-conception of its revolutionary task as that of furthering the perceived historical trajectory away from the peasant-past. This 1948 (relative) non-engagement with peasantry as such is significant for situating the (Section 3.5) “2016” representation. At this last point, peasants remain figures associated with the past; simultaneously, however, they are a reference point for revolutionary imaginaries. By tracing the political culture of the non-PCI leftist sphere to which this imaginary belongs, I show how this constellation is not formed by dislodging peasantry from pastness. Instead, it is formed by confounding the past-future coordinates of historical time, so as to dislodge the concept of revolution from its presumed orientation towards a historical future different from the past.

This is a line of transformations intelligible as a shift from an ethos shaped by progress to one shaped by crisis. In the context of revolutionary thought, this shift is one where

Lenin's famous question, "What is to be done?" is displaced by the question "What went wrong?" A political ethos can take form, then, in the mode of critical nostalgia: a nostalgia that would return to a point past, but not in order to recreate this past as it was, but to bring its unrealised possibilities back into the present. In the context of this study, this is what I call *peasant nostalgia*.

Above, I also trace a scholarly trajectory running parallel to the history discussed in the preceding paragraphs. In particular, I show how a specific 1990s anthropological certainty – that the peasantry is, "analytically speaking", gone, as a viable mode of production – was already losing its foundations when first formed. Regardless of what may be the case about peasants themselves, the scholarly landscape "[i]n the aftermath of modernization" is one in which "it is increasingly recognized that the peasantry will remain with us, in many new and unexpected forms, and that we need to come to grips with this both in practice and in theory" (van der Ploeg 2008, xvii). In passing, van der Ploeg here puts his finger on it – the aftermath of modernisation. This also marks the aftermath of the "end" of the peasantry. Not in the sense of a trajectory completed, but as the "end of the end of the peasantry", as the exhaustion of the modernist paradigm that construed "peasants" as characters always on a relentless trajectory towards their unavoidable end.

Now, scholarly sentiments such as those represented here by van der Ploeg are far from universally accepted in the literature. These debates remain perpetually stuck in the conundrum identified by Redfield – that one person might identify peasantries in one way, and the next person in another (see 2.2.3). These scholarly choices, however, harbour immanent connections to the processes active within the history of Italy itself. Thus, we see the modernist paradigm at work in the dominant interventions by the

Italian state; the Leninist model at work (via the Soviet Union) in connection with the PCI; finally, in connection with the broader environment around Critical Wine, we find a decisive return of Chayanov's thinking. But what this connection to immanent processes reflexively reveals about the scholarly paradigms is the extent to which their "choices" are themselves underpinned by differing models of historical time.

The representation of peasantry discussed in this section belongs to a cultural space somewhat separate from any "peasantry" in and of itself. I have nonetheless sought to note how these representations recursively shape the material practices of agriculture itself (as when the 19<sup>th</sup> century promotion of fertilisers was already underwritten by an ethos aimed at making Italy "catch up" with its "more advanced" neighbours). As we arrive at the agriculturists connected with the 2016 festival, that is, with those who are my immediate interlocutors, the connection between representation and material practice is immediate. These are actors who (in ways I explore in detail below) are in a position to regulate their own agricultural practices on their own lands, and who go on to do so (partly) informed by conceptions of what is entailed by the enactment of peasantry.<sup>43</sup> These conceptions about peasantry, in turn, are by no means such as have been passed down within any supposedly isomorphic peasant society to itself. They are, instead, the peasant trope whose gestation I trace in the present section.

There is no clear geographical delineation of the distribution of this image except the bounds of the Italian nation, and the fieldwork is likewise "co-produced" in relation to this spatial frame (see 2.3.7).<sup>44</sup> The connection between the sites, instead, is that gleaned

---

<sup>43</sup> It is at this point of its instantiation within processes of production I find it viable to shift from Wagner's vocabulary of "trope" to Gudeman's "focal metaphor".

<sup>44</sup> The national framing here means only that the imaginaries discussed here are found across Italy, and that they have hardly travelled elsewhere. This does *not* mean that the ideas about peasantry I have discussed here are the only ones found in Italy, or that they are the dominant one anywhere in

on occasions such as when, on my first arrival in Calabria (in the deep south), I was picked up at the train station by a winemaker wearing a hooded sweatshirt with the print of the 2016 Milanese festival itself. Or when I came to the Marches (in central Italy) and met a person who had authored a book that celebrates these events in words reproduced above. Or when setting foot in (northwestern) Piedmont, and for the first time walking towards the cooperative that would be my primary field site. The name of this site had already been mentioned by my first interviewee that Monday in *Leoncavallo*. In early summer 2017, I would step off a minibus in a small and seemingly empty village and follow the direction of a small hand-painted sign pointing the direction to a small side road. Only a minute's walk later, on my right, I passed a concrete wall covered with colourful graffiti: *Il vino è il canto della terra verso il cielo*. "Wine is the song of the earth towards the sky". The original author of the phrase, I was now able to recognise, was a man by the name of Luigi Veronelli.

---

the country (except perhaps in the Social Centres). All the framings discussed in the three sections above persist and exist in parallel, and so do yet other ways of thinking and talking about peasantry.

## Part IV. The Contemporary Italian “Peasant” in Practice: Ethnographic Investigations

*This part of the study follows the peasant trope as it is (literally) put to work. It returns to the farms and vineyards of the wine producers, in order to inquire into the ways in which they seek to pattern their agricultural activity in accordance with the peasant idea. The overarching aim of Part IV of this thesis is to inquire into the logic by which the wine producers themselves interpret their practice of production. This inquiry makes use of both ethnographic and historical material, and involves discussion of how parts of the received anthropological vocabulary must be transformed if we are to come to terms with the logic of the wine producers.*



## 4.1. The Peasant Trope Transitioning to Practice

### 4.1.1. Peasants and Peasant work

It is the morning of my final departure from fieldwork. The car is cutting through the morning fog that envelops the hills around the Piedmontese cooperative and takes one corner after the other on the way down to the nearby town. Patrick is driving, bringing my luggage and me to the train station. It is very early, after an evening assembly that had drawn out until midnight. “And then I couldn’t sleep”, Patrick tells me. “I never do after these meetings. The brain is too active, still thinking about things”.

I nod in agreement. “Same thing happened to me. But, anyway, there was one thing I wanted to ask about”.

“OK?”

“Yesterday” I continue “at the assembly. In connection with the discussion about the United Nations’ new ‘declaration on the rights of peasants’... Clara said one thing. That ‘we are not peasants’ [*non siamo contadini*]”.

Patrick, keeping his eyes fixed on the road ahead, moves his head forward and pulls down the ends of his lips in a sign of surprise: “This I have not heard”.

“Yes”, I continue. “She said it when everybody was talking at once, and it was a bit lost in the confusion. And then after the meeting she headed off very quickly. But what do you say? Are you peasants [*siete contadini?*]”.

“Yes, of course we are! We make the grain [*facciamo il grano*]!” A short break. “The bread, the wine. But there are also those... She [Clara] works with hospitality. She never goes in the fields. She never has her boots covered in mud. Also, Andrea [the chef]. He never has dirty boots!”

“OK”, I answer. “So that is what defines the peasant – the dirty boots?”

Patrick, laughing: “Well yes, perhaps a little. Also, the hands. Sometimes my hands are so dirty I don't even manage to clean them!”

Where the preceding paragraphs depict a scene of departure, here they function to introduce a transition. Through Part III, we have already come a long way from Parts I and II. In Part I, we first met the actors at the centre of this study. Noting how significant the “peasanthood” of these actors is to themselves, the study adopted this concern (and its object) as the guiding theme for itself. Part II presented the field sites chosen to study this theme and positioned the research project in relation to existing theoretical and methodological resources. The immediately preceding Part III, above, consists of a detailed exercise in historical anthropology, aimed at excavating the “etymology” of the trope, the *contadino*, that binds the fieldsites together into one interconnected whole. Here, in Part IV, we follow this trope back towards those who pick it up for themselves – a group of wine producers, all directly connected to Critical Wine, who shoulder the role of the *contadino* in the form that the festivals put on display.

The introductory vignette above serves to emphasise two things. First, Patrick's certainty (in contrast to Clara's highly atypical comment) that he and the fellow members of the cooperative (and, by extension, those elsewhere in Italy with whom they are associated) *are* peasants. The second point pertains to how he identifies this peasanthood: not with wearing peasant clothes (unless that means clothes marked by dirt); not with community rituals of the kind early Europeanist anthropology was keen to document; and not even with direct family bonds to the local peasantry (absent in the case of Patrick). The relevant sense in which Patrick is a peasant (to himself) is manifest in *how he works*; it is found with the hard labour, of a kind that leaves hands so tough

and dirty that they can barely be restored to a clean state. These sentiments exemplified by Patrick, sentiments about himself and others, are replicated at all locations encountered in this study, and make up part of what binds them together to begin with. More than anything, the winemakers seek to reproduce peasantry by working as peasants work – or *worked*, insofar as the winemakers self-consciously recreate older productive practices absent from modern industrial farming.

Recall the questions posed for this study. I asked, about a group of wine producers, who they *are*, what they *do* in the course of work, *why* they go to such lengths to produce wine in this manner that they do, and what peasantry *means* to them. Part III provides a thoroughgoing response to the last question. This also serves to justify my preceding claim that we can speak of a “community” (see Section 2.3.7), which despite its widespread distribution can be described in terms of the “they” used in the former three questions. This is what I ethnographically document, explore and analyse throughout the present section (IV), as we turn to the practice of production, as it takes place in the sites in Calabria, Puglia, the Marches, and Piedmont.

The steps of production – from caring for vines to bottling to selling wine on the market – are found in a similar form in each location. As promised in the introduction to this study, Part IV is organised so that the reader follows along these steps from vineyard to glass.<sup>45</sup> In order to simultaneously draw out the “difference” in search of which the study as a whole inquires, this sequence is connected with a parallel trajectory. Recall how the point where peasants become farmers has been construed ever since Wolf (1955): this is the point where all processes on the farm are subsumed to the logic of a

---

<sup>45</sup> While I generally indicate where specific pieces of data come from, I proceed upon the assumption that the situation is such as to legitimate the use of a collective singular. See, for instance, Gudeman and Rivera’s (1990) analytic approach to their “conversations” in disparate parts of Colombia.

profit-seeking enterprise. This is the logic of Capital, in relation to which the farming of the *vignaioli* must be discussed for any inquiry concerned with the specific “difference” the *vignaioli* may (or may not) instantiate in the process of constituting themselves as peasants. Thus, my inquiry involves a comparative discussion of the factors of production of classic economic science: Land, Labour, Capital. This is reflected in the structure, which has two chapters – always interlinked with each other – in relation to each factor of production. Part IV thus proceeds as follows.

In the first two chapters (4.2 and 4.3), we learn about the vineyards of the *vignaioli*; what they do in these vineyards; and how these lands are discursively construed by themselves. The comparative reference point for these two chapters is the economic category of Land. Insofar as Land refers to the interaction of economic and natural processes, these chapters put a large emphasis on how the *vignaioli* themselves construe “the natural”.

In the two chapters that follow, the economic reference point is Labour. I first show (Section 4.4) how the *vignaioli* themselves construe the nature of the peasant work they do (work as *cura*). Then, on the basis of the recognition that they work as peasants following a *choice* to do so, I inquire into the reasons and consequences for which they have made it (4.5).

Next, following the wine away from farm and onto the market, what follows is two chapters on commodity exchange (Sections 4.6 and 4.7). While the word Capital can mean money and possessions in a number of senses, I take the concept here as that of the *commodity form* that renders resources into “resources” to begin with. In these two chapters, we learn about the ways in which the *vignaioli*, in the context of Critical Wine, have sought to transform the nature of commodity exchange.

Finally, an outro (Section 4.8) provides a summary of the preceding chapters, and points to lines for further inquiry. While this chapter is followed by an analytic Conclusion (Part V) to the thesis, as a whole, the outro serves to close Part IV in the engaged and evocative (Herzfeld 1987, 12) mode of description employed in several of the key chapters that follow.

Such “evocation” is where we now begin, with a lengthy vignette aimed at conveying the ambience and character of the *vignaioli*’s everyday life among the vines.

## 4.2. Land I: People, vines, bodies

### 4.2.1. Scenes of pruning, in three stages

Valli Unite. Early winter. Morning. Night gives way to a grey dawn. Three loud knocks on the front door, the handle turns, and a red hat leans into the hallway. I cannot see the face beneath, but I recognise the voice: “We’re here!” it is Aline, one of the most experienced *vignaioli* of the cooperative. Still with toothbrush planted between my teeth, I turn to look at the time. “Still five minutes left!” Aline mumbles something inaudible and walks off leaving the door ajar. I hurry to get myself ready.

Outside, the car is waiting. A car well familiar to me from the preceding months. Grey, from dust as much as from its own natural colour, as muddy inside as on the outside, a diverse set of working tools spread on floors and trunks and pockets, an eradicable smell of sulphur clinging to the seats, and if there was any seatbelt then it was one that I myself never found. The vineyard car, in short, which the workers of the cooperative use to get to and from those vineyards too distant for a short walk.

The last time I had found myself in this car was months before, during the harvest. Then, the cooperative had been bustling with life, and several additional cars had been employed to transport all the workers. This morning, the one car holds but five persons: Patrick, in charge of organising the vineyard work; Stefi and Aline, experienced vineyard workers; myself, an anthropologist; and, finally, Gila, a dog. “You’re late”, Patrick turns to me over his shoulder, from his place behind the wheel.

“No, I’m not! It is you who are early”.

“No, look”, Patrick takes out his phone to look at the time. “Three minutes past eight!”

“Now yes. But I got to the car at eight!”

Patrick laughs, and so does Stefi. Aline and Gila say nothing. Then less than five minutes' drive to one of the vineyards furthest from the cooperative's central complex of buildings, before the car pulls over at the edge of the small gravel road that has brought us there.

The last several days have been dark and wet and grey throughout, and the vineyard soil is a thick mud that clings and cakes on boots and trousers. But the sky is finally brighter, and the fog has receded to the small hills around. The car left by the roadside, we make our way to the edge of the vineyard. Patrick yawns and reaches into his backpack. Out comes a *focaccia*, fresh from the bakery. "I woke up early, and needed something to do this morning", he mumbles, ripping himself a piece and passing the bread onward. In a circle, wrapped in layers of clothing, assorted assemblies of worn-out patched jackets, gloves, old boots filled with fodder, –our small vineyard crew stands. A plastic cup, blue, passes from one pair of hands to the next in a direction opposite the *focaccia*, bringing warm coffee from a thermos.

"We are all wearing hats", Stefi observes. "This is how you know the season is changing".

While there are only four of us present this morning – five, counting Gila the dog – the next day and the ones following, the working crew would conventionally be composed of one or two or three more persons. We work until midday, when we drive (or walk) back to the cooperative main building. There, the *mensa*: a dining hall, heated by a wood stove, where we always find the chef, Andrea, hurrying to get the warm meal and the wine out on time and set onto the long benches where all the sectors of the cooperative congregate: – the three or four persons working the slaughterhouse, those feeding and caring for the animals that are still alive, and the three or four persons who

deal with administration and communication in the office. Then back to the vineyards, to work until light recedes in the late afternoon. The next day the same and the same, until the midday meal on Saturday marks the end of the working week.

This day, the bag that brought the *focaccia* also holds the day's tools: the secateurs (always called *forbice*, scissors). Small enough to hold in one hand, with a red plastic cover over the handles, and two blades sticking out a few centimetres in front. Not different from those found in gardening stores across Europe, and one nearby store is where they are in fact purchased. It is a tool suited for one task: to cut. Coffee finished, Patrick and Stefi and Aline turn around, each heading for a row of vines. Gila follows Patrick, and so do I. The motion that defines the process of work, on this day and the ones to follow, are easy to summarise: first, bend down over the tangle of dried vine in front. Then, a quick decision, and cut, cut, and again cut. The canes are left to dangle in the air, ends twirled around the horizontal metal wires. Then the dried top part of the rootstock is removed. Turning around to look at Aline in the next row, I see she has brought a large two-handed lopper for this task. But Patrick, not without some obvious effort, cuts the rootstock using his secateurs. Both of them then use the small cutter (or just their hands) to clean what remains of the rootstock from protruding canes, leaving but one short end protruding.<sup>46</sup>

“Decide”: a word from the Latin *decidere*, composed of the parts “off” (*de-*) and “to cut” (*caedere*). A word, thus, which quite literally captures these days in the vineyards.

---

<sup>46</sup> The rootstock is the “trunk” of the vine, which burrows down into the ground and shoots vertically upwards. Canes are the tangle of “branches” that protrude from the rootstock (and from other canes). Each vine is composed of one rootstock, and a varying number of canes. Except for cases where very deep intervention is needed (up to the point of removing the entire vine) only the canes are wholly cut off in the course of pruning.



“It is now that we are deciding the whole harvest!” Patrick tells me about the cuts of the winter season. “Why keep this cane rather than the other?” I ask.

“Because it is further down”, Patrick responds. “And it is more beautiful”.

“So what makes it more beautiful?”

“Well... the size, for one. It is not too small, not too large. This here is a good size for making fruit. You can also keep thicker ones, but that’s when you want the plant to put its energy into growing”: Patrick circulates both hands upward, along the horizontal wires suspended in front of him. “It is the same for all fruit plants, pears and so”. Not too small, not too large, and what is what depends. *Dipende!* An answer I would receive over and over again. Depending on where the canes are in relation to the wires, on how much the vine has grown in relation to last year’s weather, on the adjacent vines, on injuries and nodes and rootstocks and branches. And much more, in a performance I would never fully master. Yet to Patrick and Aline and Stefi, a decision taken and executed in a matter of seconds.

“You need two years in the vineyard. At least. Before you can start pruning”. A restriction I encountered across the length of Italy. (Two years, as a minimum; in Calabria, I met one man, in his early twenties, who confided to me that only now has he been allowed to prune himself, despite having spent his “entire life” in the vineyards). Having spent considerably less than an entire life in the vineyards, there is no hint this day that I will do any pruning myself. First, one task is accorded to me: to deal with the canes left behind by the pruners. These are still firmly looped around the metal wires and need to be removed by pulling. Hard: a task that requires considerable physical effort, but not very much in the way of skill. Second, it is a task that requires a different set of tools than those involved in the primary task of pruning: a shovel, a

bag with small metal wire clips, white plastic tubes, short (1m) solid metal poles, a knife, and short, freshly cut, willow branches. On this day, this was a task undertaken by Patrick and me alone.

Equipped with the tools, Patrick bends forward over a dried vine. “Is it really dead?” he asks. He is dressed in a multi-coloured lumberjack jacket from the market in the nearby town, heavy boots and trousers already covered with mud from the humid ground. Straining to look closer, he bends in over the vine and pulls again, and again. All the canes are already cut – perhaps a mistake? But no. Patrick takes out his knife and makes a cut on the vine. A sigh of relief. “No. Not wholly dead, but the top part is. And then it’s no good for us. It will grow and grow but produce no fruit”. With some help from the shovel, we pull the vine out.

The pruners have already passed, and their role in this process is to make sure to leave a cane uncut on living vines adjacent to those that are dead. Such canes will often extend for several meters. Patrick and I then eventually arrive with our shovels and clips and tubes. Our first task is to remove the dead vine, and to dig a hole in its place; “the bigger the better” Patrick tells me, which turns out to mean some 50cm. He then shows me how to take the long cane of the living vine, to hold it with one hand and raise it up above its vine, up to the height of the lowest metal wire. The rest of the cane is then placed into the freshly dug hole. The point where it touches the ground marks the place where one folds it up against itself, carefully, so as not to harm it. You then run your hands along the cane and bend it slightly in several places. The sound of the cane cracking is the warning sign to let go and move on.

This way, the long cane receives a loop that can be inserted through the plastic tube. This tube is then placed in the middle of the hole, letting the cane move both in and out

of the same (upper) end of the tube from above. Then we fill the hole up again. “With dry soil, especially in the beginning”, Patrick tells me. “The wet soil becomes like cement. Not good for the plant”. Two metal poles then go into the soil, one next to the vine and one through the tube next to the cane. The metal clip ties the pole firmly to the horizontal wire. Finally, the purpose of the willow branches. Patrick shows me. “In April-March, we’ll be doing this all day long. Now, just watch”. Taking the cane and the metal wire in his left hand at the point where they cross each other’s paths, Patrick uses his other hand to loop the branch around both. Then a tight turn of the branch to make it twist around itself, then a loose turn, then a bend. This way, the vine cane is firmly fastened to the horizontal metal wire. Patrick then does the same for the “mother” vine. We stand up straight, stretch our backs – and move on in search of the next empty spot to dig in.

Many hours later, it is pitch black outside. Patrick and I linger in the sauna. This is quite possibly the only farmstead sauna in all of Piedmont and is a do-it-yourself (as is so much else here) construct built after a member of the cooperative became inspired by a Finnish lady he met. In the winter months, it sees occasional yet regular use. I turn to my companion. “That’s what I did today for my research. Dig holes!”

A laugh from Patrick, then his version: “But no! Come on. You are the anthropologist! You didn’t ‘dig holes’ – think, the *mama*, the children [*bambini*] – you created life today!” I’m trying to think back how many holes we dug that day. Perhaps twenty? Enough to be exhausting. Especially now that the soil – as Patrick explained – is a bit too humid and heavy for this sort of work. Still; this is good work: “Planting is always great work”, Patrick would tell me. “To help out in the process of giving birth”.

Valli Unite. Late winter. Finally, the snow appears to recede decisively to the hilltops. Below, winter pruning continues, in vineyards muddier than ever. “You should write your thesis about mud!” Stefi tells me.

“Perhaps I will”, I answer, as we file into our respective rows. I lean forward, over a grey tangle of vine canes. Scissors in right hand, I run the free hand through the riddle in front of me. Stumped, like many times before.

Flaunting traditional time-based restrictions, pruning is now a task I participate in. (“So that you would stop hanging over my shoulder pestering me with questions all the time”, the person who had first told me to go and prune some vines myself confessed, much later). Following much attentive looking, and some broad advice, I am not wholly inept at solving the riddle among the canes. But I need significantly more time than the more experienced workers, and I immediately fall behind the other workers. But this time, yet again, I get nowhere.

“Eliminate, and the answer appears [*Eliminare, e la risposta appare*]”, one person had rhymed a suggestion. That is, start by cutting the canes that are obviously of no use. But elimination is of little help this time.

“*Bah*, when I don’t know, I do!” one interlocutor had explained her own procedure when faced with a similar situation. Me, I don’t just do. I ask somebody like her. Good both for being useful in the vineyard and for recording indigenous procedures and reasoning, I had thought.

Asking questions has never been a practical difficulty. Most obviously because there is always somebody there to ask. The trellises and wires and vines of the vineyard create clearly delineated rows, which facilitates a distinct manner of distribution. Workers

would disperse so that an equal number of persons work each row. “Like a square box”, I had often thought, when looking around and seeing each person facing the same direction, and less than five meters distant from the nearest worker, and no more than ten metres from the person furthest away. When a person fell behind, somebody would drop beneath the wires in order to help the laggard catch up. Usually, at least. Exceptions had been frequent, but the preferred state of affairs remained that of moving down the vineyard together.

“Cornelis, do you have a moment?” I turn to the person working a few meters to my left. But Cornelis remains fixed on the vine in front of him, and I receive no response. Instead, Angelo, working in the row just above, drops down to have a look. “Well, you could take this for the *capofrutto*... this here for the *sperone*...”<sup>47</sup> At this point, Cornelis is already passing behind us, and glances over.

“No, not that one! Wait... this one would be better”, pointing here to another prospective *capofrutto*. But Angelo stands by his choice.

“No, look here... this is too far out in the row, it will be taken by the tractor...” “But look, here is a hole”, Cornelis points to an impression in the rootstock. I say nothing, but at this point, Patrick has also become curious and comes climbing up from two rows further down. “Oh, look, now comes another opinion!” laughs Cornelis. But no, Patrick agrees with him.

---

<sup>47</sup> These are words for different elements of the pruned vines, as identified by the *guyot* system of pruning used in this case. What I call *capofrutto* is properly called *capo a frutto*, yet never pronounced so to be audible as such. The system involves selecting one (occasionally two) canes each year for the purpose of growing the fruit. This is the *capo a frutto*. The *sperone* is a cane cut short (often only a few cm) at a place where the pruner hopes a suitable cane might grow, to use for the *capo a frutto* the following year.

All the commotion, however, has also prompted Stefi to come over, to stand in the row above the rest of us. “No, look. This cane”, the one on which Patrick and Cornelis have settled, “it’s been damaged by the frost. You should use this one instead!”

Patrick runs his hand down his initial choice. “Yes, you're right”. Still, he disagrees with her choice. “Look, let’s just ...”, then a few quick cuts. Yet a different solution put into effect. We all laugh and move back to where we left off. “This is the cooperative!” Patrick laughs, climbing down to his row.

I move on to the next vine, which presents a simpler situation. But, yet again, I have received a reminder of why my ability to ask questions (and my interlocutors’ willingness to answer them) has proven no secure access to either practical mastery or indigenous knowledge. The vineyard workers take pride in their skill and experience, and, somehow, they are able to call a lousy job for what it is. Yet there is so much disagreement. I confided as much to Patrick, one day. “Of course”, he turned to me. “We all do things a bit different. We used to argue a lot about these things. Nowadays, we just, well...” Nonetheless, at this point something else has already become clear to me. There is no one body of knowledge put to work in the vineyards, so there is nothing discrete and tangible that I can gain access to by speaking with and working alongside my interlocutors. But they are perfectly capable of understanding each other. And this understanding is mediated by a shared language, common tropes, even a unified model. While they disagree on *how* to do things, there is a great amount of tangible agreement on *what* and *why* they do what they do. And on this level, an opportunity to write in terms of a collective singular appears.

Valli Unite. Early spring. Taking a break from my own pruning, I have yet again walked over to observe how Antonella is going about conducting the task of pruning. “You

should choose the *capofrutto* in a way that you do not need to cut anything beneath it”, Stefi was telling me, as she kept on working. “That way the *linfa* can reach it, unhindered”, Stefi continued. “The *linfa* is a lot like our blood. And the vine is a lot like our bodies. Only it is not specialised... it has its functions distributed to all its parts”. “Hm, OK”, I said, leaning over her shoulder as she was herself leaning in over the vine she was pruning. “So how about the head of the vine? Does it have one?” “Ah well... That’s especially among the roots. But, also, on the edges! The plant mind is like a radar, it is always searching. Primitive society was connected with this world, world of the plants. But this connection has been lost”. At this point, Stefi makes her final cut, bends the prospective *capofrutto* a final time to check it, and stands up. Apparently satisfied. “All this”, she gestures to the vineyard all around, “is like a school. Because we want the grapes, and if we did not order like this, then it would be a mess [*un casino*]. But if we did not intervene, the vine would find its own equilibrium. Our bodies are like that too... perfectly capable of taking care of themselves, without doctors and all that”.

Blood, bodies, children. These tropes keep recurring, over and over again: “The *linfa* – it is a lot like our blood”. Or “this plant you need to prune short, so it puts its energy in the roots below. Like – this vine is just like a small baby, you see? A baby that first needs to learn to even walk”. Or “sometimes we are too hard on these vineyards. You can’t expect a teenager, 14-15 years... to know what he’s doing all the time. To control all his limbs. Plants are a lot like people. It takes a lot of time before you find your balance!” Or “those damaged vines over there, they might do badly the next several years. Old people need more time to recover... I am older than you, and if I break a leg I need more time to recover than you do!” Stefi’s analogy of the vineyard with a school

for such vine children was perhaps less common. But it was by no means unique. A statement from the other end of Italy: “Listen” – an older Calabrian vignaiolo told me, “The vines don’t need us, they know how to grow. And they will always produce no matter what you do. But if you leave it...” Pausing a moment. “It is like a child. If you leave a child in the jungle what will happen? What will it learn? What will it produce?” Now gesturing intently, pointing towards the vine next to our feet, “Will it have an education? *Nothing*. The child will only learn to nourish itself. It is the same with the vine!”

Throughout the year’s cycle, the vineyard loops human labour into its labyrinthine pattern. This labour is the labour of care – as with children. This is not to say that the *vignaioli* are not aiming for a goal of their own, over against that of the vines themselves. But it is to say that this result – healthy, beautiful and balanced grapes – is not brought about by their own autonomous powers. As one of the more experienced vineyard workers explained to a novice, on the latter’s first day in the vineyards: “If the vines are doing well, you will have good grapes. And if you have good grapes, you will have good wine. It’s like... the vineyard just wants to be loved by you! Ha ha! OK, but seriously. If you are good to the vine, it will give you good grapes in return. At least you can hope. Hope is all you can do!”

#### 4.2.2. *Land and hierarchy, corporeality, care*

The scenes above have depicted the activity – to recall the introduction to Part IV – that marks Patrick’s hands as peasant hands, and the lands in which they gain the dirt that does the marking. It does much the same for all the other producers, whether we find them in vineyards in Piedmont, Calabria, the Marches, or Puglia. The preceding sub-chapter provides the “evocation” (Herzfeld 1997, 23) by which we can gain a first grasp



of the world of the *vignaioli* and the place of land within it. In the following chapter (4.3), which is composed of several sub-chapters of its own, I present a thorough discussion of the meaning of “land” and “nature”. Here, in the present chapter (4.2), I present the grounding facts about the objects this meaning is directed toward. It grounds the preceding evocation by means of a more distanced description of these lands (and how they have been constructed), and concludes with an analytical reflection on the scenes above, which carries us into the next chapter (4.3.).

But first, the lands themselves. This study deals exclusively with lands that are vineyards, on which grapes are cultivated for the production of wine. Valli Unite cultivates around 20 ha of vineyards, while the one in Marchese cultivates 10. As for the family farms, the one in Calabria cultivates 8 ha, the one in Puglia 5 ha, and the one in the Marches, 5,5 ha. These sizes are typical for farms in the world of Natural and Critical Wine. Most of these lands are owned by the farmers themselves, originally acquired by inheritance. Some lands have been purchased, and some is rented from neighbours, but only to a limited extent. In these vineyards, grapes are cultivated, and ordered in a manner where one varietal grows alone in one place. The varietals in question are mostly local and “autochthonous” to the respective locations. Local varietals, the *vignaioli* will say, are better because they are adapted to the specific local conditions.<sup>48</sup> Thus, one finds the *Timorasso*, *Barbera*, *Dolcetto* and *Croatina* in Piedmond (see 2.3.1). The lands in the Marches grow central-Italian varietals such as *Pecorello*, *Sangiovese*, and *Verdicchio*. The Southern farms, finally, grow southern (and very locally confined) varietals such as *Gaglioppo*.

---

<sup>48</sup> In one case – on the farm in Puglia – I became involved in the ruminations of the owners about whether or not they should now plant vines from still further south in the region, in order to anticipate the warmer weather expected from ongoing climate change.

These vineyards do not appear out of nowhere. While the creation of a new vineyard is not part of everyday work, it does happen on occasion. Typically, the field-to-be will be demarcated and ploughed, and the distance between the prospective lanes measured out by a stick cut to the desired length. On the two ends between which the projected vine rows will stretch, a wire is rolled out to mark their position. These wires end at metal trellises outside the edge of the field itself, and further trellises are erected along the lane so projected. The end trellises are then fastened by means of metre-long spikes screwed into the soil beneath them (“as straight as possible beneath the pole... but definitely not too far in. Better to have it further out in that case!”) to which metal wires are pulled and fastened. Further metal wires are then run the full length of the vineyard row (vertically positioned on three levels, with a double pair on top).

Once poles and wires are in place, it is time for the vines themselves. There are two primary methods for vineyard propagation: massal selection and clonal selection. The latter, sometimes referred to by the *vignaioli* as “the new way”, has been important since the 1960s. Essentially, a select vine is used to create an indefinite number of clones, which are cultivated in a plant nursery. These are then purchased and planted by the vineyard operators in the form of *barbatelle*, where the select vine has been grafted onto an American rootstock.<sup>49</sup> The task of the vineyard operator then becomes that of digging a hole, depositing the *barbatella*, and filling the hole back up again with soil. While almost all of my interlocutors have propagated some of their vineyards by means of clones, it is a practice that is consistently devalued. There are three primary

---

<sup>49</sup> The reason for the grafting is the wine louse (commonly known just as “phylloxera”) that arrived in Europe from the Americas in the late 19th century, and which devastated the majority of the continent’s vineyards. Grafting is made to attach the vine to resistant rootstocks. All but a minuscule number of vineyards are now grafts. A law regulating the varieties available for purchase was introduced in 1968 (68/193/EEC). As of 2020, there are 569 certified varieties available as listed by the *Registro nazionale delle Varietà di Vite*.

reasons. The first is the risk that the plant nursery will send you vines different from the one you order, which you will typically discover only once they are already planted and growing (“Well, that’s what they sold it to me as. But you never know...”, one *vignaioli* ruminated about his doubts on a row of recently planted vines whose leaves did not look like what he expected). The second is the matter of biodiversity (“With the clones, the vines all become *the same*. Then they lack the strength to resist... without them you have more diversity, and with more diversity the field is more balanced”, spoke Francesco, in Puglia). Finally, a matter that some emphasise more than others: with the clones, the basis for your wherewithal is put in the hands of the nursery and the specialist, and you (the land-working *vignaiolo*) lose some of the autonomy of the self-managing peasant.

To the *vignaioli*, such clonal propagation is “the new way”. The “old way”, by contrast, is massal selection. Conventionally, you select a number of cuts from neighbouring fields, which you graft yourself. To this purpose, my interlocutors rely on forms of field grafting, where you attach the selected cut to a rootstock already planted. This “older” method is much preferred: you maintain the autonomy of your work, you know what you get, and you maintain the biodiversity of your field. Furthermore, by not introducing material from elsewhere, you retain an (alleged) connection of the vine to the place itself (“When you work with *massal* selection, the vines come from the territory. And they have a *memory* in them, something that makes them better adapted to the local area...”). All *vignaioli* with whom I work also propagate fields in this way. The reason they do not work *exclusively* in this manner, despite the high value accorded it, pertains primarily to the major vine surgery involved in field grafting. The skill required to do it successfully is significant, and many would not venture to do it this

way. (As Elizabeth explained to me in Puglia, while we were underway planting clones, the less preferred way: “We used to have an old *maestro* from around here, who did it [field grafting] for us. But then he died a few years back. So now we have to purchase the vines...”).

All this work leaves you with a structure that, with due maintenance and repair, can remain indefinitely. A vineyard, in short. These are enduring fixtures of the landscape, and while none of my interlocutors give vines or leaves or canes a name, all vineyards have one. These names are used only locally, and sometimes refer to a person who the vineyard may originally have belonged to (“the vineyard of Franco”); to a characteristic feature (“the vineyard of the olive [trees]”); or some other identifier (“we call this vineyard *Cayenne* [. . .] with the heat here, and the hillside . . . It is the name of the prison in *Papillon*, do you know it?”). In discussions with non-locals, such names disappear from use. In encounters of the latter kind, nonetheless, the identity of the *vignaiolo* is bound up with these places – the lands that are theirs and that they cultivate. Its existence underwrites their identity in both a generic (*vignaiolo*) and qualified sense (a *vignaiolo* whose lands are *there* – from the place indicated on the bottle). Insofar as the lands and their location are the primary means by which the *vignaioli* identify themselves to others, to be a *vignaiolo* is in a sense both to have and to be had by lands. The identification owes much to time spent in these vineyards. Sub-chapter 4.2.1 shows us what this time looks like in the period of winter pruning. But, there are more steps along the annual vineyard cycle, before it reaches the harvest. The winter pruning, also known as “dry pruning” [*potatura secca*], is the first in a sequence of four primary periods. As spring comes around in full, “tying” [*legatura*] will follow, where the *vignaioli* pass all the vines again so as to tie them fast towards the wires and metal poles

(as Patrick said, above, “In April-March, we’ll be doing this all day long”). Then the long and repetitive “green pruning” [*potatura verde*], where the *vignaioli* move up and down the vineyard rows to remove auxiliary twigs and canes that spring forth – removing enough to let the air through so as to avoid disease, but not so many as to expose the grapes to too much sun. Then, in late summer, the vineyards are left alone to complete their fruit-bearing task. Until finally, come early autumn, arrives the frenzy of the harvest. In winter, the sequence begins anew.

At each step of this progress of the vineyard cycle, the tasks involved in vineyard management require more time, but less skill. Consequently, the size of the working crew for the vineyards also expands. From the winter season, with its small but very experienced group, to the harvest, when *any* available hands are welcome. This dynamic needs to be handled somehow, in order to balance with the worker’s needs for labour. The solutions depend on the size of the enterprise. At the cooperative, winter holds other tasks to be done – from repairs to slaughtering animals – that keep workers busy before they are gradually moved into the vineyards as the season advances. At some point in spring, a number of seasonal labourers will also be employed and housed in the straw building by the campsite. The family farms often find ways to manage their vineyards with few seasonal-only employees (all except the one in Puglia, however, have one or two “non-owner” workers employed throughout the year). Finally, during the harvest, the need for labour rises to a great intensity. This creates a dynamic where a great array of workers is brought in – most not agricultural labourers, but students, holiday-makers, migrants, and drifters. Most are recruited from networks of families and friends. Sometimes these workers stay the whole harvest, sometimes (especially the friends and relatives) they come to participate for only a few days. This sets the

scene for a period of incredible intensity, where days are filled with work and nights with festivities.

Now, in the scenes in the preceding sub-chapter (4.2.1), I depicted more than land and work. I also depicted something about myself, important for the analysis that follows below. Winter pruning is the season when the work requires the highest degree of skill, and my own participation therein was regarded as highly unusual. Such participation – as I explained above (in Section 2.3.6) – was what I intended for the methodological baseline of the present study. But soon, as depicted, this focus moved towards matters of language, a mode of reasoning, and a “focal metaphor” applied to make sense of vineyard work (Gudeman 1986). As I indicate in the final scene, this is a metaphor consistently found among the *vignaiolo* with whom I work, right across the entire Italian peninsula.

The baseline of this focal metaphor is found at the point where an equivalence is asserted between the *bodies* of vines and people – where, for example, the *linfa* of the vines are a lot like “our blood”. This analogy constitutes the process of work as a mode of corporeal interchange. Whether vine or human, these are not dead and mute bodies. These are bodies with a will, set on their own trajectories of growth and expansion. Thus enters the hierarchical dimension – the school – through which vineyard work is construed as a matter of setting up determinate pathways for the vine’s own development. While this is done to make the growth of the vine serve human purposes, such interventions are not construed as brute assertion of human will. A reciprocal dimension of care (“love”, in the example above) remains throughout, through which the guiding activity of the *vignaiolo* comes to take on the character of parental care for “children” rather than detached command.

This focal metaphor provides a link to the following, more analytical, sub-chapter. Above, I do two things: first, I describe the form and creation of what makes up the “land” of the *vignaioli*. Second, I *show* how they themselves construe their interaction with this land by means of a logic of hierarchical corporeal care. The material in which I analyse this logic has been taken from the course of everyday work, but that is not the only situation when it is invoked. Further below (Section 4.4) I return to how this logic qualifies the process of the *vignaioli*'s work in the vineyards. First, however, I remain on the topic of land so as to discuss the presence of the logic in the situations where the *vignaioli* assert the “naturalness” of peasanthood in relation to “non-natural” modes of farming.

### 4.3. Land II: Lands, humans, naturalisation

#### 4.3.1. *The question of Nature*

In line with the research questions for this study, the preceding chapter presents extensive description of *what* the *vignaioli* do on the land to constitute themselves as peasants, and *how* they go about doing so. Now, the overarching aim of the study involves inquiring for “difference” in agriculture. This is what I proceed with in this chapter. However, I do not conduct a point-by-point comparison of the material presented above with other ways of going about farming. Instead, I inquire into the manner in which the *vignaioli* themselves construe the difference between their own agriculture and that of others. It is in their “different” way of *articulating* their own difference that we find the key to proceeding towards the overarching aim of the study.

Further above, we encounter what now becomes the focus for inquiry: the claim that they work *naturally*, and make *natural* wine. In the preceding chapter, however, we see all the (human) work that the *vignaioli* themselves put into production, down to the point of creating the vineyards to begin with. What could possibly be “natural” about all of this? The present chapter provides an answer and does so in five steps. In Sub-chapter 4.3.2, I begin with a vignette that shows a typical way in which the *vignaioli* discursively present their lands and their own care for them. In Sub-chapter 4.3.3, I show how the anthropological literature on proximate situations provides few resources for coming to terms with how the *vignaioli* invoke “nature” for their land and work – precisely the anthropological profligacy to denaturalise jars uncomfortably with the *vignaioli*’s efforts to *naturalise themselves*. In Sub-chapter 4.3.4, I provide more detail on what such self-naturalisation looks like. In Sub-chapter 4.3.5, I present an etymological inquiry into Western constructs of the relation between agricultural



activity and “nature”, which demonstrates that the *vignaioli*’s efforts to naturalise draw upon different constructs of “nature” than those that the anthropological literature (on proximate topics) challenges when setting out to denaturalise. A final Sub-chapter (4.3.6) draws out the broader implications.

#### *4.3.2 The lay of the land*

Sun is shining on the rolling hills of the Marches, and the world is a lush green after a rain-soaked winter. In the front seat of the car, Lorenzo turns over to Corrado. The eyes of the latter remain turned towards the asphalt ahead. “Corrado” – Lorenzo says – “do you think there’s a chance we might stop by the vineyards on the way?” Corrado, it turns out, is not difficult to persuade. Minutes later, we pull over by the cellar, where Corrado also has most of his vines. We exit the car and walk down a small gravel path overlooking the vineyards. It has recently rained again, and the warm air is thick and heavy. In the distance, a glimpse of the ocean. “South is that way”, Corrado points straight ahead. “The mountains are on this side”, he points to our right. “And the sea is down there”, he points left. Gesticulating with both hands, the host goes on to show his two visitors – Lorenzo and myself – the lay of the land; how the sun moves up above, how strong winds often move between mountain and sea on both our sides, and how sediment from a retracted ocean has shaped the character of the soil beneath.

I had not been consulted about the decision to stop by the vineyards, but I am delighted, looking forward to see how one of my interlocutors would present his lands not to an outsider (myself) but to one of his own in-group. For despite the disparate regions my two companions call home, each having never visited the home of the other before, the connection is strong – the same kind of (“natural”) wine, the same discourse about agriculture, the same ideas about peasantry and what it takes to enact it. Even the

look is similar – T-shirts covering slender wiry bodies and beards rounding long faces with significant streaks of grey. Thus, while I had myself been shown many vineyards in such a manner, this spring morning I am presented with a situation I have never observed before: one *vignaiolo* giving a tour of his vineyards to another.

The morning is that of a wine fair, for which Corrado has taken part in its organisation.<sup>50</sup> Lorenzo has come from a wholly different end of Italy, in order to partake. He spent the previous night in Corrado's family domicile, the same as where I myself have come to stay for a few weeks. By now, I am already familiar with the talk of soils, sea and winds by which Corrado first delineated the lands that are his. Everywhere I had been in Italy, these classical elements (sun, earth, wind, the fire of the sun) had been the starting point for defining the nature of any specific vineyard. On this morning, as the two men surge in among the vines, I trail closely behind. The grass grows tall in the lanes, and flowers and herbs abound. "Good biodiversity here", falls the verdict of Lorenzo. "These are good for withstanding the *peronospora*", he adds, naming one of the more serious vineyard diseases, while taking a leaf in one hand. We walk onwards. "But the spur [*sperone*] is very long, and the trunks very low. In our area [*zona*], it would be a problem if they are kept so low". Corrado nods. The difference noted is a "problem" only relationally, towards the area (*zona*) whose defining characteristic is its abundance of water. Lorenzo takes out his phone and takes a picture of one of the vines. Then we head back to the car. There is a long way to go still, in order to reach the festival.

---

<sup>50</sup> The basic set-up would be similar to those of Critical Wine: a hall where (mostly) local producers are themselves present, and where visitors can walk around and freely try the wine and chat. One key difference is that this fair would not take place in a Social Center. Thus, it would proceed without the Critical Wine's overt political notes on the one hand, and its very intoxicated and celebratory late-night ambience on the other.

At long last, the car arrives at the town for the wine festival. Soon enough, Corrado and his wife, Valeria, who has arrived in another car, are busy setting the table where they are to put their own wines on display. Lorenzo, instead, has primarily come for something else. The author and journalist Simonetta Lorigliola, already introduced above as a close collaborator of Veronelli's, and as a person involved in the initial creation of *Critical Wine*, has recently published a book (Lorigliola 2017). The topic: Lorenzo himself, and his viticultural practice and philosophy. The festival has accorded a slot to launching the book, and so Lorenzo made a last-minute decision to come and join in himself.

This launch would take place in the halls of an art gallery, somewhat apart from the main hall of the fair. Corrado provides an introduction, Simonetta describes the book, and Lorenzo himself then answers some questions from the audience. The discussion would range from one topic to the other. But, in the midst of all this, Lorenzo makes one clarification – nobody comments, but I will carry it with me in my own mind, even more so as I find it reproduced in the book. Lorenzo is a wine producer, and that is what his “lands” are for in any economic sense. Nonetheless, he clarifies for the audience: the wine has never been the focus of his agricultural practice, nor is the wine what motivates it. Instead, the locus of concern is the land itself: the old, cultivated vineyard landscape. This, Lorenzo claims, is what he cherishes. The wine is a means towards the valorisation and preservation of the land.

At this point, this sentiment was no longer foreign to me. This was again an exemplary display of how central the peasant trope is in the world of the *vignaioli* with whom I work, and how explicit the subsidiary role of wine is. In Piedmont, I had encountered wine as “the *linfa* of the cooperative”, in whose ambit my interlocutors can enact

peasanthood (see 2.3.5); here wine was presented as the means for acquiring the wherewithal to maintain the old peasant landscape from whence the grapes grow. A natural wine is meant to be “authentic” about its place of origin and process of gestation – Corrado’s wine is supposed to be as good a representation of the land as his guided tour was for Lorenzo and I. (“Good biodiversity here”, Lorenzo had said, and the wager is that this is reflected also in the character of the wine). Thus, the wine is a means of display. And insofar as peasant landscapes are maintained by peasant work, a *good* natural wine in a sense puts on display the virtuous conduct of the peasant-cultivator.

Both Corrado and Lorenzo are leading figures on the Italian natural-wine scene. Above, I note the technical definition of natural wine: the avoidance of sulphites, industrial yeasts, and other additions in the *cantina*. But, I have not quite touched upon a still more fundamental matter. If natural wine is meant to convey the nature of a place – what defines that nature? Where is nature among these vines? What do the *vignaioli* mean when they speak of their lands and all that they themselves do on them as “natural”? Below, I argue that the *vignaioli* do not stake out an ecocentric conservationist claim, as much as they voice a challenge to a specifically modern dichotomy of nature and culture. But, this takes some work to untangle, insofar as they *do* use the word “nature” [*naturale*] and do so in a modern, “Western” context. Precisely for this reason, it is important to first scrutinise the assumptions that have shaped the anthropological literature on similar claims to naturalness in similar contexts.

#### 4.3.3. *Denaturalising Denaturalisation*

Despite generations of critique, the dichotomy between nature and culture remains as both an object of anthropological critique and a foundation for anthropological analysis (Strathern 2017b). In this sub-chapter, I show how this dichotomy structures certain

efforts to *denaturalise* – that is, to reveal the real human contingency of any arrangement first presented as something that is given by the natural order of things (see Hart 2001). While there is no study (preceding the one presented here) that discusses the discourse around Italian natural wine specifically, we find this strategy on display in anthropological literature on the proximate discourse of *terroir*.

With *terroir*, products are treated as uniquely valuable insofar as their specific characteristics stem from their connection to specific parcels of land. This construct presupposes that the qualities of the product really are a matter of the specific land rather than of procedures of work (that could be reproduced elsewhere). Demossier takes note of the consequences. Writing for Burgundy – the locus of the idea of *terroir* – she notes “the total absence of wine growers and their labour” (Demossier 2018, 62) in one representation of the place, and then for another how “all of the brochures [. . .] were coloured in ecologically friendly green with abundant pictures of vines, the soil and the site. No wine growers are present in these pictures” (Demossier 2018, 226). In this way, she finds it “striking” how the lands of Burgundy are “constructed as blessed by God to the detriment of generations of wine growers who have applied their minds, hearts and bodies to the task of creating quality wines.” (Demossier 2018, 188). A key impetus for her entire work on wine, thus, is to reveal the painstaking human labour, which *really* has created what is presented by the industry as natural.

We find similar sentiments in other anthropological work on *terroir* (Ulin 2007), and while there is yet little anthropological discussion of the recent phenomenon of “natural” wines, first reactions appear to be similar. In an informal venue, Kaplonski argues that the very name “natural wine” ought to be replaced by the term “low-intervention wine”. The reason is a contradiction he finds:

[T]he term ‘natural wine’ erases the winemakers from the picture [. . .] There is nothing natural about planting vines in rows and training them in a certain manner. There’s nothing natural about all the different varieties of *Vitis vinifera*. There’s nothing natural about pressing grapes and separating the must from the rest. There’s nothing about punch downs and pump overs. There’s nothing natural about sticking the product into oak barrels to age, let alone into bottles to sell (Kaplonski 2015).

Taken together, the ethnographic material I present in the preceding section could certainly be used to advance an argument of this kind. If I chose to do so, my aim would be to expose the real human construction of what is presented as “natural”. I have completed the first step by which to advance such an argument in the conventional way, namely to describe the human labour involved. Where most critical scholarship rests content with asserting the existence of human labour, perhaps naming the tasks – ploughing, tending, planting – I describe some of what this labour actually looks like in a concrete setting. More even than noting the ongoing annual tasks of vineyard management, I show how the very existence of the vineyard originates in a series of human tasks. But then, instead of resting content with demonstrating that the allegedly natural is really cultural, I choose to move in a different direction.

The reason is this. For somebody who passes by and casts the vineyards a glance from a distance, their rows may well appear but a feature of the natural landscape. But the *vignaioli* are not such people. It is *their own* efforts that have constructed the vineyards. One would thus expect that they are the ones least likely to fall for the obfuscations – the naturalisation of the really human – that critical scholarship sets out to expose. But, if this is so, then what do we make of the fact that they among themselves so freely speak about “nature”, “naturalness”, and “natural wine”?

Among the *vignaioli*, I never encountered the anxious sense of a contradiction that one finds in the treatment of the term by scholars and outside commentators; if remarked upon at all, it was in a matter-of-fact manner, as when one Piedmontese *vignaiolo* explained in passing that he was making “natural wine, meant in a way that also includes humans”. Likewise, there is no sign that they experience themselves “erased” (to recall Kaplonski) by the concept. On the contrary, several producers of natural wine would speak of the “pride” with which they return from festivals such as the one Corrado and Lorenzo were heading to, where they present the wines by which the nature of their localities is expressed. So, what to make of this difference between anthropologists and *vignaioli* – between the desire to denaturalise and the desire to naturalise?

As the historian Lorraine Daston (Daston 2002) notes, different people across history have “naturalised” things in a great number of ways, for a great number of reasons. What is far more culturally *specific*, in fact, is the absolute certainty that any such naturalisations are inadmissible. That is, to quote John Stuart Mill, that invocations of nature are “the most copious sources of false taste, false philosophy, false morality, and even bad law” (Mill 1885, 3). This is the metaphysical position that much anthropology itself inherits. But underpinning the position itself are two specific assumptions (Daston 2002): first, the idea that there is a distinct domain of the human, which stands over against the world (nature) that human activity acts upon (so that no human way of doing things can be any more or less natural than any other). Second, that facts of nature cannot be appealed to as criteria for judging human acts as better or worse in any manner (as doing so would be a confusion of domains, smuggling values into the world of fact).

Such are the basic commitments of much anthropological scholarship. We see this, for instance, in Graeber's insistence that "the only thing really lying behind the specific, material form of the object one desires to buy is the human energy that went into producing it" (Graeber 2001, 105). An analysis proceeding on such an assumption would discredit both *terroir* and the invocation of nature and naturalness from the outset. But the problem here is that, as Daston puts it, such an analysis would reproduce the ways in which modern scholarship has "obscured not only the history of that polymorphous notion, nature, but also that of the equally distinct forms of authority it has exercised" (Daston 2014, 587). If we are to make sense of the *vignaioli's* comfort with the concept of nature, we must dispense of the assumption that they "naturalise" what is *really* human activity. Instead, we must inquire into what kind of nature the concept really invoked by their use of the concept of nature. That said, it is time to return to the *vignaioli* themselves and their discourse on nature and the natural.

#### 4.3.4. Contemporary Peasants and their Nature

In everyday speech, the *vignaioli* use the word "nature" in a manner interchangeable with a number of related terms: *territorio*, *campo*, *vigna*. Ottavio – the co-founder of the Piedmontese cooperative – would recount how his father "took me by the hand and brought me to get to know nature [*natura*]. Only he didn't call it like that, usually he said the countryside, the fields [*la campagna, i campi*]" (in Calegari 2001, 11, my translation). I begin with this broader sense before moving on to a specific articulation made by the word nature.

With these words – *campo*, at other times *vigna*, *territorio* – we have the reference point for the working tasks discussed above (see Section 4.2). So how is the relation between their work and the nature (of the vineyards) construed? One characteristic statement



comes from Matteo, a winemaker in Cirò (Calabria). Time and time again, Matteo had told me how important it is for him that his wine “expresses” himself and its territorial origin. But, what does the wine actually express, I had finally asked. Him, or the *territorio*? The answer came without hesitation: it is the same thing [*È la stessa cosa*]. With nature as such *territorio*, the suggestion that naturalisation would “erase” (to recall Kaplonski) his efforts loses its sense. *Territorio* enfolds both land and worker. Wine, to Matteo, expresses this union. Wine, in turn, is made from grapes grown on the land. And here enters another dimension of nature: to grow grapes “naturally”, as another *vignaiolo* put it, is a matter of “letting the grapes be as close as possible to what the vine itself really wants”.

There is yet another way to invoke nature, however, where the word *natura* is used more consistently. One example is from yet another Calabrian man, “*Bello e brutto!*” beautiful and ugly, I recall him exclaiming, as he gestured towards a grove of citruses adjacent a concrete building, both visible from the vineyard in which we were standing. “Cement! *Nature* always does beautiful, the hand of man, always ugly!”. “But what about agriculture?” I had asked, “Does that not also involve the hands of men?” “Yes, sure. But that is different. That is something good!” The key significance of this statement is twofold. First, we see how nature *is* used as a manner of criticising (unnatural) human activity. Second, as we see in respect to the clarification regarding agriculture, these claims do not posit “nature” as a domain standing over against *any* human activity and use. “Nature” sets some activities apart from others; it is a word that separates some ways of using “the hands of men” from other ways of doing so.

More specifically, as we see in the typical statement in the preceding paragraph, “natural” is a term that marks the hands put to use by *peasants*. We saw this also with

Lorenzo, in how the landscape he valued so much is not wild nature, but domestic nature – *peasant nature*, if you will. All across the Italian peninsula, the *vignaioli* with whom I work make the same contrast. Peasants and nature *vs.* industry and non-nature. This is a key dimension of the peasant trope.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, it is by enacting a peasant mode of cultivation that “nature” is preserved and protected. Peasant agriculture, as Matteo insisted in Calabria, *is* a matter of “defending the territory [*territorio*]”. Whether speaking of respect or about defence, the object to be so “defended” is not wild nature, but the cultivated landscape.

In sum, it is peasants and peasant agriculture that defines “the natural”. This is how their work – as peasants – can be “natural”. But the significance of this demonstration is not just to reveal one “real” significance underlying the other. If we try to take this way of using the term nature “seriously”, as if this is what nature really is, then a broader significance of the conjunction appears. This may be an ontological challenge to modern constructs of nature, even. The key to seeing how this is so lies with a return to historical anthropology and the method of etymology (Herzfeld 1987).

#### 4.3.5 *The Etymologies of Peasant Nature*

As we see, above, the *vignaioli* who shoulder the role of the peasant shoulder the role of one who cares for and protects nature. The question follows whether such ideas might not involve a rather radical re-interpretation of what the older peasants themselves really cared to protect. Ethnographic reports on peasants paint rather conflicting

---

<sup>51</sup> Likewise, already for Chauvet, in connection with his development of natural wine (see Section 2.3.5). Chauvet was born in 1907, which made him old enough to have himself experienced the great post-war transformation of French agriculture and wine production. The significance of the technological directives for natural wine, then, ultimately amount to a repudiation of what agricultural modernization introduced. In favour, instead, of “older things” (Cohen 2013, 271). Here, “the peasant” marks the position of those whose work protects nature, while “industry” marks the position of those whose work lays nature to waste.

pictures. Redfield, for instance, defined a peasant mentality as involving “an intimate and reverent attitude toward the land” (Redfield 1956, 112), even as he was himself forced to acknowledge that no such reverence is suggested in reports from ethnographers working with peasants around the Mediterranean (southern Italy most specifically; *ibid.*, 115). Similarly conflicting images abound (cf. Foster 1965, Taussig 2010[1980], Pina-Cabral 1986).

The task for this study requires approaching these matters from a different angle. We cannot proceed, as did Redfield, on the basis of seeking patterns in how groups of sociologically defined unambiguous peasants relate to the entity of nature. Nor can we measure my interlocutors’ comportment to nature in relation to an ideal-type peasant mentality construed in such a manner. In this study, the peasantry I inquire into is found within a self-recursive trope, through which a specific group of people make sense of themselves and their work. The question, then, becomes that of the elements that have gone into composing this *specific* idea of peasantry – not how peasants in general relate to nature, but the resources by which the *vignaioli* construct their own “peasant” way of relating to nature.

As we have seen, the *vignaioli* operate with the idea that their peasant work – some of which is depicted in Chapter 4.2. above – is a manner of working *naturally*, so to also protect this *nature*. But what is the context of these ideas? How do they link up (or dissociate) with older ideas in the broader cultural context? To pinpoint the position staked out when the *vignaioli* “naturalise” their peasantry in relation to the non-natural industry, we need to put their claims in the context of a longer history. In this section, I present an etymological inquiry into how the relation between nature and the human use thereof (through agriculture) has been construed along the historical line

that leads to the contemporary *vignaioli*. I focus on a particular sequence of ideas, in a narrative that step by step moves chronologically from ancient Greece straight to the *vignaioli* today.

We begin at the beginning, where we have already found Hesiod. In the *Work and Days*, Hesiod provides a model for the cultivators' use of land. A word for nature, however, is nowhere to be found.<sup>52</sup> There is no admonition to make farming a matter of loving care for nature, nor of a painstaking struggle against her. The central concept, instead, is measure – above all the measure of time, which decides the right moment for the different tasks of farming (Slatkin 2004). Good farming is a matter of adapting farming to this measure. This is a position whose underpinnings are further clarified in Hesiod's *Theogony*. In the story of creation presented in the latter work, we learn to see the universe as an amalgam of force and intelligence. Human beings lack force of the kind that might change the cosmic order; instead, they have to rely on whatever intelligence they possess (Nelson 1998, 126). Within these ontological coordinates, the manner of human use – cultivation – is subordinate to a given order of things. While a word for nature makes no appearance, it is thus perfectly possible to conceptually distinguish – in ways lost by the time we reach both Mill and the discipline of anthropology – agricultural practice, which works either *with* or *against* a larger cosmic order (Nelson 1998).

---

<sup>52</sup> An important point demonstrated by Strathern (1980) is that it is perfectly possible for cultivators of plants to go about their business without making use of any concept corresponding to “nature”. In works of translation, the ancient Greek word *phusis* is translated into nature. But the point is often made that such translations enact a decisive displacement in the significance of the word. According to Heidegger, “We use the Latin translation *natura* [. . .] [but] with this Latin translation, the original content of the Greek word *phusis* is already thrust aside” (Heidegger 2014, 15).

As we move from Hesiod's Ascra and arrive at the fourth century B.C., we have yet another model to consider. As found in the works of Aristotle, this is a model that has already gained a certain anthropological renown: the *house*, which stands at the centre of Gudeman and Rivera's work (Gudeman and Rivera 1990). While their ethnographic material is gathered from peasants in Colombia, Gudeman and Rivera insist that this "house" is really a European construct, which endured as a conceptual "infrastructure" for the European peasantry, from Aristotle and then throughout its entire existence. The key for understanding the productive activities of peasants (Colombian or European), would thus lie with appreciating their way of modelling activity on a literal house and its parts (base, door, etc.). Value, in this house model, is a tangible substance that *always originates in the land*. The land, in turn, receives force from further along a chain that leads to elemental forces (rain, sun). The peasant cultivator, in this model, comes to occupy a position not of a conquering sovereign, but of a "midwife" (Gudeman and Rivera 1990, 25) for forces originating in precisely those ("natural") elements that Corrado had been indicating for Lorenzo and myself on his tour.

In Gudeman and Rivera's account, the reason they had to set out to Colombia for this house model lies with its displacement from the European continent. In its place, market-oriented corporations have usurped control of farming. But whence this "corporation" model? The question moves us forward in history from Aristotle, yet not all the way to the contemporary situation. First, we home in on the Italian peninsula itself, and return to Virgil. Virgil's *Georgics* were an explicit response to Hesiod, and the peasant farmstead at its centre is an image of the house model. But, while a farmer's identity had been central to Roman identity (Nelson

1998, 89), the time of Virgil's life was one when smaller farms were increasingly integrated into vast *latifundia* worked by slaves. Thus, Virgil himself wrote while facing a veritable "end of the peasantry" of his own time. In the words of his own lament: "The plow has not a scrap of honor/ Worthy it; the farmers gone, the fields grow squalid / And the curved scythe is beaten into a rigid sword (Virgil, in Nelson 1998, 89). But while Virgil celebrated the (smallholding) peasant, and wrote in a context where the word *natura* was commonplace, did he also do as the contemporary *vignaioli* do and construe peasants as kinsmen and guardians of nature? Did he construe nature as something worth protecting at all?

For our purposes here, the answer has to remain that *it is complex*. While contemporary historians often ascribe the Romans a derogatory view of nature, this does not hold universally, and Virgil himself was among those capable of showing great sympathy with natural things (Nelson 1998, 154). Similarly, he alternates between constructing the farmer as an actor involved either in amicable and reciprocal exchange with nature (as the *vignaioli* do during the course of their labours, see 4.2), or as engaged in the hostile struggle to master an adversary. Arguably, however, this ambiguity is itself the point at which Virgil reveals a depth beyond those who nowadays seek for unified conceptions of nature belonging to reified cultural units.

As Nelson puts it:

Virgil is not picturing different farms with these oppositions; he is picturing different ways in which farming exists. When the rain falls at the right time, when the spring sun brings indulgence and strength to the farm's creatures, when all things thrive, the farmer lives in cooperation and sympathy with nature. When lumps of soil resist the plow, when weeds and birds attack the

crops and disease the animals, when a storm destroys the harvest, the farmer is divided from nature and at war with her (Nelson 1998, 88).

Historiography would thus have us find Virgil at the point of an ambivalent boundary, both in respect to the development of a “binary” opposition of nature-culture and for a positive or derogatory view of the “natural” part of the construct. As we follow our chronological path towards the *vignaioli* forwards, from Rome to medieval Europe, we find instead attitudes that a long tradition of scholarship has painted as decidedly anthropocentric, dualist, and exploitative in relation to nature. Following the work of historian Lynn White (1967) in particular, the blame for this has been shouldered on the Christian religion: the Christian God was believed to have created the Earth for the benefit of man alone. Any reciprocity or boundary to its exploitation would thus be superfluous, and all manner of using nature and treating land is licensed. Now, even as the influence of such historiography lingers, contemporary accounts of medieval nature-imaginaries have long been thoroughly nuanced, to the extent that (some) “historians these days see an exact opposite trend” (Aberth 2013, 30). At any rate, older ideas about an enveloping cosmic harmony (towards which human activity needs to be ordered) had no difficulties surviving in a Christian context (see Spitzer 1963, Merchant 1980, Dupré 1993). Nor did the imaginary of the “house model”, which survived at the centre of dominant agricultural ideologies up to the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Tribe 1978).<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> What would amount to an “opposite trend”, rather than just continuity, is found with the reaction towards a series of plagues and bad harvests in the Middle Ages. Two scapegoats were located: Jews and witches. This is arguably one (not particularly flattering) ancestor of modern environmentalism, insofar as the responsibility for natural events (bad weather) was decisively put on the shoulders of

Ultimately, it is with the rise of early modern ideologies that we find a veritable reversal of such older ideas about land, nature, and use. That is, we find ourselves back in the context where the modern certainty that we must challenge any “natural fallacy” also developed, and even with the same persons (see 4.3.3). Specifically, from J. S. Mill, we find an essay called *Nature* (Mill 1874), where the philosopher himself raises the question of what “nature” really *is*. There are two possible answers, he says. Either we understand “nature” as everything that exists, or we understand it as everything that exists and is *not* Man’s creation. He himself opts for the latter. Now, among the myriad of options lost when these two alternatives are all that remains, we would find any of the older conceptions about the world as an enveloping hierarchical order. Through Mill’s decision, instead, the world is divided into but two spheres. And more than just separate, these spheres are *opposed* – Mill thus calls us to “acknowledge that the ways of Nature are to be conquered, not obeyed” (Mill 1874, 20). Here, at a point 2500 years downstream, a series of directly interlinked transformations, Hesiod’s ontology has been inverted. Intelligence itself becomes nothing but force, in the sense that its nature becomes equated with the human power to act upon and master a natural world.

With this novel construction of nature, and with its concomitant figuration of use as a matter of hostile exploitation, we find also the emergence of the modern concept of land, such as embodied in the modern farming the *vignaioli* seek to challenge. In the language of classical economics, the word “land” names one of the three factors of production. This language was foreign to agricultural treatises

---

human actors (Aberth 2013). See the final footnote of Theodossopoulos (2005, 177) for a related observation.



until later than the 17th century (Tribe 1978), and considerable conceptual work underwrites the familiar construct of “land as resource” even today (Li 2014). Yet the point at which land is so construed also marks its disappearance, in the sense that the “house model’s” manner of construing it as an irreplaceable and distinct foundation for productive activity is obviated (Gudeman and Rivera 1990). Schabas (2005) calls this a “denaturalisation” of the economy, insofar as the latter only now begins to be thought of as a phenomenon apart from a larger natural order.

In conventional “genealogical” tracts, this is the point where my inquiry might end. We have followed the etymology of “the modern” construct of nature, and thus demonstrated the fact of its contingency. However, this is where Europeanist anthropology becomes so important. Instead of taking this endpoint of the story as a given fact of European modernity, perhaps utilising it to characterise the “hinterland” marking the “us” that frontal comparison contrasts with “others” (such as do Gudeman and Rivera 1990), Europeanist anthropology reveals the much more complex reality on the ground, a reality not quite enveloped by such modern constructs. Before moving back to the *vignaioli* in Italy, we can thus make a final stop with a recent nearby situation.

This is now just across the sea that Corrado had been indicating on his tour of the vineyards (“the sea is down there”). Passing south, through the Strait of Otranto, we find an island called Zakynthos. In the final decades of the last century, this island was the stage for a conflict between rural (peasant) cultivators and urban (middle-class) conservationists (Theodossopoulos 2005). The conflict hinged on the matter of how the nature of the island ought to be used – or *not* used, as was the position the

conservationists advanced against the locals. These locals took their own right to use nature for granted. From the conservationists' side, the locals were faulted for the self-interested utilitarianism by which they treated nature as valuable only in respect to its usefulness to their own purposes. Thus, a situation seemingly opposite that of the *vignaioli* in Italy – in their failure to recognise the value of nature for its own sake, these peasants act as the *enemies* of nature. The islanders, however, protest; they *do* care for nature, at least domestic “nature”. Theodossopoulos carefully lays out the coordinates: by operating in the framework of older models, the islanders relate to a “nature” in terms of an order, approached from the perspective of a domestic sphere. This sphere may be hierarchical (with humans on top), but it is also something that encompasses humans as much as “natural” beings. Its maintenance, furthermore, takes place through the continuous expenditure of care, which binds it together by means of enduring bonds of reciprocity. (The parallel with the models invoked by the *vignaioli* (4.2.) should be clear).

For present purposes, what is most illustrative about this conflict is that it is not symmetrical; it does *not* hinge – as the conservationists assume – on the degrees of care for nature. Instead, the conflict hinges on different conceptions about the *nature of nature*, and the place of human activity in relation to it. In light of the history traced above, we now readily discern how this conflict takes the form of a confrontation where a newer (modern) conception of how nature and use and land relate to each other and confront an older (peasant) model. The conservationists act from within modern coordinates. The islanders, precisely by operating within older coordinates also indicated above, can take the use of nature as an expression of care. And from the etymology above, we can draw out a further conclusion: At the end of the day, it is the

conservationists themselves who reproduce the conceptual structures that underwrite the contemporary exploitation of the earth in the name of utility.

To summarise, we begin, above, with contemporary *vignaioli* who identify themselves as protectors of nature, qualified as *peasant nature*. In order to trace the historical background of the positions for which the invocation of “nature” in this claim either does or does not make sense, the preceding paragraphs trace the history of European ideas about how the use of nature (through agriculture) relates to the care or protection thereof. The position for which it does *not* make sense to speak of peasant agriculture as natural (or even as itself “protecting nature”) is the one that has taken up a specifically modern construct of untouched nature opposed to human activity. Then, we find a series of interlinked positions in which the *vignaioli*’s invocation of the natural would not appear peculiar at all. Above all, this takes place where “nature” is not a separate domain standing over against the human *as such*, but a matter of a cosmic order (to which both humans and their agricultural lands belong) in relation to which things are “natural” in respect to their compliance or deviance. In the following sub-chapter, I draw out the implications.

#### *4.3.6. Claiming the Natural*

We arrived at this chapter from a preceding description of vineyard work and the model of hierarchical corporeal care the *vignaioli* apply to such work (4.2). As part of the overarching concern in this study, both with what they, the *vignaioli*, do and the terms by which they themselves construe their practices, this chapter discussed a particular manner through which they assert the overall significance of the work they do. I showed that this assertion involves claims to naturalness – that they work naturally,

that their work expresses nature, and that they are the protectors of nature from incursions by the industry. I proceeded to note existing anthropological critiques of the word “nature” in contexts similar to the one I focus on here – in respect to the discourse of *terroir*; and even more acerbated in respect to the very term “natural wine”. But I noted that these critiques are hard to parcel with the claims the *vignaioli* make about their own practice. Scrutinising these claims closer, I emphasized one particular contrast: peasants and nature vs. industry and non-nature.

I then went on to stage a frontal comparison around this claim (Candea 2018, 2.2.2.), focused on its fundamental presupposition: that some human ways of doing things are more natural than others. This is precisely what the anthropological critiques of “natural wine” have difficulties broaching, and I show that this difficulty is due to a modern inheritance (from Mill) distinct from the older frames of reference with which the claims of the *vignaioli* resonate.

To clarify the underpinnings of the position staked out in the claims of the *vignaioli*, I presented an etymological inquiry into the relation between farming and nature. The final stop for this etymological examination was a nearby island, across the Adriatic. Above, I sought to emphasise the parallels between the *vignaioli* and the locals on Zakynthos in their struggle with environmentalist outsiders. But, there are also significant differences. For one, whatever may be the case on Zakynthos, none of the *vignaioli* have inherited a peasant construct of nature in any simple way. While they might seek to work in a manner that is “natural”, it is an inescapable fact that “Nature as a ground for the meaning of cultural practices can no longer be taken for granted [ . . . ] if Nature itself is regarded as having to be protected and promoted” (Strathern 1992, 177).

In this last sense, it is perhaps less that the *vignaioli* work in accordance with what they take as natural, as much as they *stake the claim* that the ways they act ought to be evaluated in terms of their relative naturalness. This claim works in three steps. First, in respect to the claim that they themselves are peasants and make peasant wine; second, that peasants denote a category of actors who ought to be regarded as protectors of nature; and third – and in order for the second claim to make sense – that the modern concept of what nature *is* ought to be displaced by a peasant concept of what nature *is*. In these respects, the *vignaioli*'s way of standing as peasants *for* nature *against* “the industry” is a stand against an industrial (modern) concept of what nature really *is*. Here, where nostalgia for nature merges with peasant nostalgia, “older” ontological forms are awakened not for the sake of passive yearning, but for active confrontation with the world as it presently is. The ontologically oriented etymology above provides us with an appreciation of how this is the case.

The discussion in this chapter began from a preceding description of the *vignaioli* and the vineyards which they work. Having now discussed the vineyards – the land – the next chapter shifts focus to the latter, and to how the *vignaioli* articulate the nature and significance of their work and labour around the model of hierarchical corporeal care we have already encountered (4.2.).

## 4.4. Labour I: Between Security and Care

### 4.4.1. Grapes, vulnerability, fear

Valli Unite, Wednesday morning. It is the midst of the grape harvest, and the cooperative is buzzing with activity. This morning, it is still dark as the members of the vineyard crew squeeze into the sulphur-smelling beat-up old cars of the cooperative. The pruning crew from winter are all there still (Patrick, Aline, Antonella, Cornelis, Marco, Giovanni, Anna, Franco), now augmented by both the seasonal workers from summer, as well as a number of workers come for the harvest alone. 20 people, all in all. We leave the main premises of the cooperative. But then, we turn a direction different from any we've ever taken before. After a short break for coffee and *brioche*, we are sufficiently alert for some conversation. "So, what is the relation, actually, of these vineyards to the cooperative?" I ask from the back seat of one car. The vineyards in question are those I know we are heading to, further up the Apennines, in order to harvest grapes. But nobody seems quite sure.

"Probably they belong to a friend of Ottavio", Giovanni ventures from the front seat.

As we arrive, the sun is already high in the sky. The proprietor is there to meet us – simple working clothes, wild grey hair and beard – and the guess from the car turns out to have been correct. We find a friend of Ottavio, whose vineyard is sufficiently small that he can prune it himself in the winter, but much too large for him to harvest by himself even with the help of family. So, he has called upon the cooperative, which already has a working crew (composed of friends and other associates, many who return annually) assembled for its own harvest.

We file into the vineyards, all of us well-acquainted with the routines of harvest. Myself, I lean in with my secateurs. Cut one grape bunch, then another. Then another and another. But then, something I have never seen before: my hands are all blue. Others are also noticing. Behind me, I hear Cornelis: “Copper! Like this! And this is supposed to be organic... thirty years in the vineyards, I have never seen anything like it!” He is not the only one to complain, and I hear swearing from all directions as people turn to look at their palms. But the break is only momentary. Work proceeds apace, even as I hear the murmur of complaints throughout the day.

Many hours later, I see – or imagine I see – a faint hue of blue hovering above the tractor that is bringing the last grapes away from the mountainside. The crew packs together, and we use some of the last water we have to carefully clean our hands. For the journey back, I end up in the front seat of a van, squeezed between two of the permanent workers of the cooperative. From my right, from a person now, laughing: “Ha ha! Now you see what ‘organic’ really means here in Piedmont! You know, you are only allowed to use... I don’t know, three substances. But you can use however much you want of it!”

From the driver’s seat, an objection: “Well, not quite. There are rules for the concentration and so. But then if you go all day up and down spraying it, then!”

My companions drop me off by the house of Cornelis, where I am staying. After dinner, and a few glasses of the cooperative’s wine, the conversation returns to the day just passed. Cornelis: “Look, that thing with the copper today. What a thing, haha! We need to talk to Flavio [in the cellar] about this. If this is what it’s going to be like, I’m not going up there again! You are actually not allowed to do any treatments [spraying pesticides] after a certain point. Anyway, I think he [the proprietor] was afraid of losing

his grapes. To disease and mould. *They are always afraid...* So he has probably given the vineyard a treatment extra, much too late”.

In the context of vineyard management, a treatment [*trattamento*] refers to acts of spraying liquid substance among the vines. In organic viticulture, the primary substances used are copper and sulphur [*zolfo*]; where the former shines blue, and the latter has a strong smell, which no washing detergent will remove. The basic purpose of either is the same: to repel unwanted guests, whether insects or moulds, who seek to make their own home among the grapes the farmers want for themselves. The use of such substances is regulated by law, but “natural” winemakers often seek to reduce their own use far below the legal threshold. In the preceding paragraphs, we see some people involved in such wine production coming up against somebody doing the opposite – somebody who has (the suspicion was) exceeded the legal limit, and given an extra treatment at the wrong time. Their dislike was palatable. Then, by the end of the day, one of my interlocutors provided an explanation for *why* the proprietor had acted that way: because he was *afraid*.

This explanation interprets what refers to the proprietors’ acting in light of a spectre that trails the steps of the *vignaioli* throughout the year. Another day, as he was tying his boots under a canopy of vine leaves, the same Cornelis said: “You know... you can spend a season working in the vineyard. And everything goes fine. Then the hail comes, and in a week you lose all your work! We are never certain about what we do. Because we don’t know what the weather will be like!” The statement encapsulates the structure of agricultural fear: the crops on which the farmers expend their labours is *vulnerable*, in particular to a *weather* whose vagaries are outside the reach of their control. More than uncontrollable, the weather is *unknowable*. Thus, the crops, the objects of their



labour, the source of their livelihood, hang suspended in the unknown, ever exposed to unknown dangers. Grapes in particular become increasingly vulnerable throughout the season, as their flesh grows and their skins become more brittle. The anxieties of the *vignaioli* suffer a corresponding increase. Until the time of harvest, when the juice of the grapes is (hopefully) stowed away in the cellar. Then a short break, before the cycle of work and fear begins anew.

The stakes surrounding this fear were made particularly clear one day, in the dining hall of the cooperative. Ottavio had travelled to visit an old friend, bringing a few boxes of wine with him on his return. As the wine was served with lunch, Cornelis picked one bottle from the table, reading from the label on its back. A loud laugh, then reading aloud: “*We do not make wine. We follow its own development.* Ha ha! Sounds about right!”

“Well!” Marco, a fellow vineyard worker, interjected from across the table, “that’s precisely what Flavio is trying to do in the cellar [also here]. This is something different from *bio*! Where you can add all sorts of crap to make the wine taste as you want it to. That is why the *terroir* becomes so important here, as well as the work that we do in the vineyard. And it becomes much riskier...” At this point, Marco turns from Cornelis to me, “If we have a bad year, our wine will also be crap!”

Here, we have Marco taking the description on the back label of a bottle, insisting on its applicability also to the “us” gathered for lunch (and, by implication, to the other farms discussed in this study). What the label described was not specific acts of production, as much as a way of construing the overall relation between producer (*vignaiolo*) and product (wine). It explicitly repudiates the idea of “making”, in favour of production, as acts of *following*. Which is to say, as acts of attentive response to the

needs of another, in the manner of care. This construct is advertised on the back label of a bottle. But, as Marco notes, the price of pursuing a productive process on the model of “following” comes at the cost of perennial exposure and vulnerability. “They are always afraid . . .” as Cornelis himself had noted about his fellow *vignaioli*.

Agricultural modernisation has provided an array of interventions by which to reduce the risk and vulnerability that stalks peasant agriculture. Indeed, the *vignaioli* consistently read the adoption of “modern” agricultural practices as involving a decision in favour of *security*. Their own practices of “natural” farming, in turn, involve an explicit rejection of such modern practices. Differently from what is the case in older forms of peasant farming, however, the vulnerability of farming has become an explicit choice. They *can* opt for more interventions, and more “security”, yet they do not.

Two of the guiding questions for the present study are of *what* the *vignaioli* do in the course of their labours, and *why* they do it. Here, in the first chapter that moves from the topic of land to that of labour, we have a situation defined by what they do *not* do. The basic question for this chapter is: Why not? Why do they persist in working in ways that leave them vulnerable, where means of significantly reducing this vulnerability are readily available? The answer, as we shall see, needs to be developed in dialogue with the first question; that is, with *what* it means for them to go into the vineyards “to work”. Below, this becomes the site of a frontal comparison, in respect to how the “work” of the *contadino* is something quite different from what the economic word “labour” construes it to be. It thus hinges on different stakes, faces different challenges, and thus comes to construe the significance of vulnerability differently.

The chapter is composed of two parts, with several sub-chapters. The transition between the parts is not marked in the order of the chapter, but is obvious from the change of

pace below. In the first part, I discuss what it means “to work”, and then show what some of that meaning looks like when enacted. In the second, I turn to the weather as a phenomenon that is apt to illustrate what the state of vulnerability means in the lives of the *vignaioli*. The vulnerability they opt for leaves them haunted by a spectre of perpetual anxiety, particularly directed towards the vagaries of the weather. Firstly, however, I begin with anthropology and existing reports on the nature of viticulture and labour.

#### 4.4.2. *Work, Labour, Vineyards*

From her fieldwork among the *vignerons* of Burgundy, Demossier reports the prevalence of persons who “still define their identity in terms of ‘aller à la vigne’ (‘going to the vineyards’)” (Demossier 2018, 42-43), and how “[w]hat remains central [. . .] is ‘physically working the land’ which is at the core of their self-identification” (Demossier 2018, 58). Ulin, similarly, notes how his grape growers in southern France “see themselves as *paysans* [‘peasant’ or ‘farmer’] because of their close contact with the vines and the fact that they must [...] ‘clean the dirt from under their nails at the end of the day’” (Ulin 2002, 703). The latter is an almost direct echo of my interlocutor, Patrick (see 4.1.1), and the broader point applies generally to the *vignaioli* in Italy. “Going in the vineyard [*andare in vigna*]” is a phrase they frequently use among themselves, and those vineyards are the sites where they conduct the work, *lavoro*, that defines them as both *peasant* and *vignaioli*. But this raises the further question: When going into their vineyards, what does it mean for them “to work”, and what defines the difference between good work and bad?

In the language of modern economics, the word “labour” names one of the three factors of production. Labour, in the classic language of economics, is that suffering a person

undergoes in order to attain a desired return. The ontological basis for this conception of labour is found with the idea of an autonomous subject whose activity is understood as domination of the external world, and for whom the meaning of work is reduced to dreary necessity (Mei 2009). This is a novel language. Its hold is so strong, however, that it has also exercised detrimental effects on critical scholarship. This is particularly true for many Marxist traditions, and we find it wherever Marx' critique *of* labour is inverted so as to make of labour the position *from* which to level social critique (Postone 1993). That is, it does so wherever Marxism shifts the stakes of politics away from the area surrounding the nature of labour, so as to leave but a struggle for the equitable distribution of its products.

When it comes to anthropology, specifically, we find much work, which reproduces the presuppositions of the aforementioned tradition. What we also find, however, is work that recognises how specific the metaphysical assumptions underwriting the idea of labour are, and which then seeks to think beyond these assumptions (e.g. Strathern 1988, Ingold 2000). Narotzky captures the gist of these efforts, as that of “question[ing] the universal applicability of the Western concept of labour to make sense of the diversity of human livelihood practices” (Narotzky 2018, 31). Yet progress has also been made to decompose this “Western” black box, in scholarship which sometimes already focusses on the case of vineyard work. Specifically, Ulin (2002) notes how the common Marxian construct of “labour” interprets work as a matter of human acts that appropriate nature, with the implication that labour is merely a matter of making nature an object of control and instrumental action. Making use of ethnographic material from wine growers of the south of France, Ulin forefronts the concept of “work identity”, in order to argue that “the cultural formation of work identity [. . .] exceeds the parameters

of instrumental action as suggested in a strictly orthodox view of labour” (Ulin 2002, 693). In what follows, this is an insight I pick up on, and pursue further in respect to persons whose “work identity” is constructed in relation to the trope of the *contadino* explored in Part III, above. But what might that mean, then? We begin with a vignette from Valli Unite, which includes a discussion that illustrates the answer.

#### 4.4.3. *Caring (to be) peasants*

This is one summer morning, in Piedmont. A few meters to my right and further down the sharply inclined slope of this hillside vineyard, Ottavio – the bearded, grey-haired man who co-founded the cooperative – is working. Calmly. Hands reaching into the canopy of leaves, nipping one twig and then another. The twigs fall to the ground, and Ottavio ambles over to the next vine. This morning, we have been working our way down the same row, speaking of a *vignaiolo* from elsewhere in Italy: Stefano Bellotti. Famed for his uncompromising approach to wine and agriculture, Stefano had gained renown simultaneously as a difficult person to work with, and as one of the most iconic producers of natural biodynamic wines in all of Italy. Just last week, however, Stefano had passed away.

While Stefano was based in Liguria, further south, this was still close enough for him and the cooperative to – as Ottavio put it – have “come a long way together”. At this point, the two of us were midway through the row we were working, and Ottavio had already told me how he and Stefano would always argue, yet still travel to markets and other events together in the same vans, sometimes even to sleep in the same bed when no other space was available.

I turn back to Ottavio, picking up from a lull in our conversation: “So, that thing with biodynamic...?”

“Hm, no”, Ottavio answers. Another break, then a long explanation:

“You see – when we [the cooperative] are many. It is difficult to put the heads together – [*mettere le teste insieme*] – for something like that. It was difficult enough with organic! Cesare [the prematurely deceased co-founder of the cooperative, see Section 2.3.3], who you never met – he was very traditional. He didn’t want organic production to begin with! So, therefore... But still. I have always followed the biodynamic calendar. When I plant vineyards and such. To me this part seems very good, and it works. Some years ago, a consultant came by, checking out a vineyard. They asked what I put there [to make it grow]. Nothing! I said. He could hardly believe me! But it was planted according to the biodynamic calendar. But all that with the [special] manure, and with cow horns – that I can’t believe in. I have had so many discussions with Stefano. Where he insisted... and me, I would say: No, no! It can’t become a religion! This comes from me... we are all shaped by our history. And for me, it was Catholicism. I have seen what Catholicism has done in the world of the peasants [*mondo dei contadini*]. Already when I was a child, I drew on the wall of the church: ‘Down with the priest!’ [Ottavio stands up, hands on back, laughing at the memory, then turns back to the vines in front]. So, for me... Who has stepped out of a religion, I don’t need another! So, all that stuff about spiritual forces in the cosmos, well ... Still! One must keep an open mind. Stefano was a great peasant [*Stefano era un grande contadino*]. He had this great capacity to understand the plants, and their diseases. Stefano was younger than me. But

I was the one who went to him, in order to learn. *Era veramente un grande contadino!*”

This conversation marks my concern for the remainder of this chapter. Not the difference that was the focus of the distinction itself – whether or not there are merits to biodynamic agriculture – but the criteria of excellence applied *despite* such difference. To Ottavio, Belotti was a *contadino*, even a *grande contadino*. This recalls the topic of the Good, and Lambek’s observation of how people are constantly “being evaluated according to criteria of what is right and good” (Lambek 2010, 1. See 2.2.1). In this specific conversation, Stefano was presented as an exemplar who manifests the right conduct of the *contadino*, whether a biodynamic one or not. What we have here is an entrance point to the criterion through which the work of a peasant is defined and measured. And this criterion is encountered with the word used for this work: *curare*.

Work as *lavoro* can take place anywhere. At the cooperative, Andrea also “works” in his kitchen, preparing the daily lunch for the workers. While the former word is also applied to work in the vineyard, the latter is also referred to using the word *curare*. This is a word much more restricted in its use; it does *not* name even what the *vignaioli* themselves do when they themselves perform other tasks, such as putting the finished wine in bottles. Patrick, laughing as I asked him why that is the case: “But for the bottles it [*cura*] is not needed! You can leave them for years, and they’ll take a bit of dust. But that’s all!” In this manner, *cura* serves to specify what the *vignaioli* actually *do*, having gone to their vineyards to work.

*Curare* is translated into English using a number of words, depending on the context. One has to do with treating and curing. This is something that would appear when I explicitly asked about the word *cura*: “Yes, it’s like. What the doctor does. Like, *curare*

*il corpo* [curing the body]. A matter of health”. As for its role in defining the exemplary conduct of the *contadino*, we glean some of this in how Ottavio continued his monologue on Belotti above:

“He was good with the wine, better than me...”. [“You mean in the vineyard or the cantina?”, I interject]. “Both... So, I would not mind if my eyes suddenly opened and I could go ‘ah! Now I understand everything! And biodynamic is the key’”. [Another pause, as Franco passes behind us to go to work further ahead in our vineyard row]. ‘But still. It is a great damage to the validity of biodynamic now. That Stefano has died so young. The way I look at it [...]. That he, who has lived so strictly according to his system... That he has not been able to keep his own body in a state of health. For me this is an important sign”.

Further above (Section 4.2.) I already show how the corporeal analogy between humans and vines is central. When the bodies of the *vignaioli* enter the vineyards, they encounter there the bodies of the vines. But more than curing, I propose that it is the notion of *caring*, as in carefully attending to, nursing, which corresponds best to the way in which *cura* defines the virtue of the *contadino*. In what follows, I unpack and situate the concept of care itself. This brings us first to the activity of cultivation itself, then to the etymology of the concept used to describe it.

#### 4.4.4. *Cultivating Care*

“[I]t is growing”, Theodor Shanin states in the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Peasant Studies*, “which is central to peasant economy” (Shanin 1973, 69). The statement needs further specification. Central to the “peasant economy” is “growing”, but the active subject of the growing is not the peasants themselves. What they do, instead, is to work



among *things that grow themselves* (Ingold 2000). This creates a site of work fecund for the construction of reciprocal imaginaries. One avenue for the academic study of such imaginaries is found in the debate around the concept of “care”.

“In their relationship with their animals”, Theodossopoulos notes, “Vassilikiot farmers assume the role of the caretaker” (Theodossopoulos 2005, 168), and Van der Ploeg has demonstrated the central role played by the concept of care in the lives of dairy farmers in central Italy (van der Ploeg 2008, 117-118). Whether discussed in respect to animal agriculture (Singleton and Law 2013, Harbers 2010), the cultivation of plants (Krzywoszynska 2016), or soils (Puig de la Bellacasa 2019), the word “care” has been made to do much conceptual work.<sup>54</sup> The word does so by extending (to agriculture) the feminist scholarship of the 1980s, which brought “care” to a place of prominence (cf. Gilligan 1982, Tronto 1993). Most such scholarship, however, treats the concept of “care” as something extrinsic to the situation; it is a lens of analysis sooner than it is a concept employed by actors within the situation analysed. What we have with the *vignaioli*, instead, is precisely such immanent use: as we see, this is how they themselves speak of some parts of their work (and not others). And to recall Gadamer from above, “when you take a word in your mouth, you have not taken up some arbitrary tool which can be thrown in a corner if it doesn't do the job, but you are committed to a line of thought that comes from afar and reaches on beyond you” (Gadamer 2004[1975], 552). In the case of *cura*, what is this line of thought that takes hold of the *vignaioli* at the point they take hold of it?

---

<sup>54</sup> In precisely this regard, it is notable how the wine producers of southern France encountered in Lem’s (1999, 91) monograph employ very different words, decisively speaking about their work as *exploitation* of the land.

The earliest use of the concept of care that has gained any renown is the story of Care crossing the river, found in a collection of myths gathered by Hyginus (64 BC – AD 17). In Hyginus’ story, we find care manifest as a goddess. The word for such care was *cura* (“*Cura cum fluvium transiret ...*”), and this is the Latin origin of the Italian word *cura* of today. Despite their great similarities, this word is actually not a cognate of the English word “care”. The latter, instead, is of Germanic derivation; most proximately from the Old English word for anxiety: *caru* (Hamilton 2013, 78). But, it is likewise anxiety that the Latin word speaks of. In a negative key, *cura* denotes mental anxiety or physical pain; while in a positive key it speaks of mental attentiveness or of a physical object of concern (Hamilton, 2013: 10-11). Thus, in the Roman context, the concept was a criterion for negative evaluations, of anxieties, stifling proper conduct. But, also of positive evaluations: “[g]ood farmers display *cura* for their crops and shepherds show *cura* for their flocks, parents exercise *cura* for their children and the pious practice *cura* for the gods” (Hamilton 2013, 61).

Such *cura* is the basis for yet another conceptual construct, indigenous to the peninsula: *security*. The first appearance of such security - as *securitas* - is found in works of Cicero (first century B.C.). Writing from the hills outside Rome, it was possibly Cicero himself who coined the word, by nominalising the pre-existing adjective *securus* (Hamilton 2013, 51). For Cicero, the term denoted a psychological state of calm, and only much later (the 14th century) did *securitas* also gain a place of prominence as a political concept (cf. Hamilton 2013, 137). Whether psychological or political, however, the construction of the term remains the same: to the noun, *cura*, and the suffix “-tas” (which denotes a state of being), the prefix “se-” is added, which signifies

“apart”, or “aside”. Etymologically speaking, then, “the concern for security is at bottom a concern to be without concern” (Hamilton 2013, 10).

Security denotes a state free from anxiety. Projects oriented by the search for such states range from global security politics to safe sex (cf. Hamilton 2013). But, in light of the *privative* structure of security, revealed by the etymological excursus here, the grounds for a certain paradox appears: security projects presuppose the concern (care) that they seek to abolish. If they were ever completed, they would end up abolishing themselves. And not just themselves, but also something that (according to a belief already discerned in Hygnius’ story) can be regarded as constitutive of living time as such. Thus, critiques of totalised security, from Benjamin to Baudrillard, are often animated by a sense that the aim of protecting “life” easily ends up reducing life to lifelessness. Not by “mortifying” it, but by “removing mankind from the existential temporality that constitutes life itself” (Hamilton 2013, 29).

In this manner, care and security are both structured around a relation to vulnerability. Care cares for what is vulnerable and is dogged by perpetual anxiety; security keeps safe what is vulnerable but runs the risk of transforming the thing itself insofar as vulnerability may be part of its essential character. This is a problem that “labour” – in the modern sense found in classical economics – can never encounter. Because work is defined in a manner that makes the worker’s control over the object worked at into an intrinsically desirable characteristic (Ulin 2002, Mei 2009), one never comes to a point where control might have been extended too far. To push the contrast: it might be said that where the problem for *work-as-cura* is to keep vines from turning into objects (like bottles), the problem for *work-as-labour* is that the project of doing so has still not been completed. In the case of *work-as-cura*, the very *being* of work tasks – from “helping

the process of giving birth” to winter pruning – is a matter of maintaining a specific hierarchical relation of corporeal care (see 4.2.). The rewards for the efforts (good grapes) are a matter of reciprocal interaction with the vines. When vines are construed as objects, they are made into entities impervious to reciprocal relations, thus with consequences also for what kind of task the human interaction with these entities would be.

In light of this perspective on the longer trajectory of the word the *vignaioli* employ for their work in the vineyards, we come a long way in explaining why they do not employ all means of control and security available to them. The essential character of the work that defines them as *contadini* requires that they do not do so. Insofar as the work of the *contadino* is defined by *cura*, then the totalisation of security would render the central “work-identity” of my interlocutors entirely superfluous. At the point where there is no *cura* involved in their work, they would no longer be peasants.

We have now learned the ways in which the *vignaioli* persevere in vulnerability and a key reason as to why. But vulnerability can take a great number of forms. Below, I turn my inquiry to the *specific* vulnerability they live with, as cultivators of plants. This specific vulnerability, in turn, is now perceived as a source of an increasingly overbearing threat. I am speaking of weather, and the spectre of climate change.

#### 4.4.5. *Weather, vulnerability, and the powerlessness of care*

There is something at the outset of the passage where Corrado gives his tour of the vineyards (4.3.2) that warrants further unpacking. Corrado was showing us his vineyards: his lands. But, recall *what* he brought attention to when giving the tour: not only the soil on and under the surface of the land, but also the direction of the ocean, the winds between the sea and the mountains, the way the sun moves across the sky

above. The same is true for how all the *vignaioli* define the specific character of a vineyard. The specific character of the vineyard is not about something literally *in* the bounds of the vineyard itself. It is found in how its position is exposed to the moving elements of the larger world (in Piedmont, for instance, one *vignaiolo* would explain one vineyard's particular propensity to disease by its exposure to humid winds from the Mediterranean sea, some 80 km further south).

These entanglements with the elemental world are the source of the vineyard's blessings. But, also the source of a perpetual vulnerability, which dogs the *vignaioli* throughout the year. Virgil, in a passage from the *Georgics*, depicts one moment in particular:

Now the vines are bound, now the vineyard lays down the pruning knife,

Now the last vine-dresser sings his finished rows; nonetheless

The soil must be worried, the dust must be stirred

And now Jupiter's rain must be feared for the now ripened grapes

(Virgil, *Georgics*, 2.416-19. Cited in Daston 2019, 121).

In the centuries intervening between Virgil and the *vignaioli*, not much has changed. Virgil depicts the point of the most intense vulnerability, when any rain – or hail, or tornado – can bring devastation to the almost-mature grapes that hang suspended in the air. But this is still the ordinary fear of the farmer. Among the present-day *vignaioli*, we now have this fear transposed to a different register, to all appearance absent among Virgil's contemporaries. This is the fear induced not by any changes of the weather, but changes in the *climate*. The aim of the following paragraphs is to explore this dynamic,

which provides further insight into everyday existence for the ones who hinge their livelihood on work as *cura*.

At Valli Unite, I encountered climate change already on the afternoon of the day of my arrival. “Let’s go”, Patrick had said after a brief introduction, and we walked over to the others. Through the vines and the curling leafy spaces, I could see the *vignaioli*. “You picked one hell of a year to come”, a slim white-haired man had said. These were the first words spoken to me by that Cornelis in whose house I would later come to live. The wires were rustling along the rows, and he gathered the vines from the ground and pulled them up among the wires. Cornelis bent down and took a green shoot between thumb and index finger. “Pop”, and then again and again. He dropped the shoots on the ground. “Three days of frost in April. Even the old farmers can hardly remember anything like it. Somebody said it happened in 1952”. He walked along the row. “We lost a lot of money this way”, Patrick said, “but we’ll manage. This is part of the game when working like we do. Organic and all that”.

What had happened – that which even the old farmers could barely remember – was that spring had come early that year. As the rays of the sun brought life back to earth, the sap of the vines began to flow. Vigorously. Then the temperature suddenly dropped. The sap froze, expanded, and cracked the wooden bodies of countless vines. “*Poverina!* It is hard not to cry!” I overheard one worker say, as she bent over a broken tangle. While I never saw anybody actually shedding any tears, the state of the vines would prove an enduring source of dismay for the *vignaioli* throughout the year of fieldwork ahead. A poignant illustration of the vulnerability of farming. Three days of frost in April, enough to constitute what was consistently referred to as a “natural disaster”.

Even worse, however, was something else. I still feel those first weeks of fieldwork. Soils caked dry, trees crackling, a bleating sun, winds that brought a howl out of everything, and lightning storms in the night. But no rain. A sense of anxiety all around. I recall the days after my arrival. I was walking with Cornelis. As we passed the small garden plot of a neighbour, my companion stopped to exchange a few words about the weather forecast. As we walked on: “That was Giacomo. He used to drive the petrol. But the people here are all farmers in the end. If they have a small piece of land, it will be full of tomato, potato... But they are all worried about climate change now. Because they see how all of nature suffers... like this!” he said, pointing to a dry row of vines adjacent to the path.

The labour that defines the peasant has here become subject to a danger that threatens its result not just in this or that instance. It is its very conditions of possibility that are now at stake. A succinct summary came from one *vignaiolo*: “You can care [*curare*] all you want for the vines... if it doesn’t rain...” The implications were clear, even when left unsaid. Here would be an “end of the peasantry”, occasioned not by progress and “modernity”, but by the climate change that has accompanied them.

A *normal life*, Bryant and Knight write, “is one in which one can expect to expect” (Bryant and Knight 2019, 68). The sun will rise tomorrow, summer ought to bring heat and at least some rain, and temperatures should not drop below freezing after spring. But, as expectations are oriented toward the future, it is in their nature that they can be dashed (Bryant and Knight 2019, 58). While the sun did rise each morning during the course of my fieldwork, the weather was otherwise out of joint. I recall a sensation that was as if the entire world was as tense as the string of a bow, waiting for the release of

rain. What Bryant and Knight call an *uncanny present*,<sup>55</sup> a “present that suddenly seems to hover between past and future, taking on the burden of gathering the past and projecting it into the unknown future when the teleology that would ordinarily shape that temporal relation is lost” (Bryant and Knight 2019, 44).

Bryant and Knight suggest that weather can be an apt “metaphor” for such times that are times of crisis (Bryant and Knight 2019, 34). Taking it as more than metaphor, Ingold in turn asserts that “[t]ime is weather” (Ingold 2015, 70), noting here the connection found in the etymology of many romance languages (from Latin *tempus*, whence *temps*, *tempo*, *tiempo*). And at least among the yellow grass and dying vines that year, weather *was* the crisis. Crisis calls for response, and we have already encountered the epochalisation and speculation by which the *vignaioli* responded. Epochalisation involves the parcelling off of what Bryant and Knight call a “normal life”; it is the sense of the present moment as a site over against the other time and space where things follow their due course, and one can expect to expect (Bryant and Knight 2019, 68). Speculation is the mind’s flight into abstract possibilities, with only a tenuous relation to courses of action actually available. “Perhaps we’ll have to become olive farmers instead”, one man at Valli Unite ventured. And indeed, a few years back they planted a dozen olive trees there, in an area with no tradition of such cultivation. But this was the most concrete response made to the changing circumstances. More typical was Corrado Dottori’s speculation that “in a few years, we [humanity] will be going to Mars instead... to pollute yet another planet!” In spite of the desperation, there was little sign of change in the course of everyday work. The *vignaioli* would keep

---

<sup>55</sup> See above, 3.5.5.



stalking up and down their wine isles, “caring” for their vines, leaving the weather among those things one can “only hope for” (compare 4.2.1).

This is a central dynamic to agricultural work. The fortunes of the *vignaioli* hinge on the weather, and it directs the work down the paths, which are perilous and unpredictable. Insofar as even the conditions of possibility of working in the way of care are put at risk, we see here the dynamics by which changing weather may itself imply the *end of a peasantry* defined by so working.

During the years of my own fieldwork, such an end was not to take place. I recall one late summer day at the cooperative. I was just arriving at the cellar of the cooperative, as the first grapes of the harvest were arriving, in boxes pulled by a tractor. I see Patrick – responsible for the vineyard work – leaning back towards a stone wall. Skin scorched brown from a whole season outdoors, he leans back, takes a drag on his cigarette, and smiles. More relaxed than I have seen him in a long time. “This is a great time of the year for me!” he exclaims, as I walk over. “I feel like a great weight has been lifted from my shoulders”, here, he gestured as if taking off a backpack, then pointed to Flavio – “... and put on him! Ha ha!” Flavio – the person in responsible for the work in the cellar – was not listening. Too busy surveying the golden grapes: looking, tasting, anxiously pacing back and forth.

Soon after, I spoke to one of the workers. “We’re going to have so many grapes this year!” he informed me. And this was one person who had been particularly concerned about the weather, seemingly certain that harvest would bring no return at all. I tried to point this out, recalling his previous worries. But, my interlocutor did not even seem to include himself in the plural “you” I used to raise my question. “Yes. Some people said that. But it’s the rain! The rain changes everything!” With this person (as with others),

it was as if rain, when it finally arrived, had washed away even the memory of the anxiety by which its arrival had been hoped for.

Perhaps most telling are statements from a meeting where the following question was posed to an assembly of some workers: “Where will you [the cooperative] be in ten years?” Andrea, the chef, began by asserting that this is a question for which you can never have an answer in agriculture (gesturing towards the window: “Who knows if this tree will bear fruit in ten years!”). Then, Ottavio took over: “Why worry about ten years ahead? One thing I know: in ten years, there will still be the earth [*la terra*]. Call it *Madre Terra*, or whatever. It is enough to care for the earth [*curare la terra*]. We have faith! [*fiducia*]”. A pause, before Ottavio announces that there are two quotes he would like to bring up: “First, ‘The earth, the earth, the earth... infinitely the earth [*La terra, la terra, la terra... all’infinito la terra*]’ – *this is something Veronelli said. Then there is something written by a German woman in Umbria. That ‘until the end of the world, there will be a human who sets a plant’. The people here may go away... I know that in ten years, my daughter will have had four different phones. But the earth always remains!*”

Again, we have testimony for the extent to which peasantry as such (transferrable to olives and other crops) is a more fundamental concern than the wine itself (see Section 2.3.5). Here, these words also bear witness to the matters explored in this chapter. The activity of farming remains perpetually exposed to the vagaries of weather. No matter how much effort they put into their work, the output – a great year or a bad one – still hinges on this something, outside of their control. The weather is always the source for the blessings of a good wine, but precisely for this reason also a source of anxiety and worry in respect to the bad it might bring. The fact that a perceived imbalance in the

weather can shake the sense of a “normal life” – the very horizons of an ongoing life project, shows how intimately connected the “normalcy” of the *vignaioli* is to the weather. The same can be said in respect to how the return of normal weather immediately undoes the sense of uncanniness induced by its absence.

*Curare la terra*: that is “enough”. Here, perhaps in a spirit salvaged by the rain, Ottavio insisted on his faith.<sup>56</sup> Faith – here in a very different sense to the authority of the Catholic and other religious doctrines we found him renouncing above – is a comportment by which a course of action can be pursued in the absence of either mastery or control of the outcome. A course of action without *se-curity*. In this section, we learn what a form of agriculture conducted in these terms may look like.

That said, the foregoing discussion of anxiety and vulnerability might appear to pose further questions for my interpretation. If we accept that such experiences belong to farming conducted by *contadini*, and if that way of life is so anxious and vulnerable, it behoves us to explain why some people would elect to enact peasantry to begin with. Thus, the next chapter turns directly to the stakes surrounding the *choice* the *vignaioli* have all made to work as “peasants”.

---

<sup>56</sup> “Perhaps”, as Ottavio had not been among those more vocal about their despair to begin with.

## 4.5. Labour II: Between Income and Vocation

### 4.5.1. Peasantry as Choice

Some time ago, Redfield wrote about his own days as a time of discontent when “peasantry develop aspirations” (Redfield 1956, 138). Aspiration, in this case, was the aspiration to become something other than a peasant. In the Italian context, those days are not far gone. “We must not forget the poverty and scarcity that was the countryside”, one man concluded a story about a visit to his own grandmother, in Tuscany. Nonetheless, in the times of discontent that are ours, we encounter a situation sometimes the reverse of that facing Redfield – a situation where some non-peasants “develop aspirations” to become such.

No matter how much the *vignaioli* work in ways that enact the “old” peasantry, one fact remains readily recognisable to themselves and to outside observers alike: Where the old peasantry was mostly composed of people born into the role, the *vignaioli* who pick up the role today make an explicit *choice* to do so. Some descend directly from “peasants” of that older kind and, as we have seen, most of the land they work is inherited land. Nonetheless, these people all went to school, and many pursued higher education, in one form or another. Most also held other kinds of employment, before electing to become a *contadino*.

This chapter renders an indispensable contribution to answering the overall research questions of the study. Take the preceding chapter, for instance (4.4.); that is where I show one characteristic of how they work, and then pose the question *why* they work as they do. My answer, above, answers the “why” by referring it to what it takes to work as *contadini*. But that begs the question: Why have they made the choice to work as

*contadini* at all? How do they construe the good and bad sides of that choice? The chapter is divided into three sub-chapters. The first emphasises the great diversity of backgrounds among the people found on the farms included in this study. Against this diversity, the second and third sub-chapters demonstrate that there are shared ways of construing the good (emphasised in Sub-chapter Two) and bad (emphasised in Sub-chapter Three) sides of everyday peasanthood. Drawing on a distinction between values internal and external to practice (Lambek 2015), I trace out how peasant work shuttles back and forth between good and bad precisely at the point where it is construed either as vocation (intrinsic value) or as labour (extrinsic value).

#### *4.5.2. Peasants from Diverse Backgrounds*

Already in Chapter 2.3, we recall Angelo and his trajectory to become a member of the cooperative. I showed the haphazard pathways that brought many of the *vignaioli* to the way of life they now pursue. I have already emphasised the diversity found at my primary fieldsite in Piedmont. The three founders are all “peasants” from the village of the cooperative. But today, to take a real example from a random day working the vineyards, you might find yourself in the company of: one woman in her forties, originally from the Alsace-region of France, which was where she originally learned the craft of caring for vineyards; then, one man in his fifties, from Belgium, where he worked as a florist; then another woman, also in her fifties, from northwest Italy, who long worked in theatre; and one man from Milan, who long lived as a squatter in connection with a Social Center. Finally, you would find yourself with Angelo himself, who worked in a laboratory but is now a vegetarian man living alone and who likes to read the Bhagavad Gita.

There is still more diversity to add to this. Three workers originally arrived in the 1990s, as part of a prison early-release programme. Several others originate in northwest Italy, and come from a background in the arts. Take the chef, Andrea, for instance. A man in his forties, with a thick moustache, wild hair, and a constant craving for self-rolled cigarettes. Originally from a Lombardian village, he went on to study art, to the point where he was granted a place to study at a fine arts school in the UK. “So, I went to London”, he would recount, “and it all went well. Until they discovered that I don’t speak any English!”. Instead of fine arts, Andrea thus spent his time in London delivering pizza for an Italian restaurant. Then back to Italy, where he soon found his way to the cooperative (which was actively looking for somebody to work the kitchen). Then there is Francesco, also from a village setting in Lombardy; he studied agricultural engineering and stayed put in his hometown until the desire to get his hands dirty doing *concrete* work brought him to the cooperative (“... Because I did not have any lands to inherit myself”).

As we move from the situation at Valli Unite to that on to the subsidiary fieldsites, we immediately find a clear pattern: none of the workers of the cooperative, apart from the founders, inherited any agricultural land of their own. The same goes for the cooperative in the Marches. All who *did* inherit land work it themselves in the form of a family farm. Still, few were born into the expectation that they would do so. Quite the contrary. Take here Matteo, from Cirò in Calabria. While now having been settled in his native town for many years, he had left young in order to study at university. Then he went on to work as an architect in central Italy. Only later on, partly inspired by his exposure to the Critical Wine festivals, did he “return” to his native town to become a wine producer. “My parents here were first very happy”, he would explain, “until they

realised that I was myself going to go into the vineyard, getting my boots dirty! That I was not just going to be the boss [*padrone*]! Now, years later, they understand... well, at least a bit”.

Similarly for the family farm in Puglia. In this case, almost all the land (5 ha) inherited from the father of the present owner, Francesco. But neither he (nor his wife Elizabeth) inherited the role of a *vignaiolo*. Francesco used to work in a meat factory, Elizabeth for a printing press (and the grapes grown by the father were table grapes rather than grapes for vinification). The process of attaining an economically self-sustaining farm was long and arduous, but this couple would speak with pride about how long they had come: how they started “with nothing”, even built their house for themselves, and lived for years without electricity or running water.

In the case of Corrado and Valeria, on their farm in the Marches, the transition was in some ways less arduous. Corrado could inherit a good quantity of vineyards from his family, and a good house to go with them. But he himself grew up in Milan and went on to successfully work in the world of finance for several years. Thus, the choice to relocate to the Marches in order to make wine involved no less radical a change of circumstances. Likewise for his partner Valeria. While the lands and town are those of Corrado’s family, she also made the move from Milan in order to participate fully in the winemaking activities in the Marches.

In sum, this study deals with a collection of people from diverse backgrounds, found in diverse places across the Italian peninsula. On the basis of the *choice* they have made, however, their lives today have come to share a great number of characteristics. These are persons who all live outside smaller towns (and far from bigger cities); they all go to their vineyards to care for vines and to cellars to vinify and bottle wine, and they all

subsist economically from the sale of such wine. This way of life was not inherited. It was deliberately chosen. And for whatever varying reasons this choice was made, there are a number of sentiments as to what the good and bad consequences thereof are. These sentiments are widely shared. But, different people will emphasise some over others (and the same person may emphasise different ones in different situations). To capture this diversity, the following sub-chapters first account for the good, then the bad. Each begins with a vignette that exemplifies an extreme articulation of either side.

#### 4.5.3. *The Intrinsic Value of Peasant Life*

Much of my time at Valli Unite I spent living in the house of Cornelis, whose name often appears above. He is a Dutchman in his sixties, fond of painting, with white hair, round steel-framed spectacles, and a physical constitution slender to the point of appearing to take flight in the wind. After a long life of travelling across the globe, he is now settled here in an off-the-beaten-track corner of Piedmont. Thus, originally an outsider to the place and work of Italian peasants (“When I came here in the 1980s”, he once told me, “they would never have let me prune any vine. For years, just following behind, tearing down [canes] ...”), he is now recognised as one of the most proficient and experienced of the vineyard workers. Above, we already encounter his voice speaking of vines. Now, I recall one evening, as he leaned back on his red leather couch with one of his filterless self-rolled cigarettes: “The work I do... I don’t do it for any pressing economic reasons. Happiness, you asked? Well... like my house, here. It gives some stability after many years of traveling. And, you see. Through my life, it has all been a gradual *reduction*. Less and less luxuries. Now, I always *know what to do*. Like this *apfelstrudel* we just ate. I made it because I wanted to. If it doesn’t turn out well, then, too bad, but no problem”.



Another draw on the cigarette, settling back. The reduction in question, I had already witnessed, being by now well familiar with Cornelis. No car, no computer, no smartphone, no new clothes; my interlocutor used his income for food, tobacco, painting supplies, and little else. At the time of our conversation, in what was off-vineyard season, he was undertaking a painting job (different from the one he engages in as a hobby): painting the building of a nearby farmer, insisting on being paid in wine rather than money (“What do I need the money for?”, he had laughed, “just to buy the wine anyway!”). Now, this evening, picking up the thread of thought: “Anyway, there’s no money in this [work]. But to find meaning in what you do every day... trying to clean the earth and all that. The seventies, in the seventies I used to work in the factories in Holland. Incredible, the noise, crazy chemicals... it was horrible! But now, in the end... doing what I do, I think I’m a lucky bastard. When I go to Holland, to visit my sisters, I end up working a bit. Because I don’t need holidays. I am *always* on holiday!”

In the preceding paragraphs, I present the point of view of one person. As an extreme example, Cornelis’s statements provide an entry point to a broadly shared mode of reasoning. And what we see here is this: a strong emphasis on the *internal* value of the peasant practice, as over against the rewards *external* to it. As Lambek puts the difference, using an example of his own:

Here, one would distinguish between the value of playing the violin for its own sake – that is, for the pleasure and challenges in drawing upon and stretching human capacities it brings – from the value of playing on order to make a living [...] [y]ou play the violin for the playing of it rather than simply as the means for an external end like fame or fortune (Lambek 2015, 284)

The value of any practice can be construed in either intrinsic or extrinsic terms. And this applies as much to farming as to playing the violin. While recognising the lack of income brought about by his choosing the peasant life, Cornelis insists that such considerations are of no consequence to him. What matters is the *working itself* – so much so that “work” is hardly work anymore, and that he himself is “always on holidays”.

Such an insistence on the intrinsic value of peasant work in itself, in the act of its performance, reflects a broadly shared sentiment. Said one woman winemaker and friend of Matteo’s, in Cirò : “Doing like we do... we don't make any money. But it is a way of life, of believing”.

And said another woman, this time at the cooperative in Piedmont: “The more important thing for me is to work with something I like. Me, I hardly make any money. Perhaps 6000 Euro per year. But I do it because I like it!” But, this poses the further question: What is there to “like” about what they do? The answers mostly align with three basic characteristics of peasant work, which I list in turn.

First, there is the pleasure of being outside (“I love this work”, one woman explained in Calabria, “especially the harvest, which is the most beautiful thing in the world. The most beautiful smell that exists is the smell of the countryside in the morning”). Second, there is the pleasure of autonomy (“Because I am a control freak”, Corrado would explain, about how important it was that he himself was able to oversee the entire productive process, from vineyard to bottle to market). These first two reasons would often intersect. As Matteo (in Cirò) put it when reminiscing on his earlier life as an architect: “It was always fast! I used to work five days a week... Now, I work more than before, every day! But I am the boss [*padrone*] of my own time. This is different!”

But insofar as he is now the “boss of his own time”, this is an autonomy that is itself subject to something: not to another (human) boss, but to the “rhythm of nature”, in whose proximity he explicitly desired to work by being outside.

The third characteristic is perhaps the one most frequently emphasised: the pleasure of being together [*stare insieme*]. Thus, spoke one man, in Calabria: “The relations between persons are so important. We all need a community, with which to share problems and joy. If you do not have this, then life is shit [*merda*]! The aim should be to make a form of agriculture that is more human. Nobody can be an island. Modern agriculture, instead... that’s really pretty much a factory!” And one woman, originally from a medium-sized town in Lombardy, but since then having lived at Valli Unite for many years, said: “What really struck me about the cooperative, the reason I remain... I was born in the 1970s. When there was a lot of money arriving in Italy, but much of an older way of life still remained. And I remember those courtyards where communities would form among the people who lived there. Where the children were always around, taking part in the life there. There was life in common. Here... things are now changing, because so many children have been born, and then there’s another rhythm. But still, the door always remains open also at the homes of those families! I often just go over. Unlike my friends in the city who have families, nobody here watches TV... and having a beer in the evening is also part of what the cooperative is!”

Now, Cornelis’s statement also indicates something else. It only becomes necessary to insist that the lack of money does not matter because of the fact that such money *is* wanting. What we see above is how the “good” side of peasant life is construed through discursive operations that internalise its rewards in the performance of peasantry itself and downplay the extrinsic (economic) dimension of the performance. But, as we

see below, not even Cornelis himself is always quite so sanguine about this matter. First, however, I turn to a more extreme example in this other direction, where we find the same discourse of the intrinsic and extrinsic displayed in fully inverted form.

#### *4.5.4 Money and Peasantry as Play*

It is early spring. At the edge of the vineyard, the *vignaioli* of Valli Unite gather round. It is time for breakfast. Aline has brought biscuits, and somebody has already filled the cup of coffee that is now passed around. I have a sip, and another, and pass the cup on to the person next to me. I turn to Patrick and Cornelis, who stand on one side of the (misshapen) circle, to tell a story from the day before: yesterday morning, I had joined Vladi in his labours. A Ukrainian man, with little hair remaining above a face shaped into deep folds during an entire life working outside. He is a member of the cooperative, who only works with the vineyard crew during harvest, otherwise spending time on other tasks. The preceding day, however, two of us had joined him in order to go to the vineyards, to another vineyard, on the other side of the hill. The sun had been shining and a feeling of spring was, finally, in the air. As we were walking towards the vineyards, I told Vladi as much: “Life can be quite beautiful on a day like this!”

This had been but a passing comment, with little thought to it. But Vladi did not take it well. “Beautiful! Perhaps life is beautiful for those who earn money, who can go to the Canary Islands, sit in the sun! For somebody who works and works and doesn’t get paid for it... It is a shit life [*vita di merda*]! Being at home, with family... then maybe life is good. But to work like this... *una vita di merda!*” That said, Vladi had marched off into the vineyard, chainsaw in hand. This was an older vineyard, where the vine rows were interspaced with large trees. As always without safety gear of any kind, Vladi went to

work, cutting down one tree after another. He then sawed them into pieces small enough for me to drag to the end of the vineyard.

Once done - two or three trees still standing - I finally get a chance to ask what all this was good for. “Because the vines beneath the trees don’t grow! Look here, the trees take all the sunlight, so the vines do not get the light they need. Then the grapes stay green and don’t get the sweetness they need. This is the struggle for life and having trees in the vineyard is no good! I know what they say in the vineyard crew... Especially Antonella, she is crazy about this... How they say that it is nice to have trees, how they give shadow for working. But look at all the other farmers around! Nobody has trees in the middle of the vineyard! I also like plants, it is not that. But there should be either forest *or* vineyard – in the vineyard, it needs to be clean [*deve essere pulito*]!” Insistently gesticulating, he continues: “There can’t be plants in the vineyard! There can’t be!”

A heavily abridged version of this story is what I am telling Patrick and Cornelis, the next morning. Other people are listening now, laughing. Except Antonella, who does not look content at all (worrying about the trees, I surmise). “Yes, he [Vladi] always wants full industrialisation” Cornelis observed, “not to lose any time”. I receive the coffee cup coming back after a completed lap. Soon, the break is finished, and we move back to work.

With Vladi, we find a different attitude to peasant work than that on display above. In the case related above, the focal point for the discussion was land – Vladi’s preference for the vineyards of modern agriculture in contrast to those of peasant farming. But his statements about *why* life is “shit”, and his striving for productive efficiency, reflect above all an attitude to his practice, that he perceives little in the way of “intrinsic”

reward for time spent in the vineyard. Work should be made efficient (“not to lose any time”, in Cornelis’s interpretation of his colleague) to make it possible to spend it “being at home with family” instead – which is to say, off-work. And insofar as he performs the work for extrinsic reasons (money), the dearth of extrinsic reward makes life miserable.

To explain the relative anomaly that is Vladi, we need to consider that the “choice” of taking up life as a peasant has been more restricted for some than for others. Vladi is a case in point. Born in a poor part of rural Ukraine, as a young man he was sent to the Soviet war in Afghanistan. There he would acquire wounds still visible. Then an escape to Italy where, after some time, he found himself in prison. In the 1990s, he arrived at the Piedmontese cooperative as part of a prison release programme. And there he remains, as one of the most respected workers of the cooperative, capable – as they say – of “doing anything [any task]”. Or, in a similar key: “People like that are needed for the cooperative. People who are here *to work*. If everybody was a *fricchettone* [hippie] standing around philosophising all day, nothing would ever get done!”

The last statement is key for the present analysis. Just as Cornelis exemplifies what peasant work becomes when turned into *vocation* (by means of internalising its rewards into the performance itself), Vladi shows what the same work becomes when treated as *just work*. That, is, not as the vocation of the *contadino*, but as an activity as good as any other undertaken for the extrinsic reward of a salary. And, in this respect, Redfield’s observation that “every peasant finds his self-respect, his contentment, qualified by the knowledge that he is poorer and ruder than the gentry, those people of the towns”, still holds true (Redfield (1956, 134)). Here, most of the *vignaioli* occupy an ambivalent position towards the beneficence their life choices have brought them.

I recall one evening, which was growing darker as a group of us were driving back towards the cooperative from a nearby restaurant. “Do you really think we earn little?”, Patrick asked from behind the wheel. I was sitting in the seat to his right, but the question was directed to Cornelis and Aline in the back.

“But yes!” Aline answers with some force. “Just look at this evening. We spent, what, 40 Euro per person. That’s what we earn in a day!”

Cornelis chimed in in agreement. “Yes, what I earned last month... back in Holland, that’s what people earn in a day!”

Patrick is not convinced. “No, I disagree! Look, don’t forget... we also eat in the *mensa*, for almost nothing. We get our clothes for free.<sup>57</sup> If you put [the value of] everything together, I am sure I earn something like six Euro per hour”.

It is now Cornelis who responds: “But others are not like that! They want clothes that are new, not clothes that arrive in a black plastic bag. Take Mario and Angelica [two other workers of the cooperative, neither present that evening]. They always compare themselves to other Italians: and then they feel really poor [*poverissimi*]! But, sure, me I’m not complaining. I don’t care at all about those things!”<sup>58</sup>

With these last words, Cornelis himself put his finger on the analytic point pursued throughout this chapter. He claims not to compare himself with “other Italians”, but he is certainly capable of understanding the comparison. While none of the *vignaioli* live

---

<sup>57</sup> Occasionally, old clothes are donated to the cooperative, as a waystation to the garbage heap.

<sup>58</sup> Money is not the only object of complaint. The *vignaioli* ardently ward off any “bucolic” claims about their own work, and the rosy images of rural life they ascribe to the “Milanese [*milanesi*]” the urban, middle class. “Holidays for me is when my body is not in pain”, one woman at Valli Unite told me, and almost all workers suffer from tired and injured limbs, backs, bodies. It is even so for Cornelis himself. One evening, leaning back in that same couch where he had declared himself a “lucky bastard”, he said: “When it is like this, I often wonder why I continue. Always tired. In the vineyard from 6.30 until late in the evening, working, working. Then in the evening you’re too tired to do anything else”.

in abject poverty, most would count as poor in the regional context. Still, the dividing line as to whether peasant work is construed as good or bad does not stem from the quantity of income, as much as to whether the work is construed (on any given occasion) as vocation or as labour. Different *vignaioli* emphasise one dimension over another, and none consistently emphasises only one in all situations of their lives.

This chapter begins by observing that peasantry today must be treated in terms of a choice. It then sets out to answer the question of *why* the *vignaioli* choose to live as they do. On direct prompting, they will often answer in the ideological terms discussed in the preceding chapters, on land (“To defend the territory!”, some will say). In this chapter, I emphasise how they depict the *everyday* experience of life as a *contadino*: what is worthwhile about their choice, and what is less so. Above, I show that a dynamic around the internalisation and externalisation of the rewards of work is central for whether they depict their lives in positive or negative terms. It is this matter – the question of money – that now has us take leave of the chapters on labour. We move on to the topic of commodity exchange. As we see, selling wine (as a commodity) is what holds the key for my interlocutors to gain the money that lets them persevere as peasants at all. At the same time, these are farms where, to recall Giuseppe from the introduction, “wine is not just a commodity”. So, what *is* it, then, in addition to its commodity function? I begin with a long vignette, which follows up on an earlier promise to provide a thorough depiction of a Critical Wine festival of the kind I found myself in on my first visit to Milan in 2016 (see Section 3.1).



## 4.6. Capital I: Critical Wine at the Fort

### 4.6.1. Transporting the Goods

It is a Thursday morning in March. While the rain is laying a brightly coloured blanket across the fields, two fully packed vans roll down the hill from the Piedmontese cooperative. Its destination: Rome. One is carrying bottles of wine, as well as *salumi* and *pancetta*. The wine is under the responsibility of Flavio and Laura; the meat is cared for by Claudio and Marie. The second van carries Giulio and the beer he brews, as well as a member of the cooperative – Marco – who comes along to help carry and serve it.<sup>59</sup> With only three spaces in each van, there is no space left up front for the resident anthropologist. So, I end up in the boot, squeezed between the boxes of wine. But, as planned, half an hour's drive later we are joined by Daniele. Daniele, a man in his early thirties who has recently been trying to make a living as a (natural) winemaker, is bringing a van of his own. So Flavio hops over to one of Daniele's empty seats, while I am upgraded from boot to the front seat between Marco and Giulio. And thus we drive onwards, through rain-covered Liguria, Tuscany, Lazio – arriving in Rome at the fall of night.

Our vans cross the drawbridge of our destination: an actual wall-bound ancient fort on the outskirts of Rome, for some 30 years now this site has acted as a Social Centre much in the vein of *Leoncavallo*, in Milan. The denizens of this fort had been among the first to answer Veronelli's call to organise fairs of *Critical Wine*, and we have been heading towards what is now an annual event. So, the vans roll across the ancient moat, and turn right to reach one of the two open courtyards found within.

---

<sup>59</sup> Giulio is a former member of the cooperative, who left to run his own independent beer brewery. He still lives in the village of the cooperative, and is a frequent visitor at the *mensa*.

By now, the rain has stopped. Several vans like the kind in which we are arriving, most looking slightly beat-up and worn, are already parked in the courtyard. Giulio steers into one of the far corners and brings the van to a stop. Immediately, he and Marco make a round of handshakes, back-slaps, and hugs with those who are already there – some dozen persons, who are unloading carrels and tents and barrels. Or who try to do so, whenever there is a break from the rounds of greetings that recommence with each new arrival. There is plenty of catching up to do.

This evening, we only unload our goods at the fort, and move to the flat where our group will be staying. We are a bit short on space; Daniele needs to share a fold-out couch with Flavio this night, before he can move into the place he rents with some other producers from the following night. Me, I sleep on a mattress on the floor, until that space on the fold-out couch will be available. With luggage in place, we all head off to find a restaurant – *Slow Food pro loco*. Again, food much like what we have brought: *salumi*, *pancetta*, lots of wine. Then, as we are finally walking back to the apartment where we will all be staying together, Giulio insists on our stopping for something we have not brought – shots of tequila. Only Flavio abstains from the tequila, going for *grappa* instead.

#### 4.6.2. *The first day of festival*

A pair of feet pass me by on the floor, and I awaken. A yellow light scintillates through the shutters of the window, and a bird sings of spring outside. Claudio, however, has a face more of mid-winter. A group of pale faces and deep sighs welcome me as I come awake, and I imagine that I do not look much more alive myself. “My head...” Marie complains, sitting at the living room table. Nobody comments. But some light food is

assembled, several rounds of coffee prepared, and soon we are all off back to the fort. It is Friday – the first day of the festival.

The fort is only a short walk from the apartment, so I soon have a chance to take my first proper look at the edifice itself. From the outside, I see a tall wall, moat included, and then a drawbridge, and a tunnel. This tunnel may be old but shares an aesthetic with the Social Centres I am familiar with from Milan (with the *Terra Trema*) and elsewhere: a slightly makeshift look, with stickers, posters and graffiti that herald future events as well as the values of anti-fascism, solidarity, and self-determination.

As you come to the end of the tunnel, you can choose between entering one courtyard on the left, or another one on the right. Both are open spaces, of similar size. If you enter the right-hand courtyard at this hour, you will find people erecting gazebo tents to cover makeshift kitchens, a wine bar, and the beer that producers will sell in plastic cups. In the courtyards on the left, similar tents are erected. There is also a stand for a wine bar, and a stage for live music. You will also find Claudio and Marie, who are putting in order the stand where they will sell the *panini* of Valli Unite.

If you were so inclined, you could then enter the tunnels of the fort. There is an entrance in a corner of each courtyard, and the tunnels follow along beneath the lengths of the outer walls. There are two largely identical tunnels, divided from each other beneath the entrance gate to the fort itself. Each is about three meters wide. In the tunnels, you will find the side towards the outside world to be straight, with small windows. The opposite side is composed of equidistant cavities. These cavities are “decorated”, each in its own theme, with posters, painting and graffiti. And each is large enough to contain a table. This is where the wine-producers will sell their wine – one or two producers in

each cavity. The guests of the fair can then pass from one to the other along the corridor, glasses in hand.

“This is VIP space, ha ha!” So Daniele – the novice wine producer – calls out to me, as we enter “the Cathedral”. This is a larger space, with a high ceiling, found beneath the gate, where the two underground tunnels converge. This is perhaps the one place where I will see people gathered together from all my primary fieldsites, from Piedmont to Calabria to the Marches, all except those from the farm in Puglia have their tables allocated to this room. Daniele himself (like my interlocutors from Puglia) has been allocated one of the cavities.

I laugh with Daniele and make my way up to the courtyard on the left – the one with the stage. The sun is now high in the sky, from where it has dried much of the rain that descended the previous day. It is almost midday, where a “producers’ lunch” will take place. The organisers – the denizens of the fort – have prepared food, and people are arriving from their various preparatory labours. There are men and women alike, of mixed ages, from their mid-20s to mid-60s, perhaps, with a clear over-representation of people who appear to be in their thirties. There is a good number of piercings, hoodies, some dreadlocks and (among the men) a significant number of bushy beards. Many people only now encounter each other for the first time at the fair, so rounds of greetings continue by means of shouts, handshakes, kisses and hugs.

Apart from the food itself, there is no speech or centralised programme of any kind. There is just one thing: a long table set out, under one of the gazebos, equipped with wine glasses. Here, each producer has a space to serve his or her wine – much as they will do in the evening, only now to the other producers. This is all done in an informal manner, with people interchangeably eating, chatting, and trying wine. Flavio and

Laura take turns presenting the wines of Valli Unite, leaving the other person to leisurely interact with the other producers around.

Valli Unite's wines have been positioned at one end of the long table, where I soon find myself acquainted with Nico. Short hair, lively eyes, and skin already gaining colour from the sun of spring, he is a man in his mid-30s, now working in the vineyards of Aurora (the cooperative in the Marche). We decide to try the wines together, moving from one end of the long table to the other. At each stop, we have to wait. Inevitably, a group of people will already be there, having the wines presented to them: "This is a Montepulciano 2015. Two months of maceration, and two years in a barrel". All the while, we "tasters" inspect the wine: by sight, by smell, and finally by taste. Then comes the next wine from the producer – most have brought from two to six different labels.

All this takes place together with many greetings and handshakes among acquaintances only now running into each other – progress along the table is anything but fast and efficient. When it is our turn, we step up to the person presenting the wine, receive some of it, of our choice, from among the bottles on display, and get our chance to ask whatever we might wonder about, whether about the use of sulphites, pruning methods, the weather in their area that year, soils or hectares. These are much the same questions I hear those around us pose.

In most wine fairs, one expects the presence of spit cups. There might not be an expectation that everybody will use these, but they are there. Not so on this day. With some fifty producers along the table – and those two to six bottles per producer – there are many wines to try. Not yet halfway, my newfound companion and I are definitely feeling its effects. Judging by the increasingly louder volume of conversation all around us, so do most of the other producers gathered there. But the two of us need a break. I

bring Nico further down the table, to try the wines of some acquaintances I know from a fair of Critical Wine in Genoa. He is very impressed – not by the wine, which he does not mention, but by the goat cheese that my friends have brought with them from their farm high up in the Piedmont Alps.

Nico and I grab some food, and then head our separate ways. I decide to walk up a path that Marco pointed me towards earlier. On a patch of now completely dry grass, which overlooks the courtyard below, I finally sit down a moment to write field notes. Sitting soon turns to lying down, and my consciousness begins to drift away. I hear sounds below, of the producers returning to their places to put the last things in order for the evening. It is already after three, and the fair will soon begin.

#### *4.6.3. First night of the fair*

A visitor to the fair that evening would likely have arrived as one in a group of friends. Crossing the drawbridge of the fort, he or she would have to circumvent other groups of people standing in the passage to chat. Music sounding from speakers ahead – reggae, ska and dub – he or she would move towards the sources of this sound through ever thickening fumes of carbonised cannabis. Turning left onto the courtyard within – seeing a significantly thicker crowd of people there than on the right – our visitor might even now have to squeeze through the crowd in order to move ahead. From the left, the smell of food cooking wafts. On the right, wine and spirits are served with haste.

Perhaps not yet hungry, this visitor grabs hold of those friends who are not yet lost in the crowd, and heads towards the tunnel entrance. There, stop: a long queue. But with a bit of patience, our friends soon pass into the subterranean corridor. On the right, a cavity, its walls displaying a dark-haired woman painted on a white background. Beneath this lady, two men standing behind one table each. The younger bearded man

stands on the left, while the older (beardless) man is on the right. Cartons are stacked against the white wall. Again, another wait is likely in store. Then, finally, one's arm reaches forward, empty glass in hand, then is retracted, with a centimetre of red liquid in the bottom. "Sangiovese, 2016. We have three hectares, beneath Pistoia". Look, smell, drink, or just drink, with a smile, "*Grazie!*" then talk or move on.

It will take more than an hour to pass through just one of the two corridors. So, by now, our visitor may indeed be hungry! Emerging above the Cathedral after having tried the vines of a Piedmontese cooperative called *Valli Unite*, this visitor may now encounter these letters again on a red sign, painted with white letters. Depending on which hour of the night our visitor has arrived, this stand would either be deserted, apart from a young man or woman standing behind the desk, or it would be crowded by people trying to get hold of panini, with both the man and woman frenetically sawing bread and *pancetta*. Slice of bread, salad leaf, *salumi*. Done! Next! The courtyard is even more crowded, and live music now comes from the stage. A friend arrives, bringing a bottle purchased below. Eating, drinking, the night moves on...

#### *4.6.4. The second day of festival*

"My head... I still feel the alcohol in my veins!". Marie speaking again, head in hands. Laura opens her mouth to answer, but only a creaking passes her lips. I can't make out a single word. Instead, I grab another breakfast biscuit. Only Marco appears properly unaffected after yet another night that ended late. But soon we are all on the way back to the fort. It is Saturday, and the fair will start early today.

Arriving a while later at the fort, I turn into the right-hand courtyard, and finally run into Matteo – an interlocutor from Calabria. We embrace and stop a while to catch up. He is accompanied by a woman, "Margarita", whom he introduces. She is from Mexico,

having moved first to the Netherlands and then further to Italy, after becoming sick of the Dutch weather. There she met her (now ex-) partner, a producer of natural wine. “That’s how I ended up in the world of wine! By standing behind the table. Explaining, talking to people!” I tell her that this can be a very nice world, especially at an event like this. She nods and laughs. “Yes, a great atmosphere. And that’s how it often is! At least on fairs of *Vino Naturale*... which is really a world apart from that of conventional wine”. Margarita turns to Matteo: “Imagine Claudio here!”

They both laugh at the prospect, as Matteo explains to me that, “Claudio is one of the larger producers in Cirò, who tries, you know, to be a bit posh”.

Margarita again: “That’s a very different world! Here, for instance, it is not about competition. People help each other. Like, I give you an example. If I have a Japanese importer, when I see him, I might also bring *your* wines. To help you out. And this is not for my own economic gain, but because I want *you* to be well!”

We take leave of each other, confident to run into each other again later. Above, the sun crawls across the clear blue sky, and the daytime lull soon cedes its place to the night’s frenzy of activity. Again, the fort is restored to the shape of the fair: smoke, music, crowds, as well as a throng of people, of mixed genders and ages, just like the producers, but younger in average age. Many have dreadlocks and patched jackets; many others are more conventionally dressed, but no neckties in sight. Myself, I head down, underground, to spend more of this evening with my interlocutors in their cathedral.

As I lean back towards the wall, next to Matteo, a group of people approach: two men in their late forties, a girl in her late teens or perhaps early twenties, and a young boy. One of the men – grey hair and beard – greets Matteo with a big smile and a handshake. Somehow, they have met before. These arrivals all (boy excluded) receive wine in their



glasses, and the man who greeted Matteo gestures towards the girl: “This is my daughter. Could you explain here, this wine?” Matteo obliges. “This is a 2015. Everything – here, he makes a sweeping gesture with his palm, towards the bottles in front of him – is *gaglioppo*”. In his constant, calm manner, Matteo goes on to tell of the maceration, fermentation, and the time in the steel tanks ... as the girl leans back on one foot, eyes drifting across floor and walls, and hands fidgeting on a mobile phone still tucked in one pocket. Her father, however, stands rapt in attention, and it is to him Matteo now directs himself. Each wine, Matteo has brought three, receives the same treatment. The group then take their leave of Matteo, with warm farewells and thanks, and move on towards one of the tunnels.

Soon thereafter, a lone middle-aged woman approaches Matteo’s table. With a feather in a knitted hat, colourful necklace, and a notebook in one hand, her comfortable gait and confident greeting of Matteo have the air of somebody who knows precisely where she is and what she is looking for there. Matteo pours a mouthful of wine into her extended glass and tells her the vintage. “Do you know Cirò?” he asks. The lady does, she says, now with nose down in the glass. Then drinks, a brief pause, and a judgment: “For me, this wine needs food”. Matteo nods in agreement. “*Sì*. That is what the wine is for... how we drink it in our region”. Then he goes on, yet again, telling of the fermentation, the maceration, the soils. Then the next wine and the next. The woman across from table jots down some notes, pours the last drops of wine into Matteo’s spit cup, thanks him for his time, and moves on. A professional, by all appearances, even if neither Matteo nor I know whether she is a journalist, exporter, sommelier, or something else.

I return to the courtyard above. As I pass the stand for the *panini*, I hear my name shouted. Claudio, desperate for assistance: people are hungry now, in need of bread and meat. There is no way for him and Marie to keep up. So, I find myself frantically cutting slice after slice of bread. The live music has now begun, right across the courtyard from the small stand of Valli Unite, and I can no longer make out anything anybody is saying. Until Flavio and Laura both arrive from below. “Completely finished, completely sold out!” Flavio beams.

Laura heads off to join the crowd in front of the stage, as Flavio takes over my job of cutting bread. Soon, also Giulio comes over from his beer stand, joining the talk among the increasingly large group of producers who are arriving from the corridors below to gather behind the gazebos at the end of the courtyard (where they find a space set off from the visitors). Beer, wine and cigarettes are passed around, and there is an atmosphere of satisfied celebration. The wine-tasting below has closed for everybody. Now nothing to do but enjoy, until the guests all leave and it is time to pack together.

Late at night, we head back to the apartment. Nobody is walking quite straight. We pick up some sweets from a pastry shop open all around the clock and head up the stairs. Then, it is time to sit down at the living-room table, for final drinks and counting the money. Flavio arrives at one number. Laura another. The bills are passed to me – a third number. “*Ahh!* No!” I leave it to the others to sort this out, and head to the balcony. Claudio is already there, sitting on the floor with a cigarette, absent smile on his lips. “You know... it is strange to see all these people... walking around with bottles from people that you know. Like from Murgo ...” Having mentioned the name of a wine producer who has also come to Rome from a farm in the *Colli Tortonesi*, Claudio shrugs, and takes another draw on his cigarette.

#### 4.6.5. *Leaving the festival, returning to the fort*

It is morning on the third day. Giulio and Marco are already gone, back at the fort. I hurry to reach my appointment with Denny, a wine producer from Tuscany. Last night Denny agreed to give me a ride as far as Parma. I am a bit concerned he might not remember our late-night agreement. But, there he is! Soon packed together, we are on our way up the highways leading north. The clouds have returned once more, covering the land around in light showers. Denny is driving, hands on wheel, golden ring in ear, and long ponytail trailing behind.

We are soon engaged in conversation. He is from a family of farmers, he tells me. But, not *vignaioli*. The family primarily had cows, he goes on, as well as some other animals. Denny himself went on to study agritechnology, ending up working in a wine cellar. That's how he was properly introduced into the world of wine. Now, he has four hectares of his own. "And here, these fairs ... this is something completely different from the world of conventional wines. And there is a great ambience. They are not only about selling, but also a chance for us producers just to meet, to hang out together".

Denny then drops me off at the train station in Parma, letting me make my way back to Piedmont on my own. But Denny's emphasis on the importance of "just hanging out" was emphasised to me months later, when I returned to the fort to sit down for an interview with Giacomo – one of the organisers of the fair. Now, it is already summer; I meet my discussant in a wine bar – an *enoteca*, more precisely – found in one of the subterranean rooms of the fort. Dimmed light, some faces of persons I recognise from the fair, and many familiar wines on the list. "That is something very important", Giacomo tells me, "to have time for us to hang out [*stare insieme*]. This is why we now, for the last... three or four years, have the lunch for the producers and organisers

together, before the fair begins. This is very important!” Giacomo is a broad man well into his fifties and has been involved with the fort ever since the beginning of the occupation. “Imagine, for thirty-two years, every Monday an assembly [*riunione*]!” These assemblies are how they organise themselves at the fort, he goes on to explain. They are divided in different groups, with different responsibilities, and come together on a regular basis to discuss.

The group involved in the *enoteca* consists of 7-8 persons, where Giacomo has been involved from the start. The origins of it, however, lie with the Critical Wine movement. It all began, Giacomo tells me, when Luigi Veronelli reached out to the fort asking if they wanted to organise something like this. They agreed, and the event was a huge success – “ten thousand visitors!” – which, my interlocutor emphasises, was “a very powerful experience [*un’esperienza molto forte*]”, also for himself, on a personal level. Then, in 2008, they organised the *enoteca*. As a more permanent installation, this changed the dynamic between themselves and the producers. The festival becomes more of a final party for all the activities taking place throughout the year. Giacomo here points to the wine bar, behind my back from the table where we are seated. “Here, the wines, 90% are from people we know, who are part of this world. And who come to the fair!”

“So, who *are* these people?” I ask.

Giacomo hesitates. “Well, people we know. Friends”. These friends have some things in common, however. That the producers are *small-scale* producers comes “automatically”, because the fort “is a political project, so of course we will privilege producers with a certain management [*gestione*]”. This is not only about the wine,

Giacomo explains. It is also about the situation with respect to labour, which should be self-managed in one way or another.

“So, it is more than a question of being organic, then?”

“Of course! Lots more! For us, there is a strong ethical component!”

I try to prod Giacomo a bit further here. “So, but what’s the point to doing all this?”

“Well.., one thing, for example, is we would like to create a different circuit... for consumers and the small-scale producers. And for the fort it is good, because it brings people in here who would otherwise never come. And also it brings in good wine, so that the people who *do* hang out here drink something different from the cheapest beer, the way they always do! Ha ha!” Giacomo laughs. “To the external world, well... take for instance the small *enoteche* around Rome – you *always* find at least some wine there from [the festival]!” Finally: “For me, it’s about the possibility of doing a project here, at the fort. And to create connections between small producers [...] This project is itself another moment of collective labour”. This, my discussant finally emphasises, is “a treasure [*una ricchezza*]”.

#### *4.6.7. The significance of the festival*

The preceding pages provide a description of a festival in the tradition of Critical Wine – the same tradition we encounter in Chapter 3 – which I promised to return to in more detail. The details have now been provided. The length of the vignette is motivated by the fact that it depicts the immanent central point that keeps the present study together: it is at festivals *such as these* that the *vignaioli* have all come to know each other, despite their homes on different ends of the Italian peninsula. It is at festivals such as these, furthermore, that their “peasanthood” is celebrated, displayed, and to a large extent

defined to begin with. Recalling my commitment to writing sections focused on “evocation rather than of analysis” (Herzfeld 1997, 23, see 2.3.8), the preceding pages have sought to “evoke” the festive ambiance of the events, which is otherwise easily glossed over in discussions about more propositional forms of political statements.

In the context of Part IV of the present study, we have now come to the final destination of the parallel trajectories we are tracing. The trajectory that leads from the vineyards whence the grapes grow, then to the workers who toil on the land, has now reached the point at which the bottled wine is finally sold.<sup>60</sup> Likewise, the conceptual trajectory from land to labour has now reached the commodity form of capital. At this endpoint, we also come back to the beginning. For, as Giuseppe had suggested that I title my research project, “Where wine is not just a commodity”. In the vignette above, I have *shown* this “more”. We found ourselves at a market, at which the *vignaioli* gathered to sell their wine. And we saw how the festival, without eradicating the activity of exchange, provided an event for so much more – for celebration, amity, solidarity, companionship, and mutual aid.

These sentiments do not belong exclusively to the event of the festival itself. Instead, the festival is one part of the multifaceted Critical Wine project, which involves several strategies aimed at re-defining the practice of market exchange. This is *the* key work through which the radical peasant nostalgia I discuss above is manifest practically. And at its centre, just as they were awarded the “VIP space” at the heart of the festival, stand the *vignaioli* at the farms examined in this study. Thus, the next chapter thoroughly

---

<sup>60</sup> For more on the intermediate step of bottling, see Appendix.

decomposes and analyses the elements of the ideological market-imaginaries connected with the festivities described above.

## 4.7. Capital II: Re-imagining market exchange

### 4.7.1. *On analysing a transformation of the commodity form*

Commoditisation, Keith Hart (1982, 40) points out, “has many concrete manifestations in our past and present and may take several courses in the future”. By means of a series of interventions, Critical Wine has sought to harness (some) Italian wine for the purpose of advancing along one such course into the future. The present chapter is a study in these interventions, and of the future-oriented hope that animates the effort to make the intervention to begin with.

The next sub-chapter (4.7.2) presents the interventions in question: Specific forms of wine guides, price declarations, and certifications. In order to gain hold of the unifying ambition for which these interventions are put to use, the next sub-chapter (4.7.3.) focuses attention on the conundrums created for the *vignaioli* by certification systems. The third sub-chapter (4.7.4.) turns to the existing anthropological literature and shows that its treatment of “Western” economic *theory* creates difficulties in situating these conundrums in their own cultural context. The fourth sub-chapter (4.7.5) rectifies this situation by staging an etymological inquiry into the development of Western commodity-thinking. Sub-Chapter 4.7.6 carries this historical inquiry into the present situation, drawing out the preceding sub-chapter’s implications for contemporary Italian market-oriented radicalism of the kind we have already seen on display above (4.6). A final sub-chapter (4.7.7) sums up the implications.

### 4.7.2. *Critical Wine, changing exchange*

There are a number of devices, familiar on all the farms discussed in this study, by which actors in the ambit of Critical Wine have sought to transform the nature of



commodity exchange. First, take the 2017 wine catalogue, “Guide to Critical Wine” [*Guida al Vino Critico*]. The catalogue – a small book – comes with a purple front cover with the aforementioned title, and a back cover where the volume is presented as “a compass for orientation in the world of peasant, artisan, and critical wine” (guide, back cover, my translation). Inside, there are no images. But one finds a series of short texts, in an eclectic mix of philosophy, manifestos and politics. Among other things, one learns here that the guide itself is part of an explicitly “Veronellian” project. Then the main body of the guide: a list, alphabetically ordered, of 101 select wine producers. Without pictures or points, these producers are presented by means of a short description (one page) of the persons and places behind the product. All the producers with whom I have conducted fieldwork make an appearance in one way or another.

We find another device for transforming commodity exchange in a discussion at the cooperative in the Marches (days after encountering the fireflies with which this study began). I recall, one day, standing in the courtyard of the housing complex where the cooperative is located. Giuseppe – the quick-eyed man who acted as my guide in the first pages of the thesis – had just brought out a phone from his pocket, indicating that he wanted to show me something: a picture. It takes me a few moments before I recognise it as a wine list, from a bar. “This is from New York”, Giuseppe tells me, explaining that a friend of his had just sent it. I was still looking, trying to make out what he wanted me to see. Then, on the list, a name: a wine from the cooperative! Giuseppe went on to explain that his friend had ended up in this bar just by chance and had then seen the wine on the list. But my discussant does not sound too excited telling me this. I soon find out why, as he points towards what he really wanted to show me: the price. “16 dollars! Not for a bottle... for a glass! For the same wine that we sell here

for less than five euros a bottle!” There is some kind of commercial mechanism at work here, Giuseppe went on to reason, which adds something to the price in between – something that is way too much.

Giuseppe’s complaint brought to mind a “Veronellian” idea with which I was already familiar: the source price [*prezzo sorgente*]. I had already had the chance to ask other discussants about this concept. At the Piedmontese cooperative, for instance, Flavio had explained that this was “... an idea from Pino Tripodi [. . .] Normally, when you buy a bottle of wine... seven euro go straight to the *enoteca*. With the source price, they might take, say, two Euro, in order to live. And they would do this in a way that is transparent... in respect to costs and all that”. Now, to Giuseppe, I have but to mention the words “... *prezzo sorgente*”, before he took over the discussion.

“Yes! A very good idea! Just like... now, instead of being happy to see our wine in an exotic place like New York... because of this, I am very unhappy. Look, our wine is also sold in London. But not at all for a price like this!” Voicing his frustration in this manner appears enough to spur my discussant into action. Taking back his phone, he calls up a number. I hear him explaining the situation as he walked off.

Soon enough during my stay in the Marches, a third “Veronellian” intervention would become the topic of a discussion. Self-certification. As two members sought to explain to me their opposing views on the practice: “I don’t like these [conventional] certifications”, one man said, “It is something they arrived with... the French and the Germans. It means you can make your product just like the industry does. A lot of things you are allowed to put in your wine. We [instead] have wanted to develop a system of self-certification.... Which is about putting your face on it [*metterci la faccia*]. And to say yourself precisely what you do with your wine”.

Then, the second person: “We want to create a better certification”, he agreed with his friend, “that is ethical, before anything else. For producers like us. Where it is about... where it is not like for those who have only made an economic choice... those who can also be large producers, who will follow the rules, but then don’t give a damn about the soil [*non frega niente il suolo*]. What we do here goes way beyond the bio-certification”; then, however, the point of discord: “He” – referring here to the first person – “does not want to certify. Then we argue about that... and we agree. But then he changes his mind again. I’m completely against! I mean, I’m for certification! OK, fine if you want to put your face on the product, on markets, direct sales, local sales, GAS... This works when the customer has trust [*fiducia*] directly in you. But this is just not possible when you sell to a distributor, or to a store! Then you have to... even if it’s bureaucratic and so!”

Together, the three devices above account for the most significant ways in which Critical Wine has practically sought to transform commodity exchange: first, the *wine guide*, which functions as a catalogue of producers affiliated with Critical Wine; second, a *source price*. The basic idea of the source price is for producers to adorn their bottles with a label stating how much the product would cost if purchased directly from themselves at the farm. In a situation like the (allegedly) overpriced wine in New York, then, the “commercial mechanism” at work between producer and consumer would be rendered visible, and each act of price augmentation would be made subject to an evaluation as to whether it is legitimate or not. Third, practices of *self-certification* appeared. Such alternative certification systems might differ from conventional (e.g., “organic”) certifications in respect to what they certify. More significantly, however, they differ in respect to *how* they certify. The systems envisioned here would be self-

managed by the producers themselves and would no longer rely on third-party certifying institutions.

These ideas have been around since the inception of Critical Wine. None of them, however (except possibly the register, found in my own catalogue) has been realised in any unproblematic sense. This is especially true for the source price. “It was a good idea”, Valeria (on the family farm in the Marches) echoed the voices presented above, “but it would have been impossible for us to implement it. Almost nobody did. And then somebody said it was illegal...” Nonetheless, each ambition exists in the *form* of such ideas. And *as* ideas they create debates and conundrums. This could not be the case if the *vignaioli* were simply to take the modern market for granted, taking its coordinates to define the nature of any past or possible future markets.

To explore the nature of the hopes that the *vignaioli* invoke in their critique of present-day markets, the next chapter focuses on the conundrums created by one of the aforementioned devices: self-certification. I emphasise two characteristics of *conventional* certifications that render these problematic in the eyes of the *vignaioli*. While one is rather straightforward, the second orientates our inquiries for all the sub-chapters that follow.

#### 4.7.3. *Certifications and trust*

In the preceding sub-chapter, I show two persons disagreeing on whether or not they ought to certify their wines. One person insisted that it is better if you “put your face on it” and declare yourself what you have done with the product; the other person agreed that this is better but insisted that it is “impossible” within larger chains of distribution. But what is problematic about certification to begin with? I show, below,

that there are two issues at stake here. First, however, I outline what “certifications” are to begin with.

Practices of certification, specifically, practices of organic certification, in the contemporary world of European wine, have a sign as their most obvious manifestation: a rectangle, usually green, and always with a combination of letters and numbers next to it. This is the European Union’s logo for organic products, or production. The first thing to note is the fact that there is a certification at all. To this, there is a longer history, originating in the Demeter biodynamic logo of 1928 (Aschemann et al. 2007). Since these early beginnings, the logic of certification has remained consistent. The aim is to transform agricultural practices. But, instead of regulating practices directly, certifications create a common identity for producers who work in the desired manner. Assuming that this identity marks something desired by a class of consumers, certifications bring about change by institutionalising a price-based incentive for producers to align their production with the specifications of the regulatory system (Guthman 2004).

As for the “organic” character testified by the green rectangle, the meaning is both clear and self-referential: organic production “means the use of the production method compliant with the rules established in this Regulation, at all stages of production, preparation and distribution” (EC Regulation 834/2007).<sup>61</sup> These regulations are as uniform as the labels on the bottles, and the varying letter-number combination

---

<sup>61</sup> The practice of putting such logos on bottles of wine follows a slightly more complex history than for most products. Neither the 834/2007 legislation nor its original 1991 predecessor (EC Regulation 2092/91) made provisions for wine, which was excluded by virtue of the interventions to which grapes are subject in the process of vinification. It was for ORWINE – an EU-wide research project coordinated by the Italian *Associazione Italiana per L’Agricoltura Biologica* – to provide the recommendations whereby the legal category ‘organic wine’ (EC Regulation 203/2012) was constructed in 2012.

identifies the specific control body tasked with overseeing the production of the product in question. For an Italian product, there are 18 such control bodies, two of which are registered in Germany. And the incentive created by this particular setup has proven greatly successful in effecting the change intended. In the European Union, 12.6 million hectares of EU agricultural land are organic as of 2017, following a 25% increase since 2012. Italy itself is at the forefront of these developments and has the largest number of organic producers and second largest area dedicated to organic agriculture in all the union – the latter following a striking 69.2% increase since 2012.<sup>62</sup> But why, then, would some *vignaioli* be so sceptical?

There are two reasons. The first we glean in the course of one morning's vineyard conversation at Valli Unite, which followed the day on which the meeting with visitors from the Marches had taken place (see 2.3.5). Bending over a wine to tie it fast to the metal wire, one worker (Sara) began by recalling the preceding day's conversation about "the problem of organic understood as a way of taking care of the territory [*curare il territorio*], with a connection to it... against a world of conventional organic".

Patrick answered by noting "that soon organic will mean nothing at all".

Cornelis, finally, went further, exclaiming that "organic is *already* just something commercial [*una cosa commerciale*]!" In the academic literature, the object for these complaints is called conventionalisation. "Organic regulation", Guthman (1998: 150) summarises the insight, "makes organic agriculture safe for capitalism". Precisely by creating a price incentive, organic regulations facilitate the entry of profit-oriented actors into a domain first explored by ideologically motivated pioneers. These new

---

<sup>62</sup> For statistics, I remain with the numbers available from the European Farm Structure Survey at the time of fieldwork. The overall trend they attest to has not changed since.

actors may follow the rules but, to recall the words of the *vignaiolo* in the Marches further above, “don’t give a damn about the soil”.

In situations such as this, the organic pioneers thus find that their mark of distinction has been taken over to create a category that effaces the distinction between themselves and the kind of producers they first sought to distinguish themselves from (see Pratt 2009). Furthermore, the certifying frameworks so created tend to focus on purely technical matters, and give no consideration to much of what the *vignaioli* find important about themselves. The small scale of their operations, for instance, which is a feature that remains connected to the peasant identity. Despite popular perceptions that connect the organic with bucolic smallholding, organic legislation has lacked requirements regarding scale from the outset (Jaffee and Howard, 2010). In Italy, organic farms will often be several times the size of non-organic ones.<sup>63</sup>

But, there is also another reason for the scepticism towards organic certifications, which is about something more fundamental. This does not involve the *content* of organic regulation, but regulation *as such*. Recall the very first interview I conducted for this project, where one of the organisers of the festival in Milan insisted that certification “makes no difference at all here”, for the *reason* that one should be able to trust what the producers themselves claim about their product (see Section 3.5.1). While many of the bottles present at the festival did display the green organic label, many did not. Often, this followed an explicit choice by the producer. In the words of one producer in southern Italy:

---

<sup>63</sup> The *vignaioli* are by no means uniformly critical against “conventional” organic production. Giuseppe in the Marches expressed a sentiment broadly shared everywhere: “I am very glad if my neighbour becomes organic. Certified. What they are doing is something different, but if it means I will not have poison all over my own fields then all the better! I am happy!” Yet as he made sure to clarify: “What we do *here* is much more than organic”.

For economic and political reasons (distance from bio-business and from bureaucratic speculations on agriculture, opposition to certification mechanisms and delegation), the Commune does not use any official brand, but supports participatory self-certification practices. Our “certification” is ourselves and those who know us or buy our products (Urupia, n.d., my translation).

Adapting the language of my own interlocutor from the Marches, these people insist on “putting their face” on their product and ask the consumer to trust them – not the certifying institution. Alexander Koensler notes some of the dynamics at play here. “[W]ith every newly introduced standard or regulation”, he writes, “many people seem to experience the perils of undermined trust” (Koensler 2018, 53). Regulations force producers to rely on authorised channels for inputs, which will inevitably mean commercial entities. Regulations force reliance on relations that are commercial rather than amicable, and in this manner “regulations [...] *de facto* erode informal relations of and favour large industrial productions, thus fostering a continuing integration of farming into global agribusiness” (Koensler 2018, 53).

This second source of scepticism towards certifications requires more unpacking. For while the first source is a straightforward matter of losing a market advantage, what we have here has to do with something more than money. Something that involves a valorisation of a certain kind of *relation* between actors involved in commodity exchange. In this respect, their complaints are less about their own economic interests, as much as their interest in what an economy ought to be. This is the point at which we have also come to the common ambition underlying the other devices employed in the ambit of Critical Wine. Now, before continuing to unpack this ambition, I want to scrutinise the anthropological resources available for doing so. I show that there are certain shortcomings in this respect. These shortcomings are located not so much with



how anthropologists have depicted exchange, as much with how they have tended to depict Western *theories about* exchange. This is what I turn to next.

#### *4.7.4. Anthropology between Gifts and Commodities*

In the anthropological tradition, there are two long-established antonyms at the centre of studies on exchange: gift and commodity. What do these words mean, in the context of anthropology? First, consider commodities. Where the economic sciences have traditionally been able to take it for granted that “commodities simply are” (Kopytoff 1986, 64), anthropologists have confronted situations that prompt them to inquire into the production of not only this or that commodity for sale, but of the commodity form itself (Gregory 1982). So how would they recognise this form when they saw it? One definition has the commodity as “an article or a service which is produced for exchange, where exchange is between ‘universal others’, independent and autonomous operators, who have no relation with each other except in so far as they exchange these commodities” (Stirrat 1989, 94). The way that such commodities are transacted, in turn, has been defined as “a transfer of value and a counter-transfer: the transfer of an object or service from A to B and the counter-transfer of money from B to A” (Carrier 1995a, 20). Properly conducted, such an exchange closes any further duties or bonds between the transacting partners (Carrier 1995a, 23).

The gift is the antonym of all this. On the one hand, gifts are recognisable in exchanges where “[o]ne party makes over something of theirs to another [...] [i]t is given, and that is that” (Laidlaw 2000, 621). That is to say, where the transfer “from A to B” is conducted in the absence of the mandatory return “from B to A”. Since Mauss’ 1925 essay on the gift (Mauss 2002), however, the key insight about gifts is that such gratuity is only approximated in the most arduously constructed circumstances (Laidlaw 2000).

In actual gift exchange, a return of some kind is expected. However, contrary to how the insights of Mauss were received for some time (Sigaud 2002), this does not mean that gifts simply dissimulate the real underlying logic of commodity exchange. To anthropologists, the gift has long figured not as the gratuitous opposite of the self-interested commodity, but as the concept that exposes the false *binary* that set exchanges apart as either wholly gratuitous or self-interested (Graeber 2001).

Both the gift and the commodity, in the senses above, are ideal constructs. Few anthropologists would expect to find either as a pure form (or worse, as a coherent type of “society”) in the real world (see Strathern 1988). Quite the contrary. Much ethnographic work is aimed precisely at qualifying not only the existence of “pure gifts”, but also “pure commodities” – that is, autonomous objects transferred between (self-interested, utilitarian) persons without inhering or constructing any enduring identity or obligation (Bloch 1989; Miller 2001; Keane 2001; Hart 2007; Bird-David and Darr 2009). At first glance, this literature applies directly to the ambitions behind *Critical Wine*, and to the constructs wherein wine may be a commodity but “not *just* a commodity”. However, there is something more at play in this literature, which needs to be qualified.

Note that from its inception, this debate on exchange has involved frontal comparisons (contrasts of “us” and “them”; Candea 2018)). Sometimes, this has come in the form where the “us” is construed by means of the “common interpretations and invocations of the West as the land of impersonal transactions and the market” (Carrier 1995b, 85). Yet such crude contrasts had already been challenged by Mauss himself, who never believed that the *real* West operates on principles of pure commodity exchange (Sigaud 2002). By now, there is a wealth of ethnographic evidence as to how people in the local

Italian context, while not conducting exchange like “Melanesians”, certainly do not do it like the *Homo Oeconomicus* of economic theory, either (e.g., Grasseni 2013; Pipyrrou 2014a; Pipyrrou 2014b; Koensler 2018; Koensler 2020. See also Rakopoulos 2013; Rakopoulos 2017). The ethnographic material presented in this chapter and the preceding one (4.7.3.) can certainly be employed to render a direct contribution to this literature. In this study, however, I level these materials for the purpose of demonstrating a complementary avenue of inquiry for Europeanist anthropology.

This reason come into view if we ask about the seemingly perennial need to qualify the idea of pure commodities or gifts to begin with. If not even Westerners abide by the dichotomy, why all this discussion about it? The answer is that the focus of Mauss’ critique was directed not so much towards Western practices of exchange as to Western *theories* of exchange. Allegedly, it is Western theory, due to a Roman introduction of a strict person-thing dichotomy (Parry 1986; Frank 2016) that has lost track of reality, so as to end up blind to the reality of exchange. *This* is the “us” of the Maussian frontal comparison. Not the utilitarian economic man, but the persons beholden by theoretical dichotomy that is foreign to “them” (whoever they may be) and wholly “our invention” (Parry 1986, 458).

Making use of the method for historical anthropology applied several times above, etymology, the following chapter challenges such inherited constructs of Western economic theory. Instead of showing how the *vignaioli* and the activists of Critical Wine think “economics” in a manner that does not fit the frameworks of Western theory, I show the striking extent to which these *do* fit. Only, and this is the crucial qualifier, we see that the economic theory in question has been marginalised in modernity, and thus fallen out of anthropological memory. Nonetheless, if we can gain a hold on this

historical context, we glean a dynamic otherwise occluded for anthropology. Similarly to how the *vignaioli*'s claim to work naturally must be understood as a manner of reviving older senses of the word nature (Section 4.3.), their reworking of commodity exchange partially recovers older “indigenous” constructs of the commodity.

#### 4.7.5. *Towards an Etymology of the Commodity*

In order to qualify anthropological constructs of the “Western” historical context for the contemporary situation in which we find the *vignaioli* and activists, this sub-chapter puts the method of etymology (Herzfeld 1987) to work for the sake of a sustained inquiry into the roots of Western commodity-thinking. As in the etymology of nature and farming above (Section 4.3.), I follow linearly along a chronological chain that, step by step, moves towards the contemporary context for the *vignaioli*.

We can begin at the far end of our chronological trajectory, by noting the etymological roots of a common word. The power of the gift, in the Maussian tradition, is that of bringing a social community about to begin with. We find much the same with the word *community* itself. The word is of Latin origin (composed as *cum-munus*), where the main element (*munus*) means duties, but also gift. *Munus*, in turn, derives from the proto-Indo-European *\*mey-*, which means to exchange, strengthen, bind. Etymologically speaking, the Western word “community” thus enfolds a profoundly Maussian range of meanings (Esposito 1998). Now, Mauss himself traced the “us” of his frontal comparison to the Roman context, and the legal introduction of a strict person-thing binary.<sup>64</sup> This etymology has been taken over by later anthropologists, who then enfold the Western “us” into a cultural whole defined by this legal invention

---

<sup>64</sup> Here it is possible to be even more specific than Mauss is, and trace this dichotomy to the legal innovations introduced by the influential jurist Gaius (130-180 AD) (Esposito 2014).

(e.g., Parry 1986). Doing so, however, “blackboxes” a history that is long and complex, even on the level of official legal and political culture (rather than just vernacular practices enduring in their shadow). First, accounts of a Western “us” in these terms ignore the economic doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, and its medieval Schoolmen who fought an arduous and protracted battle explicitly against the precepts underpinning Roman economic thinking (Langholm 1998). It is from this Medieval Catholic context I will proceed towards the contemporary situation.

To do this, we again gain an entrance point from a dispute between Veronelli and Soldati. Recall how both were involved in the task of salvaging the disappearing world of the Italian peasantry, and in harnessing wine for that purpose (see Section 3.4.3). The debate, at this point, was whether the bottle or the demi-john [*damigiana*] is the proper vessel for peasant wine. At one point in their dispute, Veronelli invoked the authority of an old statement: “*A che si conoscono, eh, le bottiglie? Alle etichette*”; Veronelli quotes the Franciscan friar San Bernardino of Siena (1380-1444) (Altreconomia 2015, 43): “It is on the labels that you recognise the bottles”. A reference fortuitous for our present purposes, not so much for the matter of the labels, as for the person whose words are invoked. San Bernardino was a friar, mostly known (when known at all) for the fiery sermons he delivered throughout Tuscany. To some contemporary scholarship, however, he now appears also as “perhaps the ablest economist of the Middle Ages” (de Roover, 1958, 423). Thus, with Bernardino, we have an entry point by which to explore how commodities and markets were construed in the broader medieval context. Arguably, the dominant modern constructs of “the economy” were inaugurated only as such thinking was defeated (Langholm 1998).

To understand the changes associated with San Bernardino's times, we must consider their background against an older suspicion against merchant activity of all kinds. Take here the case of the most influential of all scholastic thinkers, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). Aquinas held that "among all worldly things, there is nothing which seems worthy to be preferred to friendship" (cited in Santori 2020, 283, emphasis removed). In this vision of common life, gift (*donum*) is the pillar, and a common good (*bonum commune*) is construed in opposition to private gain. In various related forms of scholastic social thought, merchant activity was regarded with deep suspicion – a necessity, surely, but one to keep fixed in its proper place (Howell 2010). Thus, in the words of Aquinas himself:

If the citizens themselves devote their life to matters of trade, the way will be opened to many vices. Since the foremost tendency of tradesmen is to make money, greed is awakened in the hearts of the citizen through the pursuit of trade. The result is that everything in the city will become venal; good faith will be destroyed and the way opened to all kinds of trickery; each one will work only for his own profit, despising the public good; the cultivation of virtue will fail since honour, virtue's reward, will be bestowed upon the rich. Thus in such a city, civil life will necessarily be corrupted (Aquinas, cited in Howell 2010, 263-264).

Such suspicion was only reinvigorated as the late-medieval "commercial revolution" took off from its early Italian beginnings, and as social life increasingly became a matter of depersonalised (market-) relations between strangers (S. Zamagni 2012). Soon, the merchant class found that an appeal to the indispensability of their hallmark activity was insufficient – they needed more profound conceptual transformations, by which their activity could be recognised as a good (Howell 2010, 276). It was in this context that Bernardino enters, as one of the first actors who sought to develop a set of ethical

criteria for the conduct of the business entrepreneur and commercial distributor (Langholm 1998).

We can picture the conceptual innovations of this time as a fractal shift of scale (Strathern 2005), in respect to how criteria for sorting “good” from “bad” was put to work (Lambek 2015). From a tendency to sort commercial activity *as such* into the bad, efforts were now made to identify some commercial activity as good, and other commercial activity as bad. And in this respect, Bernardino remained a follower of Aquinas and the vocabulary of love, friendship and charity (Santori 2020). To San Bernardino, the pursuit of merchant gain is morally admissible. But only if conducted through honest exchange, with goods that hide no harms for the buyer, and if the pursuit is oriented towards a *real* need (such as providing for a household) rather than for its own sake (Saint Bernardine of Siena 1920, 196-197). For this tradition of thinking, profit was legitimate if derived out of exchange conducted with care and charity, and if it serves the good of the community as a whole rather than the merchant as an individual actor (S. Zamagni 2012).

Notably, this means that commodity exchange would be judged as bad insofar as economic actors engage in it with only their self-interest in mind. Concomitantly, it is then assumed that it is at least possible to conduct such exchange in other ways, and that the maintenance of such (virtuous) markets ought to be encouraged. This is clearly not how “Western” commodity-thinking has been depicted (whether in the form of a strategic essentialisation or not) in the anthropological literature discussed above. So whence, then, the anthropologists’ “us”?

This question brings us to specific modern innovations of thought, which a well-established tradition of thought identifies with the English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes

(1588-1679; e.g., Agamben 1998; Esposito 1998). The first thing to note about Hobbes is his vehement hostility towards the older thinking explored above, which he dismissed as “School-divinity (Langholm 1998, 140). To Hobbes, human beings are thrown into a world of merciless conflict and persist in existence only by dedicating all their energies to such perseverance. On this assumption, a construction of human activity emerges that interprets it in light of a perennial underlying self-interest. Any generosity of one person towards another is thus interpreted as an investment to serve the interest of the “generous” person himself.

Now, Hobbes certainly contributed to the unmaking of premodern (Western) economics (Langholm 1998; Bruni 2012). His influence on the making of modern economics, on the other hand, is more disputed. Adam Smith, one of the founders of modern economic science, has often been presented as a (preferable) alternative to Hobbes (e.g., Sen 2010). While we might hear echoes of Hobbes in Smith’s famous adage that “[i]t is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own self-interest” (Smith 1937, 14). But, Smith’s writings also show a concern with something else, with altruism and intimacy and care. However, if it is not a celebration of self-interest that really marks the work of Smith, something else does: a dichotomy, which parcels two spheres off from each other. One sphere is the intimate world of friends, dominated by a principle of altruism; the other sphere is the public sphere of everybody else, dominated by a principle of self-interest (Pabst 2011). Now, as I note above, in the anthropological literature it tends to be precisely *this* that is construed as the Western theory that gets the reality of exchange so wrong. That is, not the West as the world that celebrates self-interest, as much as the theory that dichotomises and purifies self- and other-interest from each other.



But here, a pause for thought. Hobbes was not Italian, nor was Smith. We have turned onto an etymological trajectory that has led away from the Italian context. To get at the latter, we need to retrace our steps, to the place before both Hobbes and Smith. And there, we find that it is not just possible (for people like those involved at Critical Wine) to imagine an alternative economy. It is also possible to imagine an alternative *history* of economics – economic science as it could have been.

In many histories of economic thought, the starting point of the discipline is identified with Smith and his contemporaries. But, what is occluded by such histories is the fact that the first academic chair in political economy was instituted elsewhere: in Naples, 1754, awarded to a man by the name of Antonio Genovesi (1713-1769). The *magnum opus* of Genovesi went by the name *Lezioni di Economia Civile*. This work was rapidly translated into German, Spanish and Portuguese, and exercised a considerable influence in these linguistic spheres. It is telling, however, that to this day no full translation into English exists (Pabst and Scazzieri 2019). From here, however, we have a coherent “Italian” school of political economy, which differs from the Scottish tradition of Smith (“the West” in the essentialisations of anthropology) in several key respects (Reinert 2005).

The Italian tradition, firstly, is characterised by its much stronger connection to the older anthropologies of friendship that we found with Aquinas (S. Zamagni 2012; Porta 2018; Santori 2020). Following Genovesi, we would have no reason to assume that we owe our bread to the self-interest of the baker; human beings, he believed, were naturally oriented by a desire towards mutual assistance, which also extended to matters economical (Bruni and Sugden 2008, 46). Mutual assistance was not altruism, to be sure, and “interest” was a key component of Genovesi’s system. Critically, however,

interest was not interpreted as simply a matter of exclusive self-interest (Pabst and Scazzieri 2019). Much like the way both *Critical Wine* and the systems Maussian-inspired scholars like to contrast with “ours”, the dichotomy between self- and other-interest is elided in favour of a mixed-motive image, where the happiness of relata (persons) is assumed to be realised only in the quality of their mutual relation.

With this in mind, let us make one final return to San Bernardino. The saint certainly recognised the possibility of subterfuge and dishonesty in market transactions. “Has thou ever heard”, he addressed his audience in one sermon, “that the host doth sell two wines at the same time, and that one is better than the other? And the better he doth always give to such as come there often, or to such that are his friends; and the worse he gives to such as are simpletons” (Saint Bernardine of Siena 1920, 190). Similarly, medieval economics consistently regarded secrecy as the biggest threat to the proper conduct of economic activity (Howell 2010, 276). To both the Scottish tradition of Smith and the Neapolitan tradition of Genovesi, the dimension of trust was understood as a phenomenon at the centre of a flourishing economic culture (Bruni and Sugden 2000).

The most important factor explaining the divergent pathways of the traditions of economic thought lies in how differently the matter of trust was treated. What Smith did, leading to the “us” of anthropological constructs of the West, was to turn to the centrepiece of Hobbes’ model: the contract, as a binding agreement upheld by the sovereign power of the State. In this case, trust becomes trust in a third party (ultimately the state), intentionally creating a situation where market actors can conduct business without having to ascertain the reliability of the transacting partner (Evensky 2011). To Genovesi, by contrast, trust was not primarily trust in sovereigns and contracts, but a

characteristic of the relation of one person directly to another – or to all others (Pabst 2018).

Here we find the *vignaioli*, and the contrast with which we became familiar in the discussion on organic certification: the face (“... *metterci la faccia*”) construed in opposition to the label. Here, it quite literally captures the sense of the contrast made. The certificate is something the consumer encounters as a logo on the packaging of the product; it is a sign, which refers to an institution (the state). The face is something the consumer encounters in a meeting with the producer, perhaps at a festival such as those in Milan or Rome. If the face is a sign at all, it refers directly to a person. Thus, the preference for the face corresponds precisely to one side of the breaking point at which the two Western economic traditions diverged.

In this sub-chapter, I nuance received understandings of Western models of economic exchange. A key point lies with its excavation of an economic tradition – that of Genovesi – that was eventually rendered subaltern and forgotten. But to fully situate the *vignaioli* and their contemporary situation in relation to this longer past, we need to appreciate how recently this took place.

#### *4.7.6. Radicals against markets, or radical markets?*

In light of the preceding etymological inquiry, we are now able to read the significance of the market interventions of Critical Wine (and the hopes underlying them) in a new light. We find them taking up a position that is not *against* markets or commodities, as much as about transforming the coordinates that have defined what markets and commodities really *are*. By tracing the ways that older models of economic life have been brought into the Italian present, this sub-chapter argues that their apparent

acquiescence to the market amounts to a far more radical position than a position of wholesale rejection.

Note first how, in Italy itself, the indigenous model of economic theory – that for which any “amoral” market is an aberration – long retained its vitality. We have here Giuseppe Toniolo (1845-1918), who held the chair of political economy in Pisa from 1883 to his death. Drawing on the indigenous Italian tradition of economic thought, Toniolo looked to the guilds of Aquinas’s and Bernardino’s time for an alternative to both liberalism and socialism.<sup>65</sup> And, in 1934, we have the dissertation of a young scholar who worked in the wake of Toniolo, insisting that “Catholics, so long as they held closely to the social teachings of the Church, could never act in favour of capitalism” (Fanfani 2003, 123). The reason? Because capitalism construes wealth as “simply a means for the unlimited, individualistic and utilitarian satisfaction of all possible human needs” (Fanfani 2003, 60), which betrays the demand that “[e]conomic activity [...] must take place within the moral sphere” (Fanfani 2003, 58). This may have remained a historical parenthesis, perhaps, if not for the fact that the young scholar in question – Amintore

---

<sup>65</sup> The displacement of the indigenous tradition from the academy largely took the form of its displacement by imports from the Anglosphere. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, economic science in Italy was also increasingly a matter of the “scientific analysis of market mechanisms and the benefits of free competition” (Augello and Guidi 2005, 1). Viewed as a potential vehicle of liberalism – not without reason, perhaps, as Cavour himself was a staunch free-market liberal (Mingardi 2017) – studies in the field were suspended in the 1820s (San-Julián-Arrupe 2014, 82). As the discipline was reinstated following unification and gained great prominence, it often did so in a new form. The aptly named economic society, *Società Adamo Smith* (founded in Florence, 1874) is illustrative (see Augello and Guidi 2001). The period of fascism may certainly have introduced an interruption to liberal economic science, as the regime insisted that research conform to the ideal of a corporate economic model. Nonetheless, actual adherence was often a matter of mere appearance (Augello et al. 2019; Barucci 2019). The precepts of liberal economy continued to gain ground. Following the war, an influential economist by the name of Luigi Einaudi would even serve as president. Einaudi, illustratively enough, was a devout anglophile, who concerned himself not so much with Genovesi as with his readings of Mill, Carlyle and Ricardo (Marchionatti et al. 2013).

Fanfani – was to go on to serve as prime minister of Italy for five separate terms. And this for the pro-market Christian Democrats, no less.<sup>66</sup>

The point here is not that somebody like Fanfani has exercised any influence on Social Centres or on the culture of wine connected to them. I have never heard his name mentioned by any interlocutor, his church is spoken of in terms at best ambivalent, and his political party is invoked of only with a disdain bordering revulsion. The point, instead, is to show how “different” ideas about what market exchange *is* (or *should be*) also endured in Italian “official” contexts for much longer than anthropologists have tended to give due to Western contexts.

The situation confronted by Critical Wine today, however, is dominated by a very different construct of social and economic life that is, the constructs of neoliberalism. On the political stage, “neoliberal” ideas had remained marginal all the way up to the 1980s (Masini 2019). It was in close conjunction with the rise of Berlusconi (who would win the national election of 1994) that this era of Italian politics was inaugurated (Ginsborg 2003): an era advancing towards lower taxes, less regulation, more competition, and the overarching ambition to reconstitute Italy in the image of a business enterprise (Stacul 2007, 452). But, we miss the complexity of what has been going on here if we interpret this period as the rise to hegemony of self-interested

---

<sup>66</sup> When it comes to the Italian twentieth century, it is thus important to avoid mapping different constructs of markets and commodities onto any simple right-left political scale. In fact, one strong ideological hub for what would become neoliberalism was the Italian think tank, CESES. But unlike what one might expect, neither the leaders nor members of CESES were exclusively right wing. Many were former members of the PCI (Bockman 2011). These persons may have abandoned the party structure, but not necessarily their communist convictions. The case of CESES, thus, demonstrates the extent to which “the ideas and experiments of the dissident left worldwide [...] sit at the heart of neoliberalism” (Bockman 2011, 135). Likewise, across the iron curtain, intense collaboration was going on among economists – something possible only on the basis of a shared assumption that “markets” have nothing to do with any moral sphere or with personal relations, and are simply mechanisms for the efficient allocation of scarce resources.

commodity thinking over all spheres of life. Instead, we need to note how a key characteristic of Berlusconi's politics was a renewed valorisation and celebration of *the family*, found in a domestic sphere set off from the market and its self-interest (Ginsborg 2003, 291).

As Muehlebach notes in an astute observation, what we find in Italy is a “neoliberal order rising under the sign of brotherly love” (Muehlebach 2012, 20), where “[m]oralization abounds in proportion to exploitation, gifting in proportion to commodification” (Muehlebach 2012, 23). This is the point where the Maussian construction of “Western” commodity-thinking comes to apply to actual political discourse and structure. That is, the point where dominant actors seek to organise society *not* on the basis of universalising the self-interested economic actor above all else, but on the basis of a *separation and purification* of the spheres of commodity and gift, self-interest and altruism, commodities and personal relations. Or, as in the case of Berlusconi, markets and family.

This is precisely the point at which Critical Wine advances a different proposal. Above, I show the key interventions by which it has sought to advance its ambitions (the guide, the source price, the self-certification). As the manifesto published in connection with the first events in the *Leoncavallo* and elsewhere in the early 2000s proclaims:

A glass of wine, like any other product of the earth, can bring attention to the virtuous circuit that must combine production with consumption; that circuit is made of environmental quality, quality of social relationships and product quality.

If one of these elements fails, the virtuous circuit is interrupted. If one of these elements is missing, every quality principle is false (my translation).<sup>67</sup>

This ambition remains at the heart of *Critical Wine*. A decade later, says a text published by the group who organised the *Terra Trema* where my own fieldwork began:

For us, acquiring a bottle of wine means acquiring awareness and knowledge as well as the joy of enjoying a wine as poetry. Protagonists of a different economy. Reducing the distance between producer and consumer, eliminating the widespread antagonism in our society between the two subjects, to build synergies instead. Coproduce. Coproduction (La Terra Trema 2015, emphasis removed, my translation).

I have already noted the existing literature that shows that we should qualify the “Italy” of Muehlebach to be but that of public politics rather than everyday life and initiative. Yet it is in relation to the real prominence of such dichotomising constructs of social life (market *vs.* sociality, self-interest *vs.* altruism) that the ideological radicality of *Critical Wine* stands forth. This initiative does not take up the position of “brotherly love” in order to advance over against the market. Instead, it seeks to transform what markets really *are*. What is more – and this we also glean in light of the etymology above – their talk of “synergies” and “coproduction” recalls a model for markets that is by no means foreign to the indigenous context. On the contrary, it is striking the extent to which this ambition (to overcome both self-interest and altruism in favour of mutual care around a shared relation) aligns entirely with a wholly “Western” tradition of

---

<sup>67</sup> This manifesto was published in print but is now rare and unavailable for purchase. I have been able to consult it as found in the homes of several *vignaioli*, and noted this passage down by hand. The excerpt cited here can also be found in an archived digital version at: [http://web.archive.org/web/20050531074419/www.criticalwine.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=PagEd&file=index&page\\_id=25](http://web.archive.org/web/20050531074419/www.criticalwine.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=PagEd&file=index&page_id=25). (Accessed 05.02.2021).

economic theory, a tradition that was only recently stowed aside, to be forgotten also by anthropologists.

#### 4.7.7. *Redeeming the Commodity*

The aim of this chapter has been to explore in detail the sense in which Giuseppe spoke – in the introduction – of wine as “not just a commodity”. What is this “more” and how is it enacted? We found answers with three devices for transforming markets: a guide, a just price, a system of self-certification. To come to terms with the ambition for which these devices have been levelled to begin with, I unpacked how the *vignaioli* reason about systems of certification. What led our inquiries forward was the demonstration that this reasoning is shaped by the hope that market exchange can be based on principles of mutual trust and care. To properly contextualize this hope, the chapter conducts an etymological inquiry into Western forms of commodity-thinking.

As Corrado Dottori – my interlocutor on the family farm in the Marches – puts it himself, in his autobiography: “I still remain convinced that every product of man or nature that is exchanged on a market must somehow possess an intrinsic value. I am ancient [*sono antico*], I know” (Dottori 2012, 81, my translation). Now, we are equipped to understand the antiquity in question, and the significance of its recovery in the present.

In respect to the overarching research question of *what* the *vignaioli* do, this provides an answer in respect to their practices of commodity exchange. However, this is not the only manner in which they sell their wines. Hopes such as those explored in this chapter are omnipresent in the world of the *vignaioli*. Nonetheless, as I already show, none of the ambitions have been wholly realised. How the *vignaioli* thus relate to the ambiguity of their actual market activity is a matter I turn to next, in a chapter (4.8) that pulls



together Part IV of the study as a whole. To do this, I begin the next chapter with a vignette from a situation somewhat apart from my main fieldwork sites, so as to gain a view from a certain distance.

## 4.8. Outro: When “wine is just a commodity”.

### 4.8.1. *Natural Fish*

Pausing a moment from incessantly blowing his nose and wiping his runny eyes, Roberto turns towards me: “When we meet Claudio, you must ask him this: *What is Natural Fish?*” Despite coming down with a bad cold, Roberto remains characteristically animated. Laughing, he turns back to the road ahead. We are in his car, driving to the coast from his village in inland Calabria. Down by the Ionian Sea his friend Claudio has a restaurant, and Roberto is eager to introduce us.

Calabria. It is February, and all along the winding roads the hills are green, and the land is studded by small houses and plots of land where crops grow, vines, olives, vegetables of all kinds, all mixed up with one another. “Like Permaculture!” Roberto exclaims, while enthusiastically pointing to one plot after the other as our car sweeps by. “There is much water here”, he smiles, and a profound culture of the earth remains, where “everybody” still has a plot to grow food on, even when they hold a conventional job.

Not that there is an abundance of these jobs to begin with. This is the tip of the Italian boot, in the poorest region of Italy. “Industrialisation failed here”, Roberto tells me, “and in this area was never any large-scale farming businesses”. A pause, then the conclusion: “We have been fortunate [*siamo stati fortunati*]”.

Months have passed since I first met this winemaker in his early 40s, whose slender frame is only accentuated by how his prodigious beard and hair seem able to grow in all directions at once. This first meeting was at my primary field site in Piedmont. Roberto had come for a short visit, and I first saw him as he was walking along the long table for lunch, offering everybody a drink from a bottle of unmarked red wine that he

had bought. We did not get a chance to speak much back then. At the festival in Rome, he was supposed to be present, but failed to show up, because his car broke down. Now, however, I am his guest for a few days, and have been given a room in the flat of Roberto's mother. Each morning he has picked me up with his car, and without my ever fully knowing where we are going or why, I have joined in running errands from one end of Calabria to the other. Now, it seems we are going to the coast.

“Roberto is a strange thing”. So I have heard people describe him. A “peasant without land [*contadino senza terra*]”. He is not from a grape-growing family. For years, he did other things, including film studies at university elsewhere in Calabria. Until, in 2006, when he entered the world of wine. This step was one he took together with two friends, with the idea of running a small cooperative. As of the preceding year, however, they have split. He and his previous collaborators simply had a different vision of how to make wine, Roberto told me when I asked why. Where his friends wanted to expand the operation, he wanted them to remain small so as to retain the maximum amount of control possible over the gestation of the wine.

Unfortunately, this split has also left him in a somewhat complicated situation, as far as both grapes and a place to ferment them are concerned. The grapes he now harvests from some small plots spread around the countryside – two hectares in total. And the *cantina* is a cement structure located behind the house of a friend, which takes him more than an hour to drive to. His energy and passion remain tangible, however. “This is *not* tradition” he had told me when I first arrived. “It is... *vocation*. That is not the same thing. During the harvest, you can't talk to me at all. I'm like in a trance... I work 20 hours per day, lose six or seven kilos from not eating... Ask anybody, it is true!”

It is not *only* for wine that he has expressed this passion. His dream now, he had told me, is to create a place “A bit like Valli Unite ... with a garden, a bakery to buy bread. Where people can come and buy and pick herbs and we can cook together. It is important to make things together, to create relationships”. After a pause, he continued “I think we need to eliminate money”. But with the realisation of any such vision still far off, he has meanwhile become involved in a project aimed at promoting the cultivation of traditional cereals, and he has somewhat more concrete hopes of reviving local *terracotta* traditions.

We had been standing outside his cantina when Roberto first mentioned his dreams for the terracotta. We had just tried all the wines therein – *mantonico*, *mantonico pinto*, *guarnaccia nera*, *pecorello*, *merlot* – all at different stages along the path from grape to wine, all varietals you are unlikely to encounter anywhere but here. Except, of course, the Merlot (“*Merlot! Can you believe it? Did you ever taste a merlot like this!*”). All still in their vats, which apart from a few amphoras were all from steel. This is what Roberto is hoping to use the *terracotta* for – as materials for making his own *qvevri*.<sup>68</sup> Then, he would be able to bury his own wine in his own soil, with his own containers. Not only would this let the wine benefit from various energetic forces at work among the roots – it would be more “consistent” with what “all this” was about.

It was the matter of “all this” that was now bringing us towards the coast, in search of fish and knowledge. The sea has not yet come into view, but the hills are slowly levelling out. Roberto himself has done little but sniffle for some time now. But seemingly recovering some of his energy, he picks up the phone to call Flavio at Valli

---

<sup>68</sup> *Qvevri* are large vessels used since ancient times to ferment wine in Georgia. These are made from earth, and conventionally buried in the soil. These have gained some renown in the world of natural wine, primarily due to the pioneering efforts of “natural” winemakers such as Josko Gravner.

Unite: “Guess who I have with me!” – he shouts – “Oscar has come to learn how to make *real* natural wine!” He has put the speakers on and gestures for me to say something as well. I only add that this is perfectly true. “The open door is now closed for you,” Flavio shoots back to me (invoking the motto of the cooperative) while Roberto laughs: “You people in Piedmont don’t know shit about wine!”

The phone call concludes on this note, and I decide that it is as good a time as any to ask directly: What *is* real *Vino Naturale* to begin with? Roberto needs no further prompting to give his view on the topic. The first principle for making *Vino Naturale*, he begins, is to respect the diversity given to you. This means that you should use your own “autochthonous” varietals of the wine vine, since these will be more resistant than international ones. However, you cannot be “*taliban*” about this principle. He himself has his Merlot, in a few rows that stand among the rocks and conifers at the cantina. This building is at an altitude of 900 metres, and the Merlot was planted by his friend when he was searching for a varietal that could prosper in those very uncommon conditions.

Nevertheless – Roberto goes on – autochthonous varietals are more consistent with both *Vino Naturale* and the local “geomorphology”. Here Roberto begins to list the things he would include within the latter category: the liquorice for which Calabria has long been famous; the indigenous herbs that grow spontaneously; the rice that has been cultivated here since antiquity; the cereals, and the wolves, and the “five-six... no, four-five... three-four” breeds of goat that are indigenous to this place. To me, it is starting to look like this list could go on for a very long time. But then, Roberto leans in, gesticulating with one hand so as to emphasise the point he is making: at the centre of

the work of natural wine, “there needs to be Man [*deve essere l'uomo*]!” I am now myself sitting rapt in attention. Then, the phone rings.

I have never met a winemaker who spends this much time in his car and on his phone, I think to myself, as Roberto talks on. Looking out on the landscape passing by, I think back again to the cantina the day before. Due to its location, Roberto had told me, propitious winds would reach all the way up there from the sea, and on a good day you can even see the ocean. As hard as we tried to get a glimpse of it, however, on the day of our visit the best we could bring into view was a grey sliver of “perhaps” on the horizon.

Giving up, and walking back to the car, Roberto had turned around to me: “The right thing for you to do right now is to write a very critical thesis on natural wine!” We stopped, so he could explain: to make natural wine means to have an *ethics*. But now – “look at all these small-scale producers, who have found themselves with little land and then think they might as well make *Vino Naturale*. Those people don’t understand shit [*Non capiscono un cazzo*].”

The target of Roberto’s anger here was twofold, as he went on to explain. First, it was aimed at agriculturists who (in a rather traditional manner) would avoid any pesticides for the crops they grow for themselves, while putting “anything” onto that which goes onto the market. As for himself, Roberto insisted, he insists that both his vineyard and cellar remain open. Anybody should be able to come in at any time and see for themselves what he is doing. “This is what honesty means! I am transparent!” Second, he had no kind words for those he considered too willing to compromise when their plants become sick: “Why do [these people] always try to control everything? Control has a limit. You need to accept some disease. Nature is stronger than we are! You are a

servant of nature. You cannot try to dominate it. You don't dominate shit!" He was almost shouting now, fixing me with his gaze and waving his arms back and forth: "If you believe in organic, you must believe! Either you believe in organic, or you don't [*Se credi in bio, devi credere! O credi in bio, o non credi*"]". He himself, he insisted, "believes".

I could recognise some of where this was coming from, this professing to be "authentic" in faith, "coherent" in practice, and "transparent" in both. I recall a dinner in the home of Corrado and Valeria, in the Marches. With meat and pasta and salad all finished, Valeria picked up one of the half-empty bottles still on the table in front of her: "Perhaps a bottle like this... can be, technically speaking, without sulphites, made with indigenous yeasts. According to me, it will still not be a *Vino Naturale!*" *Vino Naturale* also involves a certain *ethics*, she continued, and a way of organising your work and comporting yourself to other people. What these new arrivals seek, by contrast, is but profit. "But their wine is not authentic", she went on, "And it will not work in the long term. People will discover. But in the short term, it can be very bad".

I recall also the exasperation of friends in Puglia, following their return from that year's edition of VinNatur: "What the hell is he doing at VinNatur [*Ma che cazzo fa a VinNatur?*]"<sup>69</sup> This was Elizabeth, in Puglia, speaking to her husband while rolling a cigarette. This year, there had been a new producer at the festival. A producer whom, according to my interlocutor, had arrived onto the scene with "a lot of money from God knows where", and already in possession of as much as 50 hectares of vineyard. "Sure", she went on, while turning to me on her way to the front porch, "you can test the wine,

---

<sup>69</sup> VinNatur here refers to a major annual wine-tasting event for natural wine.

and maybe you won't find sulphur and such things. But it is still a wholly different thing! That guy for sure never gets his own boots dirty in the vineyard!"

Whether in Piedmont, Puglia, Le Marche, or Calabria, the worry here had been presented to me in similar terms: it has now been demonstrated that not only is it possible to make *Vino Naturale* – it is possible to make a living from it. So now a new kind of people are arriving, taking up the practice for a different reason than their own.

Roberto hangs up his phone, and my attention is snapped back to the road below, and the fish ahead. A brief pause. "Humans at the centre, yes. Not the machine!" He himself now does all the work by hand, he proudly tells me. Or feet, in the case of trampling the grapes at harvest. It was only large-scale industrial production that justified mechanisation to begin with, Roberto goes on, and this is wholly foreign to *Vino Naturale* anyway.

We now have the Gulf of Taranto on our left. Finally, we are arriving at the village where Claudio has his restaurant. It has been a long drive, but as we roll up in front of our destination, it is still not lunchtime. It is located in an unassuming building, this restaurant, tucked between the railway tracks and the sea. We enter. There is nobody there.

So it seems, at first. In the kitchen, we find a woman cooking. Her face shines at the sight of Roberto. This is Claudio's mother, it turns out, and we are soon engaged in lively conversation, until Roberto decides it is time to go find his friend. With Claudio promptly located, the three of us are soon seated at a corner table in the restaurant. These friends are similar to each other in age and stature, only Claudio is round where Roberto is lean, and has neither hair nor beard where Roberto has ample quantities of



both. And while with Roberto I am never quite sure what we are about to do next, the expectation here seems to be that we are going to eat.

It is now almost time for the restaurant to open, and waiters – Claudio’s sons – have arrived. The always indispensable wine is ordered and, one after the other, five seafood dishes are brought to the table. Claudio, leaning back on his chair, carefully explains what we have in front of us. To me, it is the first dish brought to the table that really stands out: *Sardella spalmabile*. This is made by taking *novellame* [whitebait], and adding salt and peperoncino, which is all left to decompose slightly. It is still Claudio speaking, and he goes on to explain how this is very traditional food for the fishermen families here. When larger fish were sold north, to cities like Naples, the *novellame* were the scraps left behind. This is a pattern that also runs through the other dishes – food for the poor, which Claudio now seeks to reinvent. “Because of the mountains here, there was never the agricultural development seen elsewhere. There were never the large *latifundia*. And now they have been excluded from globalisation. It is still a natural area, where tradition and quality are the only ways that will work”. “*Siamo stati fortunati*”, he echoes Roberto from earlier, “we have been fortunate”.

By now, I am wondering whether Roberto is able to taste any of this, with that cold that he has. I do not know, but now he is finally insisting that I pose his question: “What is Natural Fish?”

Claudio hesitates for a second, before he begins to answer: “Fish which is autochthonous, local to your *territorio* ...” Here, Roberto appears to have heard enough, and breaks into the conversation himself: “So far you have only been in contact with products from the land”, he tells me. “Fish comes from the sea, and that changes everything. You cannot control your production the way you do on land. You don’t grow

fish the way you grow your meat”. But still, he continues, “the fishermen were the peasants of the sea [*i pescatori erano i contadini del mare*]!” Natural fish is fish from your own sea, caught without large ships or machines. And when working like that, then here it is also possible to make very authentic food, and to maintain the right “connection with the raw materials”. Claudio nods and leans back again.

The meal draws on for hours, while guests arrive and depart from the restaurant. Claudio is busy working now but returns to our table whenever he can. At some point we are also joined by his father, who takes the opportunity to dismiss the town where I stayed just before arriving at Roberto’s: “Pah! There’s no good wine from Cirò”. And so, we eat and drink, until finally lunchtime is over, and all other guests have left the premises. Now Claudio’s mother is also able to come sit down with us. Visibly tired, she lets out a deep sigh, and a complaint about the amount of work involved in running a restaurant. Roberto immediately objects: “Yes, but the work you do is beautiful work!” Claudio’s mother gives no answer, but does not look particularly convinced. “Well”, she shrugs, “one good thing about this work is that you don’t have to commute. You’re not stuck in the metro like the people up north”.

On this note, we take our leave from Claudio and his family. Strong coffee, a short walk to recover as best we can from the lunch, and we depart. We speak less on the way back, and as the sea disappears behind us, we pull over to a gas station, then one more coffee, to manage the journey back up the hills.

#### *4.8.2. The commoditisation of the qualified commodity*

The vignette above serves two purposes. First, we have now arrived at the final chapter of the thesis (conclusion aside), and the scenes above serve to gather up the key themes we have explored above. My companion, first of all, is a “peasant” who was made so

by a choice of his own. While expounding the significance of what he had thus chosen, Roberto would touch upon: transparency and trust in the context of economic activity (Section 4.7), money and vocation (4.5.), security and vulnerability (4.4.), as well as the relation between human activity and nature (4.2 and 4.3.). We also have the wine from which Roberto hopes to make a living (2.3.). Finally, we have the figure that frames the whole project: the peasant (Part III). As an inherited framework of historical progress has broken down, this figure is one whose “backwardness” has been reinterpreted as a path to the future. In this manner, the figure of the peasant marks a space where phenomena past and present are connected in novel ways, as is the force of the dialectical image of Benjamin (Part I).

Then, we have the second purpose. The journey with Roberto introduces a new problem, which appears for the *vignaioli* at this point of the production chain: those people who “don’t understand shit”. Let’s say that everything else works out for the *vignaioli* as it should. The vines thrive and provide good grapes that are salvaged in time from the autumn rain; the fermentation proceeds without issues; the wine is brought to the market and sold at a rate sufficient to ensure the wherewithal of the producer. If so, then this is the fundamental problem that faces them, in the form of a success that threatens to undermine itself.

What is this threat about? We already find awareness of it in Pasolini, and his complaint about what he called “gatherers of lichens” – those in search of untouched dialects, as curiosities to be labelled, pinned down, and put on display (Pasolini 2005). Later, Agamben would echo the sentiment, coining the concept of the Museum: an omnivorous dimension that can enfold a city, a region, or even a group of people “insofar as they represent a form of life that has disappeared” (Agamben 2007, 84). The

Museum, here, is a term for entities gathered for display with regard to their designation as “no longer”, where they can be gazed upon and admired, but not put to any new use (cf. Prozorov 2014, 38-39). The same might readily happen to the *contadino*, and to the *vignaioli* in their efforts to enact that role. In their efforts, the *vignaioli* already perform that role, indexed with the temporal designation “no longer” (see Part III). Yet there is a political edge to this performance, by which they hope to redeem this “no longer” for a different future. As made part of the Museum, instead, their performance of peasantry would be emptied of both substance and significance and “given over to consumption or to spectacular exhibition” (Agamben 2007, 82).

This is yet another challenge associated with the “consequences of integrating market-oriented consumerism with the social function and importance of remembering” (Hodges 2001, 208). Roberto exemplifies the most widespread response to this problem: he emphasises his *sincerity* – the degree of correspondence between his actions (as a *contadino*) and his intention (Lambek 2015, 175). Precisely this pinpoints the site of a yet more grating problem, however: the extent to which the actions of the *vignaioli* do *not* always correspond to their intentions. The critique that Roberto levelled against others, those new arrivals who “don’t understand shit”, may often be applied equally to the *vignaioli* in this study themselves.

#### 4.8.3. *The Problem of Irony*

Such self-critique, in fact, is common. I recall one night, when returning with Flavio from yet another fair of Critical Wine. I am exhausted after a long weekend and two nights sleeping in the Social Centre itself, and slump towards the door of the van that Flavio is driving. Slow, dispersed conversations ensue. Then, Flavio mentions the fair itself. “Look, this is really absurd when you look at it. This evening, I gave those guys”

– referring here to a specific group of customers from the end of the evening – “16 boxes of wine. But then tomorrow, I go to the warehouse and there is a truck arriving to pick up 70 boxes. Just look at the proportions. These markets, with a few bottles here and there... it is absurd. It is the market abroad that really supports the cooperative”. The same applies to all the farms in this study. All sell at least half of their wine abroad, and most of the rest in conventional commercial circuits. And likewise, they all regard this as problematic. Yet they still do it.

Thus, however “synergetic” the circuits envisioned at the outset of Critical Wine may appear, none of my interlocutors provide for themselves exclusively (or even to the major part) within these circuits as they actually exist. On several occasions, I encountered references to one collective of producers who do things differently. As one *vignaiolo*, in the Marches, said: “They are one step beyond us. At least in one respect: they sell only to people they want to sell to”. My discussant admires the choice to do so, he indicated, but continued: “Many years ago, we discussed this. And decided to focus on the production side of things, and to sell normally, to everybody. This way, we also make a living!” Similarly, from a *vignaiolo* at Valli Unite, who spoke speaking about the same producer: “[They] only sell wine to people who agree with them!”, then defensively, “But [that place] is different. They were an artist collective who decided to also be *contadini*, in addition. Here, we were already always *contadini*!”

I never visited the producer (a commune in southern Italy) in question, and I do not know if the latter characterisation has any truth to it. My point here has nothing to do with this exceptional producer as such, but with the ethical precepts embodied by their conduct. The fact that some feel the need to justify why they do things differently only underscores the force of these precepts. Thus, we see here the extent to which these

*vignaioli* often find their conduct wanting in relation to the very precepts they seek to uphold. A self-referential worry, often repeated in various forms. Cornelis at the Piedmontese cooperative, here extending it also to the process of production, said: “You see the vineyards around here, how endless they are. Boring! The cooperative is going in the same direction, according to me. We are growing. Soon they will begin taking Romanians and Macedonians, like everybody else. Seasonal workers who work fast, and cheap too. In the world of organic, that's how it is. A form of modern slavery, with people who work for almost nothing!”

On occasion, Cornelis was nicknamed “Apocalypse Cornelis” for his constantly gloomy predictions. None of the other members of the cooperative are quite so pessimistic about their future. Yet there *is* a worry about a drift to “normalcy”. What I do in the preceding chapters of Part IV is to inquire into the ways in which they are not “normal” – the respects in which the farms, in the words of Giuseppe, in the introduction, are “very special places” that are not like “everywhere in Italy”. I have *not* sought to critically evaluate their claims, nor to judge what the prospects of a real “peasant revolution” might be in present-day Italy.

In this final chapter, I indicate how these are worries and doubts that are also harboured by the *vignaioli* themselves. Precisely this fact, however, also works in another direction. The fact that the *vignaioli* are perpetually dogged by anxieties about their own conduct shows the perseverance of commitment – otherwise there would be nothing for them to worry about. I provide no solution to their conundrums. The ethnographic demonstration above centres on the immanent existence and structure of a feeling of self-doubt. But the point I want to emphasise with this is equally that of

hope. What does the future hold in store for the *vignaioli*, museum or revolution? Only time will tell.

## Part V: Peasants at the End of the End

Writes Agamben, to conclude a major project of his own: “The reader will thus find here reflections on some concepts [...] that have from the very beginning oriented an investigation that, like every work of poetry and of thought, cannot be concluded but only abandoned (and perhaps continued by others)” (Agamben 2015, xiii). This is also the point now reached in the study presented here. Having started out from the ambition to find “new ways of telling true stories beyond civilizational first principles” (Tsing 2015), the thesis presents a true “story” of a specific way of life in a specific time and place. In relation to this way of life, the study levels a challenge to a number of “civilizational first principles”. But, there is always more to be said, about concepts and people both. Hence, the one who conducts a wholly thorough inquiry always paradoxically brings it to an end in abandonment rather than conclusion, finding that “as long as life goes on, there is somewhere further he can go” (Ingold 2011, 150). But, the one who picks up and carries on with the investigations presented here will find that a great deal has already been achieved. This is the point at which to take stock.

The topic of this study is presented in Part I. By constructing a montage – a dialectical image (Benjamin 1999) – around a poetic evocation of fireflies and peasants, I raise the issue of *peasant nostalgia*, in light of its relation to questions of historical continuity and change. I ask what it means to know oneself as a peasant today, in contemporary Italy, where I had already come to know ethnographic informants who in some senses must be regarded as *peasants after the end of peasantry*. Thus, Part I sets the study up as an inquiry into what it *means* to be a peasant today, and into how the establishment of that meaning involves shifting established images of history.



Part II of the study goes on to operationalise this theme. First, it situates my principal themes in relation to key debates on topics already raised in Part I: wine; agriculture; difference; peasants; historicity; Italy; and “the Good”. Second, it specifies ethnographically the Italian *vignaioli* among whom my ethnographic research was conducted. I emphasise that across the distance separating these select fieldsites – from the principal fieldsite at a (viticultural) farm in Piedmont to others in Calabria, Puglia and the Marches – it is still possible to speak of a “community” constructed in both imagined and face-to-face terms. The connection between the farms was not constructed by myself for the purpose of comparative research, but pre-existed my arrival. These ethnographic interlocutors already knew each other, through bonds created and maintained (primarily) at a specific series of politically infused wine fairs. In this way, a two-sided mode of ethnographic and analytical inquiry arises, which gives attention both to specific people in specific places, yet articulating this specificity in relation to the dimensions of life these people share in common, despite their geographic dispersal. This approach constituted the ethnographic bedrock of my doctoral fieldwork, and this thesis.

The broader theoretical topic for my study is grounded by means of straightforward research questions directed to the *vignaioli*: Who are they? What do they *do* in the course of work? Why do they work and live in the way in which they do? And if they consider themselves peasants – which they do – then in what *sense*? What does peasanthood *mean* to them? Crucially, however, I approach this question with a specific analytical commitment: to take their answers on their own terms, and work *from that* to refashion anthropological assumptions as needed (Viveiros de Castro 2004; Holbraad and Pedersen 2017). Thus – by taking their answer for what it means to be a peasant

“seriously”, my simple questions are connected to theoretical (and methodological) issues of considerable complexity.

As a first key analytical and empirical step, Part III of the study homes in on these key questions and themes of ethnographic enquiry – the meaning of peasantry – by means of a transversal historical etymology of how the concept of “the peasant” has continually morphed throughout modern Italian history, each time in relation to transforming horizons for historical consciousness (Herzfeld 1987; Hodges 2019). My aim is to analyse a trope, present on and around the farms at the centre of ethnographic inquiry, of a “revolutionary peasant”. By teasing out the obviational sequence (Wagner 1986) through which this trope is constructed, I seek to identify the elements that compose it today. This investigation leads to the manner in which the progressive ethos of “Liberal Italy” temporalised the peasant class as “backwards”. This connotation remains to this day, and is responsible (I argue above) for the *lack* of articulation between “revolution” and “peasant” in dominant 20<sup>th</sup> century Italian politics. What has now changed so as to enable the conjunction of peasants and revolutions, I argue, does not involve the removal of the peasant from the “backward” slot. Instead, it is the bond between revolution and *progress* that has been obviated in a context where the future is constructed under the sign of progress. Thus, it has become possible to direct revolutions both backwards and forwards in time, in a manner I describe in the immediate context of the *vignaioli* at the centre of my inquiries. In this sense, these *vignaioli* may be said to be peasants *after the end of the end* of peasantry – that is, after the end of the “progressive” constructs of history as an ineradicably forward-oriented movement.

Part III provides an answer to the question of what it means, for the *vignaioli*, to be peasants. By means of the history analysed in order to provide an answer, the thesis renders a contribution to the topics of wine, peasants, agriculture, Italy, and above all the debate on historicity that binds the inquiry together. In Part IV, I bring these results further by means of a sustained inquiry directed at the work and production of the *vignaioli* themselves. This part provides ethnographic descriptions with which to answer the questions of *who* these people are, *what* they do, and *why* they do it. In a more analytic key, the part follows the sequence of steps through which a bottle of wine is made (and sold) on their farms, in order to examine the “difference” their practices and words enact in relation both to the language of economic science and to the language of anthropology. At each step, making sense of this ethnographically registered difference requires extensive conceptual discussion, informed by both philosophy and history.

Throughout the thesis, I take my analytical bearings from contemporary debates in “ontological” anthropology. This is pursued, however, with some important qualifications. Emphatically, I do not advance the claim that the *vignaioli* are a coherent group of subjects who live in a “different world” from “us” (see Heywood 2012). As Kapferer notes, there is no reason to let the word ontology underwrite “a homogenization of societies as of one type or another” (Kapferer 2014, 396). “Why”, he asks, “cannot a number of different ontologies operate, if under specific situated circumstances, in the one overall context?” (Kapferer 2014, 396). In the course of my description of the lifeworld of the *vignaioli*, then, I go on to capture this ethnographic diversity and complexity, and this is also evidenced ethnographically in my adhesion to

a narrative mode that privileges the description of individuals and their experience, alongside the generalising traditions of ethnographic narration.

At this point, one could ask, what *do* I mean when speaking of ontology? As a key observation, and like Kapferer (2014), I regard this vocabulary as a means for *deepening the stakes of difference*. This deepening of stakes also inheres in a specific mode of analysis, which leading proponents of the “ontological turn” have claimed as the defining trait of their method (Holbraad and Pedersen 2017, see 2.2.2): *Recursivity*. This is to say that such analysis proceeds through what Candea calls “frontal comparison” (2018; see 2.2.2.). Frontal comparisons consist in a confrontation of an “us” with a “them”, in which “our” vocabulary is shown to be incapable of grasping what goes on in “their” lives, and in which this demonstration is used to recursively reshape the vocabulary by which “we” began. I repeatedly deploy frontal comparisons. In so doing, I seek to show how a method of analysis hitherto employed almost exclusively in non-European contexts can be applied just as well in European ones.

To say that ontologically oriented modes of analysis can be applied just as well in European settings is not to say that they can be applied in just the same way as elsewhere. For whatever may be the case in Amazonia or Melanesia, the terms that are “ours” and those that are “theirs” trace their genesis to one and the same history – their relation pre-exists the analytic intervention of the anthropologist. Drawing on Herzfeld and the method of etymology, I seek to turn this apparent difficulty into a strength. By tracing the historical roots of both “our” and “their” concepts, I demonstrate how the *vignaioli* can be conceived as “radically different” precisely in their manner of being both “Western” and familiar. Which is to say that in the very process of contextualising

my interlocutors in a historical past, I also re-describe the kind of context that anthropologists often take this (“Western”) past to be.

This ethnographic study, informed by this specific strand of ontological theory, adapted for the European context, has not started out from a concrete clash between groups in a particular situation (which it might then have explained by demonstrating the radically diverging stakes the object of conflict holds for the groups involved). As Strathern notes, “[o]ntological divergence is not going to look like a cultural—or indeed social—clash, where the clash is obvious. It may not even look like a ‘clash’ at all” (Strathern 2019, 63). The starting point here, instead, lies with a particular group of people and their way of lives. Not with an overt clash between these people and others. Thus, I have presented what Agamben calls “a reflection on some concepts” – specifically, a reflection on the concepts (nature, labour, commodities) that “we” need to rethink if we are to make sense of (and situate historically) how the *vignaioli* – at farms from Piedmont to Calabria, and at festivals from Milan to Rome – invoke and perform the *contadino*.

Finally, recall Giuseppe’s insistence at the beginning of this study, that I give the project presented here the name “Where wine is not just a commodity”. If there is an overt ontological “clash” at stake in the situation described above, it hinges on this “not *just*”. When Dante made his escape from the underworld, he did so by climbing the flanks of the devil towards the very centre of hell. In a vertiginous moment, when he passes the midpoint of the universe itself, up turns to down and down to up. And thus he finds his “hidden passage” back to the “world of light” (Dante *Inferno*, XXXIV. 397-398). Will my interlocutors find their way out of capitalism by means of climbing the commodity form itself? Is wine that hidden path? Or are the fireflies – peasants – already all gone,

and they themselves nothing but impostors? I have no answers nor solutions, and I do not want to judge them one way or the other. Only retrospectively will it be possible to tell what has become of these peasants after the end of peasantry. But this doubt works also in another direction: to cast doubt on the certainty, held by some, that the peasant world really is irrecoverably lost and that (as Pasolini believed about the Italy of his and our time) there is no reality but the reality of capital. With doubt, one might hope. It is such hope, shared by the *vignaioli* and by myself, that I hope this thesis has inspired also in the reader.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aberth, John. 2013. *An environmental history of the middle ages: the crucible of nature*. Oxon: Routledge
- Absalom, Roger. 2000. "Peasants." In *Encyclopedia of contemporary Italian culture*, edited by Gino Moliterno, 609-611. London: Routledge.
- Agamben, Giorgio. 1998. *Homo sacer: sovereign power and bare life*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Agamben, Giorgio. 2007. *Profanations*. New York: Zone Books
- Agamben, Giorgio. 2007. *L'amico*. Rome: Nottetempo.
- Agamben, Giorgio. 2007[1978]. *Infancy and history: the destruction of experience*. London: Verso.
- Agamben, Giorgio. 2015. *The use of bodies: (Homo sacer IV, 2)*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Altreconomia. 2015. *La Sovversione Necessaria: Battaglie civili e impegno politico in Luigi Veronelli*. Milan: Altreconomia edizioni.
- Amit, Vered, and Nigel Rapport. 2002. *The trouble with community: Anthropological reflections on movement, identity and collectivity*. London; Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press.
- Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. 2006. *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed.. London: Verso.
- Angé, Olivia, and David Berliner, eds. 2014. *Anthropology and nostalgia*. New York: Berghahn Books.

- Angé, Olivia, and David Berliner, eds. 2020. *Ecological Nostalgias: Memory, Affect and Creativity in Times of Ecological Upheavals*. Vol. 26. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Appaduari, Arjun. 1986. "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value." In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai, 3-63. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press.
- Asad, Talal, James W. Fernandez, Michael Herzfeld, Andrew Lass, Susan Carol Rogers, Jane Schneider, and Katherine Verdery. 1997. "Provocations of European ethnology." *American Anthropologist* 99(4): 713-730.
- Aschemann, Jessica, Ulrich Hamm, Simona Naspetti, and Raffeale Zanolli. 2007. "The organic market." In *Organic farming: An international history*, edited by William Lockeretz, 123-151. Wallingford: Cabi.
- Augello, Massimo M., and Marco E. L. Guidi. 2001. "The associations of economists and the dissemination of political economy in Italy." In *The Spread of Political Economy and the Professionalisation of Economists: Economic Societies in Europe, America and Japan in the nineteenth century*, edited by Massimo M. Augello and Marco E. L. Guidi, 70–90. London and New York: Routledge.
- Augello, Massimo M., and Marco E.L. Guidi. 2005. "Economists in Parliament in the Liberal Age: A Comparative Perspective." In *Economists in Parliament in the Liberal Age (1848-1920)*, edited by Massimo M. Augello and Marco E.L. Guidi, 1-26. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Augello, Massimo M., Marco E.L. Guidi, and Fabrizio Bientinesi. 2019. "Italian Economics and Fascism: An Institutional View." In *An Institutional History of Italian Economics in the Interwar Period — Volume I*, edited by Massimo M.



- Augello, Marco E.L. Guidi, and Fabrizio Bientinesi, 1-32. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Aymard, Maurice. 1982. "From Feudalism to Capitalism in Italy: The Case That Doesn't Fit." *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 6(2): 131-208.
- Barucci, Piero. 2019. "Italian Economists and the Fascist Regime: Only an Ambiguous and Painful Continuity?" In *An Institutional History of Italian Economics in the Interwar Period — Volume I*, edited by Massimo M. Augello, Marco E.L. Guidi, and Fabrizio Bientinesi, 33-64. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Barbera, Filippo, and Stefano Audifredi. 2012. "In pursuit of quality. The institutional change of wine production market in Piedmont." *Sociologia ruralis* 52(3): 311-331.
- Baudrillard, Jean. 1975. *The mirror of production (Vol. 17)*. St. Louis: Telos Press.
- Baudrillard, Jean. 1994. *The Illusion of the End*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Bear, Laura. 2014. "Doubt, conflict, mediation: the anthropology of modern time." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 20(S1): 3-30.
- Berardi, Gigi M.. 1983. "Pesticide use in Italian food production." *BioScience* 33(8): 502-506.
- Bernardi, Emanuele. 2016. "Political stability, modernization and reforms during the first years of the Cold War." In *Agriculture in Capitalist Europe, 1945–1960: From Food Shortages to Food Surpluses*, edited by Carin Martiin, Juan Pan-Montojo, Paul Brassley, 44-63. London and New York: Routledge.
- Benjamin, Beth A., and Joel M. Podolny. 1999. "Status, quality, and social order in the California wine industry." *Administrative science quarterly* 44 (3): 563-589.
- Benjamin, Walter. 1999. *The Arcades Project*. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA: Belknap.

- Benjamin 2007[1968] *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken Books
- Berger, John (1999[1979]). *Pig earth*. London: Bloomsbury
- Bernstein, Henry. 2009. "V.I. Lenin and A.V. Chayanov: looking back, looking forward." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 36(1): 55–81.
- Bernstein, Henry. 2014. "Food Sovereignty via the 'Peasant Way': A Sceptical View." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 41(6): 1031-1063.
- Bernstein, Henry, Harriet Friedmann, Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, Teodor Shanin, and Ben White. 2018. "Fifty years of debate on peasantries, 1966–2016." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 45(4): 689-714.
- Bertolino, Maria Anna. 2012. "Museology and ethnography in Italy: and historical perspective." *Great Narratives of the Past. Traditions and Revisions in National Museums. Conference proceedings from EuNaMus, European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen, Paris 29 June – 1 July & 25-26 November 2011*, edited by Dominique Poulot, Felicity Bodenstein & José María Lanzarote Guiral. EuNaMus Report No 4. Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press.
- Besky, Sarah. 2013. *The Darjeeling Distinction*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bevan, Andrew. 2014. "Mediterranean Containerization." *Current Anthropology* 55(4): 387–418.
- Biehl, João. 2013. "Ethnography in the Way of Theory." *Cultural Anthropology* 28(4): 573-597.
- Bird-David, Nurit. 1992. "Beyond 'The Original Affluent Society': A Culturalist Reformulation." *Current Anthropology* 33 (1): 25-47.

- Bird-David, Nurit and Darr, Asaf. 2009. "Commodity, gift and mass-gift: on gift-commodity hybrids in advanced mass consumption cultures." *Economy and Society* 38(2): 304-325.
- Birth, Kevin. 2008. "The creation of coevalness and the danger of homochronism". *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 14(1): 3-20.
- Bissell, William Cunningham. 2005. "Engaging colonial nostalgia." *Cultural Anthropology* 20(2): 215-248.
- Black, Rachel. 2012. *Porta Palazzo the anthropology of an Italian market*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Black, Rachel. 2013. "Vino Naturale: Tensions between Nature and Technology in the Glass." In *Wine and Culture: Vineyard to Glass*, edited by Rachel Black and Robert Ulin, 279– 294. London: Bloomsbury.
- Black, Rachel, and Robert Ulin. 2013. "Introduction." In *Wine and Culture: Vineyard to Glass*, edited by Rachel Black and Robert Ulin, 1-10. London: Bloomsbury.
- Bloch, Maurice. 1989. "The symbolism of money in Imerina." In *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, edited by Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry, 165-190. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bloch, Maurice, and Jonathan Parry. 1989. "Introduction: money and the morality of exchange." In *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, edited by Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch, 1-32. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bockman, Johanna. 2011. *Markets in the Name of Socialism: The Left-Wing Origins of Neoliberalism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bonanno, Alessandro. 1989. "Agriculture and dualistic development: The case of Italy." *Agriculture and Human Values* 6(1-2): 91-100.

- Boyer, Dominic. 2006. "Ostalgie and the Politics of the Future in Eastern Germany." *Public Culture* 18(2): 361-381.
- Brass, Tom. 2015. "Peasants, academics, populists: Forward to the past?" *Critique of Anthropology* 35(2): 187-204.
- Braudel, Fernand. 1991. *The identity of France Vol. 2 People and production*.  
London: Fontana
- Breda, Nadia. 2016. "The plant in between: Analogism and entanglement in an Italian community of anthroposophists." *ANUAC* 5(2): 131-157.
- Brice, Jeremy. 2014a. "Attending to grape vines: perceptual practices, planty agencies and multiple temporalities in Australian viticulture." *Social & Cultural Geography* 15(8): 942-965.
- Brice, Jeremy. 2014b. "Killing in More-than-human Spaces: Pasteurisation, Fungi, and the Metabolic Lives of Wine." *Environmental Humanities* 4: 171-194.
- Bryant, Rebecca, and Daniel Knight. 2019. *The Anthropology of the Future*.  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bruni, Luigino. 2012. *The Genesis and Ethos of the Market*. London: Palgrave-Macmillan
- Bruni, Luigino and Robert Sugden. 2000. "Moral canals: trust and social capital in the work of Hume, Smith and Genovesi." *Economics & Philosophy* 16(1): 21-45.
- Bruni, Luigino and Robert Sugden. 2008. "Fraternity: why the market need not be a morally free zone." *Economics & Philosophy* 24(1): 35-64.
- Brunori, Gianluca, Vanessa Malandrin and Adanella Rossi. 2013. "Trade-off or convergence? The role of food security in the evolution of food discourse in Italy." *Journal of Rural Studies* 29: 19-29.

- Bryant, Rebecca. 2016. "On critical times: return, repetition, and the uncanny present." *History and Anthropology* 27(1): 19-31.
- Bryant, Rebecca, and Daniel M. Knight. 2019. *The anthropology of the future*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Burnham, Douglas and Ole M. Skilleås. 2012. *The aesthetics of wine*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Burridge, Kenelm. 1975. "Other people's religions are absurd." In *Explorations in the anthropology of religion: Essays in honour of Jan Van Baal*, edited by Walter E. A. van Beek and J. H. Scherer, 8–24. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Caldwell, Melissa L. 2006. "Tasting the worlds of yesterday and today: culinary tourism and nostalgia foods in post-Soviet Russia." In *Fast food/slow food: The cultural economy of the global food system*, edited by Richard Wilk, 97-112. Lanham: Altamira Press.
- Calegari Manlio. 2001. *La porta aperta. Vent'anni di Valli Unite raccontati da Ottavio Rube*. Milan: Selene.
- Candea, Matei. 2007. "Arbitrary locations: in defence of the bounded field-site." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13(1): 167-184.
- Candea, Matei. 2018. *Comparison in anthropology: the impossible method*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Candea, Matei, and Giovanni Da Col. 2012. "The return to hospitality." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18(S1): S1-S19.
- Cannarsa, Stefania. 1992. "Genesi del concetto di folklore progressivo. Ernesto de Martino e l'etnografia sovietica." *La Ricerca Folklorica* 25: 81–7.
- Carrier, James G. 1995a. *Gifts and commodities: exchange and Western capitalism since 1700*. London: Routledge.

- Carrier, James G. 1995b. "Maussian occidentalism. Gift and commodity systems", in *Occidentalism. Images of the west*, edited by James Carrier. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Carrier, James G. 2012. "Industrial Work." In *A handbook of economic anthropology*, second edition, edited by James G. Carrier, 145-159. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Casarino, Cesare. 2010 "The Southern Answer: Pasolini, Universalism, Decolonization." *Critical Inquiry* 36(4): 673-696.
- Cashman, Ray. 2006 "Critical nostalgia and material culture in Northern Ireland." *Journal of American Folklore* 119(472): 137-160.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2009. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial thought and historical difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Chayanov, 1986[1966]. *Theory of Peasant Economy*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Charters, Stephen. 2006. *Wine and society: the social and cultural context of a drink*. Amsterdam: Elsevier/Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Charters, Steve and Simone Pettigrew. 2005. "Is wine consumption an aesthetic experience?" *Journal of Wine Research*, 16(2): 121-136.
- Chernilo, Daniel. 2011. "The critique of methodological nationalism: Theory and history." *Thesis Eleven* 106(1): 98-117.
- Cipolla, Carlo M. 2005[1976]. *Before the industrial revolution: European society and economy, 1000-1700*. London: Routledge.
- Clark, Brett and John Bellamy Foster. 2009. "Ecological Imperialism and the Global Metabolic Rift: Unequal Exchange and the Guano/Nitrates Trade". *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 50(3-4): 311-334.

- Cohen, Paul. 2013. "The Artifice of Natural Wine: Jules Chauvet and the Reinvention of Vinification in Postwar France." In *Wine and Culture: Vineyard to Glass*, edited by Rachel Black and Robert Ulin, 261-278. London: Bloomsbury.
- Cohn, Norman. 1961. *The pursuit of the millennium: revolutionary messianism in medieval and reformation Europe and its bearing on modern totalitarian movements*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- Cole, John W. 1977. "Anthropology comes part-way home: Community studies in Europe." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6: 349-378.
- Cook Joanna, James Laidlaw and John Mair. 2009. "What if there is no elephant? Towards a conception of an un-sited field." In *Multi-Sited Ethnography: Theory, Praxis and Locality in Contemporary Research*, edited by Mark-Anthony Falzon, 47-72. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Coote, Jeremy. 1992. "Marvels of everyday vision: the anthropology of aesthetics and the cattle-keeping Nilotes." In *Anthropology, art and aesthetics*, edited by Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton, 245-273. Oxford: Oxford: University Press.
- Dalton, George. 1972. "Peasantries in Anthropology and History" *Current Anthropology* 13: 385-415.
- Danowski, Déborah and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. 2017. *The Ends of the World*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Dans, Eva Parga, Pablo Alonso González, and Alfredo Macías Vázquez. 2019. "Taste and knowledge: the social construction of quality in the organic wine market." *Human Ecology* 47(1): 135-143.
- Dante 1999. *Commedia*. Princeton Dante Project. <https://dante.princeton.edu/pdp/> (Accessed 11.02.2021).

- Davidson, Alastair. 1984. "Gramsci, the peasantry and popular culture." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 11(4): 139-154.
- Daston, Lorraine. 2002. "I. The Morality of Natural Orders: The Power of Medea." In *Tanner Lectures at Harvard University*. available at [https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/\\_documents/a-to-z/d/daston\\_2002.pdf](https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/d/daston_2002.pdf)
- Daston, Lorraine. 2014. "The naturalistic fallacy is modern." *Isis* 105(3): 579-587.
- Davies, Charlotte Aull. 2008. *Reflexive Ethnography*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Davis, John. 1970. "Morals and backwardness." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 12(3): 340-353.
- Davis, John. 1973. *Land and Family in Pisticci*. London: Athlone.
- Daynes, Sarah. 2013. "The Social Life of Terroir among Bordeaux Winemakers." In *Wine and Culture: Vineyard to Glass*, edited by Rachel Black and Robert Ulin, 15-32. London: Bloomsbury.
- De Martino, Ernesto. 1949. "Intorno a una storia del mondo popolare subalterno." *Società*, 5(3): 411-35.
- Demossier Marion. 1997. "Producing tradition and managing social changes in the French vineyards the circle of time in Burgundy." *Ethnologia Europaea* 27(1): 47-58.
- Demossier, Marion. 2011. "Beyond Terroir: Territorial Construction, Hegemonic Discourses, and French Wine Culture." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17(4): 685–705.
- Demossier, Marion. 2018. *Burgundy: A Global Anthropology of Place and Taste*. New York: Berghahn Books.



- De Roover, Raymond. 1958. "The concept of the just price: theory and economic policy." *The Journal of Economic History* 18(4): 418-434.
- Descola, Philippe and Gísli Pálsson (eds). 1996. *Nature and society: anthropological perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- Descola, Philippe. 2013. *Beyond nature and culture*. Translated by Janet Lloyd. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dickenson, John P., and John Salt. 1982. "In vino veritas: an introduction to the geography of wine." *Progress in Geography* 6(2): 159-189.
- Didi-Huberman, Georges. 2018. *Survival of the fireflies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Di Lampedusa, Tomasi. 2017[1957]. *Il Gattopardo*. Milan: Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore Milano.
- Di Siena, Piero. 1978. "Emilio Sereni e la questione agraria." *Studi Storici* 19(3): 509-544.
- Dottori, Corrado. 2012. *Non è il vino dell'enologo. Lessico di un vignaiolo che dissente*. Rome: Derive Approdi.
- Dougherty, Percy. H. (Ed.). 2012. *The geography of wine: regions, terroir and techniques*. Berlin: Springer Science & Business Media.
- Dove, Michael. 2001. "Interdisciplinary Borrowing in Environmental Anthropology and the Critique of Modern Science." In *New directions in anthropology and environment: intersections*, edited by Carole L. Crumley, 90-110. Walnut Creek, CA and Oxford: AltaMira Press.
- Downey, Greg, Monica Dalidowicz and Paul H. Mason. 2015. "Apprenticeship as method: embodied learning in ethnographic practice." *Qualitative Research* 15(2): 183-200.

- Duby, Georges. 1980. *The three orders: feudal society imagined*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dupré, Louis. 1993. *Passage to modernity: an essay in the hermeneutics of nature and culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- EC 1991. “Council Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91 of 24 June 1991 on organic production of agricultural products and indications referring thereto on agricultural products and foodstuffs.” *Official Journal of the European Communities*, L198 (22.7.91), 1-15. Consolidated version available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/consleg/1991/R/01991R2092-20070101-en.pdf>
- EC (2007), “Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91”, *Official Journal of the European Union* , Vol. L 189, July, 1-23.
- EC 2012. COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING REGULATION (EU) No 203/2012 of 8 March 2012 amending Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007, as regards detailed rules on organic wine
- Edelman, Marc. 2005. “Bringing the moral economy back in... to the study of 21st-century transnational peasant movements.” *American anthropologist* 107(3): 331-345.
- Esposito, Roberto. 1998. *Communitas: origine e destino della comunità. Nuova edizione ampliata*. Turin: Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi
- Esposito, Roberto. 2008. *Bíos: biopolitics and philosophy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Esposito, Roberto. 2014. *Le persone e le cose*. Turin: Giulio Einaudi editore.

- European Commission. 1991. "The development and future of the CAP." Reflections paper of the Commission. Communication of the Commission to the Council. COM (91) 100 final, 1 February 1991
- European Union. 2018. *Agriculture, forestry and fishery statistics*. Luxembourg: Publications office of the European Union.
- Evans, Nick, Carol Morris, and Michael Winter. 2002. "Conceptualizing agriculture: a critique of post-productivism as the new orthodoxy." *Progress in Human Geography* 26(3): 313-332.
- Evensky, Jerry. M. 2011. "Adam Smith's essentials: On trust, faith, and free markets." *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 33(2): 249-268.
- Fabian, Johannes. 1983. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Falzon, Mark-Anthony. "Introduction: Multi-sited ethnography: Theory, praxis and locality in contemporary research." In *Multi-Sited Ethnography: Theory, Praxis and Locality in Contemporary Research*, edited by Mark-Anthony Falzon, 1-24. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Fanfani, Amintore. 2003. *Catholicism, Protestantism, and Capitalism*. Norfolk: IHS Press
- Farolfi, Bernardino, and Massimo Fornasari. 2011. "Agricoltura e sviluppo economico: il caso italiano (secoli XVIII-XX)." In *L'agricoltura e gli economisti agrari in Italia dall'Ottocento al Novecento*, edited by Massimo Canali, Giancarlo Di Sandro G, Bernardino Farolfi, and Massimo Fornasari, 13-70. Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Fasolt, Constantin. 2004. *The limits of history*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Federico, Giovanni, and Pablo Martinelli. 2018. "Italy to 1938." In *Wine Globalization: A New Comparative History*, edited by Kym Anderson and Vicente Pinilla, 130-152. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fonte, Maria, and Ivan Cucco. 2015. "The Political economy of Alternative Agriculture in Italy." In *Handbook of the International Political Economy of Agriculture and Food*, edited by Alessandro Bonanno and Lawrence Busch, 264-294. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Forgacs, David. 1990. *Italian culture in the industrial era, 1880-1980: cultural industries, politics, and the public*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Forgacs, David. 1996. "Cultural consumption, 1940s to 1990s." In *Italian Cultural Studies: an introduction*, edited by David Forgacs and Robert Lumley, 273-290. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Forlenza, Rosario. 2010. "A Party for the Mezzogiorno: The Christian Democratic Party, Agrarian Reform and the Government of Italy." *Contemporary European History* 19(4): 331-349.
- Forlenza, Rosario, and Bjorn Thomassen. 2016. *Italian Modernities: Competing Narratives of Nationhood*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Foster, George M. 1965. "Peasant society and the image of limited good." *American anthropologist* 67(2): 293-315.
- Fourcade, Marion. 2012. "The vile and the noble: On the relation between natural and social classifications in the French wine world." *The Sociological Quarterly* 53(4): 524-545.
- Frank, Stephanie. 2016. "The "force in the thing" Mauss' nonauthoritarian sociality in The Gift." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6(2): 255-277.

- Freedman, Paul. 1999. *Images of the medieval peasant*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Fuller, Dorian Q. 2010. "An emerging paradigm shift in the origins of agriculture." *General Anthropology* 17(2): 1-12.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 2004[1975]. *Truth and Method*. Continuum. Chippenham, UK.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1961. "Studies in peasant life: Community and society." *Biennial Review of Anthropology* 2: 1-41.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1988. *Works and lives: The anthropologist as author*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Gell, Alfred. 1992. *The Anthropology of Time: Cultural Constructions of Temporal Maps and Images*. Oxford: Berg Books.
- Gell, Alfred. 1995. "On Coote's 'Marvels of everyday vision'." *Social Analysis* 38: 18-31.
- Gilligan, Carol. 1982. *In a Different Voice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ginsborg, Paul. 1990. *A history of contemporary Italy: society and politics 1943-1988*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Ginsborg, Paul. 2003. *Italy and its Discontents: Family, Civil Society, State, 1980-2001*. London: Penguin.
- Giordano, Christian. 2012. "The Anthropology of Mediterranean Societies." In A companion to the anthropology of Europe, edited by Ullrich Kockel, Máiréad Nic Craith and Jonas Frykman, 13-31. Chichester: Blackwell.
- Goddard, Victoria A., Joseph R. Llobera and Cris Shore. 1994. "Introduction: The Anthropology of Europe." In *The anthropology of Europe: identity and boundaries in conflict*, edited by Victoria A. Goddard, Joseph R. Llobera and Cris Shore. Oxford and New York: Berg.

- González, Pablo A., Eva Parga-Dans, and Alfredo Macías Vázquez. 2017. "The political economy of wine: How terroir and intra-sector dynamics affect land use in Spain." *Land Use Policy* 66: 288-292.
- Gori, Giorgio. 2014. No title. In *Luigi Veronelli: camminare la Terra*, edited by Alberto Capatti, Aldo Colonetti, Gian Arturo Rota, 9. Florence: Giunti Editore S.p.a.
- Graeber, David. 2001. *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams*. New York: Palgrave.
- Graeber, David. 2009. *Direct action: an ethnography*. Edinburgh: AK Press.
- Graeber, David. 2011. Consumption. *Current Anthropology* 52(4): 489–509.
- Grappe, Yann. 2006. *Sulle tracce del gusto: storia e cultura del vino nel Medioevo*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.
- Grasseni, Cristina. 2005. "Slow food, fast genes: Timescapes of authenticity and innovation in the anthropology of food." *Cambridge Anthropology* 25(2): 79-94.
- Grasseni, Cristina. 2008. "Learning to see. Practice, worldviews, skilled visions." In *Knowing How to Know. Fieldwork and the Ethnographic Present*, edited by Narmala Halstead, Eric Hirsch and Judith Okely, 151-172. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Grasseni, Cristina. 2009. *Developing skill, developing vision: practices of locality at the foot of the Alps (Vol. 3)*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Grasseni, Cristina. 2013. *Beyond alternative food networks: Italy's solidarity purchase groups*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Gregory, Christopher A. 1982. *Gifts and Commodities*. London: Academic Press.
- Green, Lesley. (Ed.). 2013. *Contested ecologies: Dialogues in the south on nature and knowledge*. Cape Town, South Africa: Human Sciences Research Council.

- Gudeman, Stephen. 1986. *Economics as culture: models and metaphors of livelihood*.  
London: Routledge & Kegan Paul
- Gudeman, Stephen. 2012. "Vital energy: the current of relations." *Social Analysis*  
56(1): 57-73.
- Gudeman, Stephen, and Alberto Rivera. 1990. *Conversations in Colombia: the  
domestic economy in life and text*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gundle, Stephen. 2000. *Between Hollywood and Moscow: The Italian communists and  
the challenge of mass culture, 1943–1991*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Gundle, Stephen. 2002. "Visions of Prosperity: Consumerism and Popular  
Culture in Italy from the 1920s to the 1950s." In *Three Postwar Eras in  
Comparison: Western Europe 1918-1945-1989*, edited by Carl Levy and  
Mark Roseman, 151-172. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gurevich, Aaron J. 1983. "Medieval culture and mentality according to the new French  
historiography." *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de  
Sociologie* 24(1): 167-195.
- Guthman, Julie. 1998. "Regulating meaning, appropriating nature: The codification of  
California organic agriculture." *Antipode*, 30(2): 135-154.
- Guthman, Julie. 2004. "The trouble with 'organic lite' in California: a rejoinder to the  
'conventionalisation' debate." *Sociologia ruralis* 44(3): 301-316.
- Guy, Kolleen M. 2003. *When champagne became French: Wine and the making of a  
national identity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hamilton, John T. 2013. *Security: politics, humanity, and the philology of care*.  
Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Harbers, Hans. 2010. "Animal farm love stories." In *Care in Practice. On Tinkering in Clinics, Homes and Farms*, edited by Annemarie Mol, Moser Ingunn and Jeanette Pols, 141-70. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- Harper, John L. 1986. *America and the Reconstruction of Italy, 1945-1948*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Harris, Lindsay. 2012. "Photography of the 'primitive' in Italy: perceptions of the peasantry at the turn of the twentieth century." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 17(3): 310-330.
- Harris, Olivia. 1996. "The Temporalities of Tradition: Reflections on a Changing Anthropology." In *Grasping the Changing World*, edited by Vaclav Hubinger, 1-16. London: Routledge.
- Harris, David R., and Dorian Q. Fuller. 2014. "Agriculture: definition and overview." In *Encyclopedia of global archaeology*, edited by Claire Smith, 104-113. New York: Springer.
- Hart, 1982. On Commoditization. In *From Craft to Industry: The Ethnography of Proto-Industrial Cloth Production*, edited by Esther Goody, 38-49. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hart, Keith. 2001. "Cultural critique in anthropology." In *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* 5: 3037-3041.
- Hart, Keith. 2007. "Money is always personal and impersonal." *Anthropology Today* 23(5): 16-20.
- Hart, David B. 2003. *The beauty of the infinite: the aesthetics of Christian truth*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co



- Hartog, François. 2015. *Regimes of historicity: Presentism and experiences of time*.  
Translated by Saskia Brown. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Heatherington, Tracey. 2011. *Wild Sardinia: indigeneity and the global dreamtimes of environmentalism*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Hedican, Edward J. 2009. "Ways of knowing in anthropology: Alexandre Chayanov and the perils of 'dutiful empiricism'." *History and Anthropology* 20(4): 419-433.
- Heidegger, Martin. 2004. *Four seminars. Translated by Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Heidegger, Martin. 2014. *Introduction to metaphysics. Second edition. Translated by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Helstosky, Carol. 2004. "Fascist food politics: Mussolini's policy of alimentary sovereignty." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 9(1): 1-26.
- Henare, Amiria, and Martin Holbraad and Sari Wastell. 2007. "Introduction: Thinking Through Things." In *Thinking Through Things*, edited by Amiria Henare, Martin Holbraad, and Sari Wastell, 1-31. London: Routledge.
- Henig, David. 2016. "Fragments of village life and the rough ground of the political in postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina." In *Negotiating Social Relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Semiperipheral Entanglements*, edited by Stef Jansen and Čarna Brković and Vanja Čelebičić, 46-59. London: Routledge.
- Herzfeld, Michael. 1987. *Anthropology through the looking-glass: critical ethnography in the margins of Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Herzfeld, Michael. 1990. "Pride and perjury: time and the oath in the mountain villages of Crete." *Man* 25(2): 305-322.

- Herzfeld, Michael. 1991. *A place in history: social and monumental time in a Cretan town*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Herzfeld, Michael. 1997. *Portrait of a Greek Imagination: an ethnographic biography of Andreas Nenedakis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Heywood, Paolo. 2012. "Anthropology and what there is: reflections on 'ontology'." *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 30(1): 143-151.
- Hirsch, Eric, and Charles Stewart. 2005. "Introduction: Ethnographies of historicity." *History and Anthropology* 16(3): 261-274.
- Hockey, Jenny, and Martin Forsey. 2012. "Ethnography is not participant observation: Reflections on the interview as participatory qualitative research." In *The interview: An ethnographic approach*, edited by Jonathan Skinner, 69-87. New York: Berg.
- Hodges, Matt. 2001. "Food, time, and heritage tourism in Languedoc, France." *History and Anthropology* 12(2): 179-212.
- Hodges, Matt. 2008. "Rethinking time's arrow: Bergson, Deleuze and the anthropology of time." *Anthropological Theory* 8(4): 399-429.
- Hodges, Matt. 2013. "Illuminating vestige: Amateur archaeology and the emergence of historical consciousness in rural France." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55(2): 474-504.
- Hodges, Matt. 2015. "Reinventing 'History'?" *History and Anthropology* 26(4): 515-527.
- Hodges, Matt. 2019. "History's Impasse: Radical Historiography, Leftist Elites, and the Anthropology of Historicism in Southern France." *Current Anthropology* 60(3): 391-413.

- Holbraad, Martin, and Morten A. Pedersen, 2017. *The ontological turn: an anthropological exposition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Holbraad, Martin, Morten A Pedersen, and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. 2014. "The Politics of Ontology: Anthropological Positions." *Fieldsights: Theorizing the Contemporary*. Accessed 08.06.17. <http://culanth.org/fieldsights/462-the-politics-of-ontology-anthropological-positions>.
- Holmes, Douglas R. 1989. *Cultural disenchantments: worker peasantries in northeast Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Howard, Stephen. 2018. "Archaeology and/or Genealogy: Agamben's Transformation of Foucauldian Method." *Journal of Italian Philosophy* 1: 27-45.
- Howell, Martha C. 2010. *Commerce before capitalism in Europe, 1300-1600*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Howland, Peter J. 2013. "Distinction by proxy: The democratization of fine wine." *Journal of Sociology* 49(2-3): 325-340.
- Ingold, Tim. 2000. *Perception of the environment: essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill*. London: Routledge.
- Ingold, Tim. 2002[1994]. "General introduction." In *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, edited by Tim Ingold, xiii-xxii. Oxon: Routledge.
- Ingold, Tim. 2013. *Making: Anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Ingold, Tim. 2015. *The life of lines*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Ingold, Tim. 2016. "A naturalist abroad in the museum of ontology: Philippe Descola's Beyond nature and culture" In *Anthropological forum* 26(3): 301-320.
- Itçaina, Xabier, Antoine Roger, and Andy Smith. 2016. *Varietals of capitalism: a political economy of the changing wine industry*. Ithaca: Cornell University

- Press.
- Jackson, Michael. 1995. *At home in the world*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Jordheim, Helge, and Einar Wigen, 2018. "Conceptual synchronisation: From progress to crisis." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 46(3): 421-439.
- Jover, Antonio J. Verdú, Francisco Javier Lloréns Montes, Maria del Mar Fuentes Fuentes. 2004. "Measuring perceptions of quality in food products: the case of red wine." *Food Quality and Preference* 15(5): 453-469.
- Jung, Yuson. 2014. "Tasting and Judging the Unknown Terroir of the Bulgarian Wine: The Political Economy of Sensory Experience." *Food and Foodways* 22(1-2): 24-47.
- Kaplonski, Chris. 2015. "Unnatural wine: the problem with words." <http://www.anthroenology.org/unnatural-wine-the-problem-with-words/>. Accessed 18 May 2021.
- Kapferer, Bruce, and Theodossopoulos, Dimitrios. 2016. "Introduction: Against Exoticism." In *Against Exoticism: Toward the Transcendence of Relativism and Universalism in Anthropology*, edited by Bruce Kapferer and Dimitrios Theodossopoulos, 1-23. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Karpik, Lucien. 2010. *Valuing the unique: the economics of singularities*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Keane, Webb. 2001. "Money is no object: Materiality, Desire, and Modernity in an Indonesian Society." In *Contemporary Archaeology in Theory: The New Pragmatism*, edited by Robert W. Preucel and Stephen A. Mrozowski, 347-361. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.
- Knight, Daniel. 2012. "Cultural proximity: crisis, time and social memory in central Greece." *History and Anthropology* 23(3): 349-374.

- Knight, Daniel. 2015. *History, time and economic crisis in Central Greece*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Knight, Daniel. 2016. "Temporal vertigo and time vortices on Greece's Central Plain". *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 34(1): 32-44.
- Koensler, Alexander. 2016. "The Emerging Spheres of Resonance: 'Clandestinely Genuine' Food Networks and the Challenges of Governing Sustainability in Italy". In *Envisioning Sustainabilities: Towards an Anthropology of Sustainability*, edited by Fiona Murphy and Pierre McDonagh, 37- 52. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Koensler, Alexander. 2018. "Reinventing Transparency." *Ethnologia Europea* 48(1): 50-66.
- Koensler, Alexander. 2020. "Prefigurative politics in practice: Concrete Utopias in Italy's Food Sovereignty Activism". In *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* (25) 1: 133-150.
- Koensler, Alexander, Fabrizio Loce Mandes, and Andrea Zappa. 2018. "The right to certify? A grassroot response to standardization". *Anuac* 7(1): 183-196.
- Kohn, Eduardo. 2013. *How forests think*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kopytoff, Igor. 1986. "The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process." In *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai, 64-91. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Körner, Axel. 2009. *Politics of Culture in Liberal Italy: From Unification to Fascism*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Körner, Axel. 2011. "The Experience of Time as Crisis: On Croce's and Benjamin's Concept of History." *Intellectual History Review* 21(2): 151-169.

- Koselleck, Reinhart. 2004. *Futures past: on the semantics of historical time*. New edition. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Krause, Elizabeth L. 2005. "Encounters with the 'peasant': Memory work, masculinity, and low fertility in Italy." *American Ethnologist* 32(4): 593-617.
- Kroeber, Alfred.L. 1948[1923]. *Anthropology*. New York: Harcourt. Brace and Company.
- Krüger, Oscar. 2019 "The paradox of sustainable degrowth and a convivial alternative." *Environmental Values* 28(2): 233-251.
- Krzywoszynska, Anna. 2016. "What farmers know: experiential knowledge and care in vine growing." *Sociologia ruralis* 56(2): 289-310.
- Laidlaw, James. 2000. "A free gift makes no friends." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6(4): 617-634.
- Laidlaw, James. 2014. *The subject of virtue: An anthropology of ethics and freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lambek, Michael. 2010. "Introduction." In *Ordinary Ethics: Anthropology, Language, and Action*. Edited by Michael Lambek, 1-38. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Lambek, Michael. 2015. *The ethical condition: essays on action, person, and value*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press
- Langholm, Odd. 1998. *The legacy of scholasticism in economic thought: antecedents of choice and power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Larkin, Brian. 2013. "The politics and poetics of infrastructure." *Annual review of anthropology* 42: 327-343.
- La Terra Trema. 2015. "Non è il vino del distributore." <https://www.laterratrema.org/2015/02/non-e-il-vino-del-distributore/>.

- Latour, Bruno. 1993. *We have never been modern*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Laurent, Jane K. 1984. "The Peasant in Italian Agrarian Treatises." *Agricultural History* 58(4): 565-583.
- Law, John, and Annemarie Mol, 2002. "Local entanglements or utopian moves: an inquiry into train accidents." *The Sociological Review* 50(1\_suppl): 82-105.
- Le Goff, Jacques. 1980. *Time, work, & culture in the Middle Ages*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Leitch, Alison. 2003. "Slow food and the politics of pork fat: Italian food and European identity." *Ethnos* 68(4): 437-462.
- Lem, Winnie. 1999. *Cultivating dissent: work, identity, and praxis in rural Languedoc*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Lenin, Vladimir and Henry M. Christman, 1987[1966]. *Essential works of Lenin: "What is to be done?" and other writings*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Liguori, Guido. 1991. "La prima recezione di Gramsci in Italia (1944-1953)." *Stori* 32(3): 663-700.
- Loria, Mario. 1967. "Cavour and the Development of the Fertilizer Industry in Piedmont." *Technology and Culture* 8(2): 159-177.
- Lorigliola, Simonetta. 2014. "Fare a pezzi un discorso." <https://www.laterratrema.org/2014/10/fare-a-pezzi-un-discorso-di-simonetta-lorigliola-un-invito-a-scrivere-nel-decennale-dalla-morte-di-gino-veronelli/>
- Lorigliola, Simonetta. 2017. *Un vino paesaggio*. Rome: DeriveApprodi.
- Lowe, Philip, Jonathan Murdoch, Terry Marsden, Richard Munton, and Andrew Flynn. 1993. "Regulating the new rural spaces: the uneven development of land." *Journal of rural studies* 9(3): 205-222.

- Maccormack, Carol and Marilyn Strathern. 1980. *Nature, culture and gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Malanima, Paolo, and Vera Zamagni. 2010. "150 years of the Italian economy, 1861–2010." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 15(1): 1-20.
- Manning, Erin. 2016. *The minor gesture*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Marchand, Trevor H. J. 2010. "Making knowledge: explorations of the indissoluble relation between minds, bodies, and environment." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16: S1-S21.
- Marchionatti, Roberto, Francesco Cassata, Giandomenica Becchio, and Fiorenzo Mornati. 2013. "When Italian economics 'was second to none'. Luigi Einaudi and the Turin School of Economics." *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 20(5): 776-811.
- Marcus, George E. 1995. "Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography." *Annual review of anthropology* 24(1): 95-117.
- Marx, Karl. 1999[1852]. "18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. VII." <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch07.htm>. Accessed February 11, 2021.
- Marx, Karl. 1999[1876]. "Capital Volume One. Chapter Ten: The working day." <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch10.htm>. Accessed February 11, 2021.
- Marx, Karl. 1999[1876]. "Capital Volume One. Chapter Twenty-Six: The secret of primitive accumulation." <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch26.htm>. Accessed February 11, 2021.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 2000[1848]. "Manifesto of the Communist Party." <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/>.



- Accessed February 11, 2021.
- Masini, Fabio. 2019. "Tracing neoliberalism in Italy: intellectual and political connections." *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 26(2): 327-351.
- Mason, Tim. 1988. "Italy and Modernization: A Montage." *History Workshop Journal* 25(1): 127-147.
- Mattone, Antonello. 1973. "Partito comunista e contadini nel mezzogiorno." *Studi storici* 14(4): 940-952.
- Mauss, Marcel (2002). *The gift: the form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*. London: Routledge.
- McGovern, Patrick. 2017. *Ancient Brews: Rediscovered and Re-created*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Mei, Todd. 2009. *Heidegger, work, and being*. London: Continuum.
- Membretti, Andrea. 2007. "Centro sociale Leoncavallo: Building citizenship as an innovative service." *European Urban and Regional Studies* 14(3): 252-266.
- Membretti Andrea, and Pierpaolo Mudu. 2013 "Where global meets local: Italian Social Centres and the alterglobalization movement." In *Understanding European Movements: New Social Movements, Global Justice Struggles, Anti-Austerity Protest*, edited by Cristina F. Fominaya and Laurence Cox, 77–93. New York: Routledge.
- Mendras, Henri. 1970. *The vanishing peasant: innovation and change in French agriculture*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Mennell, Stephen. 1996. *All manners of food: eating and taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the present*. Second edition. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

- Merchant, Carolyn. 1980. *The death of nature: women, ecology, and the scientific revolution*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Mill, John Stuart. 1885. *Nature the Utility of Religion and Theism*. London: Longmans, Green, & Co.
- Miller, D. 2001. Alienable gifts and inalienable commodities. In *The empire of things: Regimes of value and material culture*, edited by Fred R. Myers, 91-115. Oxford, UK: School of American Research Press.
- Mingardi, Alberto. 2017. Classical liberalism in Italian economic thought, from the time of unification. *Econ Journal Watch*, 14(1): 22.
- Minicuci, Maria. 2003. "Antropologi e mezzogiorno. *Meridiana*" 139-174.
- Mintz, Sidney W. 1973. "A note on the definition of peasantries." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 1(1): 91-106.
- Mitrany, David. 1951. *Marx against the peasant: a study in social dogmatism*. London: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Monti, Alberto and Severiono Salvemini. 2014. "The 'Barolo brothers' organizational identity and social relationships as strategic decision-making drivers", *Management Decision* 52(9): 1750-1781.
- Monterescu, Daniel. 2017. "Border Wines: Terroir across Contested Territory." *Gastronomica: The Journal of Critical Food Studies* 17(4): 127-140.
- Monterescu, Daniel and Ariel Handel. 2019. "Liquid indigeneity: Wine, science, and colonial politics in Israel/Palestine." *American Ethnologist* 46(3): 313-327.
- Moore, Robert Ian. 1970. "The origins of medieval heresy." *History* 55(183): 21-36.
- Moragues-Faus, Ana, Dionisio Ortiz-Miranda and Terry Marsden 2013. "Bringing Mediterranean agriculture into the theoretical debates." In

- Agriculture in Mediterranean Europe: Between Old and New Paradigms*, edited by Dionisio Ortiz-Miranda, Ana Moragues-Faus and Eladio Arnalte-Alegre, 9-35. Bingley: Emerald.
- Mudu, Pierpaola. 2004. "Resisting and challenging neoliberalism: The development of Italian social centers." *Antipode* 36(5): 917-941.
- Mudu, Pierpaolo. 2012. "At the intersection of anarchists and autonomists: Autogestioni and Centri Sociali." *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 11(3): 413-438.
- Muehlebach, Andrea. 2012. *The moral neoliberal: Welfare and citizenship in Italy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Müller, Jan-Werner. 2011. *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press.
- Müller, Jan-Werner. 2013. "The paradoxes of post-war Italian political thought." *History of European ideas* 39(1): 79-102.
- Munn, Nancy D. 1992. "The cultural anthropology of time: A critical essay." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21(1): 93-123.
- Narotzky, Susana. 2016. "Where have all the peasants gone?" *Annual Review of Anthropology* 45: 301-318.
- Narotzky, Susana. 2018. "Rethinking the concept of labour." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 24(S1): 29-43.
- Nelson, Stephanie A. 1998. *God and the land: the metaphysics of farming in Hesiod and Vergil*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Nossiter, Jonathan. 2010. *Liquid Memory: Why Wine Matters*. London: Atlantic Books.
- Nowak, Zachary. 2012. Against Terroir. *Petits propos culinaires* 96: 92-108.

- Nowak, Zachary. 2019. "A Transnational Fiasco: Authenticity, Two Chiantis, and the Unimportance of Place." *Global Food History* 5(1-2): 5-24
- Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey. 2003[1967]. *Luchino Visconti*. Third edition. London: British Film Institute.
- Odorici, Vincenza and Raffaele Corrado. 2004. "Between supply and demand: intermediaries, social networks and the construction of quality in the Italian wine industry." *Journal of Management and Governance* 8(2): 149-171.
- O'Keefe, Kerin. 2014. *Barolo and Barbaresco: The King and Queen of Italian Wine*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Orlandi, Edda C. 2017. "The values of pallets: An ethnography of exchange in the warehouse of an Italian supermarket." *Journal of Material Culture* 22(1):19-33.
- Ortner, Sherry B. 2016. "Dark anthropology and its others: Theory since the eighties." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6(1): 47-73.
- Osborne, Peter. 2011. *Politics of time: modernity and avant-garde*. New York: Verso books.
- Overton, John and Warwick E. Murray. 2013. "Class in a glass: Capital, neoliberalism and social space in the global wine industry." *Antipode* 45(3): 702-718.
- Owton, Helen and Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson. 2014. "Close but not too close: Friendship as method (ology) in ethnographic research encounters." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 43(3): 283-305.
- Pabst, Adrian. 2011. "From civil to political economy. Adam Smith's theological debt." In *Adam Smith as Theologian*, edited by Paul Oslington, 106-124. London: Routledge.

- Pabst, Adrian. 2018. "Political Economy of Virtue: Civil Economy, Happiness and Public Trust in the Thought of Antonio Genovesi." *European Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 25 (4): 582–604.
- Pabst, Adrian and Roberto Scazzieri. 2019. "Virtue, Production, and the Politics of Commerce: Genovesi's 'Civil Economy' Revisited." *History of Political Economy* 51(4): 703-729.
- Palmié, Stephan and Charles Stewart. 2019. "Introduction: The varieties of historical experience." In *The varieties of historical experience*, edited by Stephan Palmié and Charles Stewart. London: Routledge.
- Pandian, Anand. 2009. *Crooked stalks: cultivating virtue in South India*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Pasolini, Pier Paolo. 1975. *Scritti corsari*. Milano: Garzanti.
- Pasolini, Pier P. 2005. *Heretical empiricism*. Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing.
- Parasecoli, Fabio. 2003. Postrevolutionary chowhounds: Food, globalization, and the Italian left. *Gastronomica* 3(3): 29-39.
- Parry, Jonathan. 1986. "The gift, the Indian gift and the 'Indian gift'." *Man* 21(3): 453-473.
- Paxson, Heather. 2010. "Locating value in artisan cheese: reverse engineering terroir for new-world landscapes." *American Anthropologist* 112(3): 444-457.
- Paxson, Heather. 2013. *The Life of Cheese: Crafting Food and Value in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Pensieri, Claudio. 2015. La comunicazione alimentare tra programmi TV e pubblicità. In *Le sfide dell'educazione alimentare: Prospettive nutrizionali, comunicative e didattiche.*, edited by Laura De Gara. Rome: Armando Editore.

- Pensky, Max. 2004. "Method and time: Benjamin's dialectical images." In *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, edited by David S Ferris, 177-198. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Peters, John Durham. 1999. *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Peters, John Durham. 2015. *The marvelous clouds: toward a philosophy of elemental media*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Piazza, Rosalba. 1974. Dibattito teorico e indirizzi di governo nella politica agraria della Democrazia Cristiana (1944-1951). *Italia Contemporanea* 117: 49-71.
- Pina-Cabral, Joao de. 1986. *Sons of Adam, daughters of Eve: The peasant worldview of the Alto Minho*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Pina-Cabral, Joao de. 1987. "Paved Roads and Enchanted Moresses: The Perception of the Past among the Peasant Population of the Alto-Minho." *Man* 22(4): 715-735.
- Pina-Cabral, Joao de. 1992. "Against translation: the role of the researcher in the production of ethnographic knowledge." In *Europe Observed*, edited by Joao de Pina-Cabral and John Campbell. London: Macmillan.
- Pipyrou, Stavroula. 2014a. "Altruism and sacrifice: mafia free gift giving in South Italy". In *Anthropological Forum* 24(4). 412-426.
- Pipyrou, Stavroula. 2014b. "Cutting bella figura: Irony, crisis, and secondhand clothes in South Italy." *American Ethnologist* 41(3): 532-546.
- Pipyrou, Stavroula. 2016. Adrift in time: lived and silenced pasts in Calabria, South Italy. *History and Anthropology* 27(1): 45-59.

- Pitt-Rivers, Julian. 2017. *From hospitality to grace. A Julian Pitt-Rivers omnibus*. Edited by Giovanni da Col and Andrew Shryock. Chicago: HAU Books.
- Pitti, Ilaria. 2018. *Youth and unconventional political engagement*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ponte, Stefano. 2009. "Governing through quality: conventions and supply relations in the value chain for South African wine." *Sociologia ruralis* 49(3): 236-257.
- Porta, Pier Luigi. 2018. "From Economia Civile to Kameralwissenschaften. The line of descent from Genovesi to Beccaria in pre-Smithian Europe." *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 25(4), 531-561.
- Postone, Moishe. 1993. *Time, labor, and social domination: a reinterpretation of Marx's critical theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Poyatos, Fernando (ed.). 1988. *Literary Anthropology*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Pratt, Jeff. 1994. *The rationality of rural life: Economic and cultural change in Tuscany*. Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers.
- Pratt, Jeff. 2009. "Incorporation and resistance: Analytical issues in the conventionalization debate and alternative food chains." *Journal of Agrarian Change* 9(2): 155-174.
- Pretorius, Isak S. 2000. "Tailoring wine yeast for the new millennium: novel approaches to the ancient art of winemaking." *Yeast* 16(8): 675-729.
- Prozorov, Sergei. 2014. *Agamben and politics: A critical introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Puccini, Sandra. 1981. Evoluzionismo e nascita degli studi etno-antropologici. Riflessioni e percorsi di ricerca ai margini di un libro recente. *La Ricerca Folklorica* 3: 123-129.

- Puig de la Bellacasa, Maria. 2019. "Re-animating soils: Transforming human–soil affections through science, culture and community." *The Sociological Review* 67(2): 391-407.
- Rabinow, Paul. 1986. "Representations Are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology." In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, edited by James Clifford and George Marcus, 234–261. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Rabinow, Paul. 2008. *Marking time: On the anthropology of the contemporary*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Rabinow, Paul, George E Marcus, James D. Faubion, Tobias Rees. 2008. *Designs for an anthropology of the contemporary*. Durham NH: Duke University Press.
- Rakopoulos, Theodoros. "Responding to the crisis: food co-operatives and the solidarity economy in Greece." *Anthropology Southern Africa* 36(3-4): 102-107.
- Rakopoulos, Theodoros. 2014. "Cooperative modulations: The antimafia movement and struggles over land and cooperativism in eight Sicilian municipalities." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 19(1): 15-33.
- Rakopoulos, Theodoros. 2015. "Which community for cooperatives?: Peasant mobilizations, the Mafia, and the problem of community participation in Sicilian co-ops." *Focaal* 2015(71): 57-70.
- Rakopoulos, Theodoros. 2017. "Solidarity bridges: Alternative food economies in urban Greece." *Greek Review of Social Research* 149(B): 1-21.
- Rakopoulos, Theodoros. 2018. *From clans to co-ops: confiscated mafia land in Sicily*. London: Berghahn.



- Rapport, Nigel. 2002. "Community". In *Encyclopedia of social and cultural anthropology*, edited by Jonathan Spencer and Alan Barnard, 173-177. London: Routledge.
- Redfield, Robert. 1956. *Peasant Society and Culture: An Anthropological Approach to Civilization*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Righi, Andrea. 2011. *Biopolitics and social change in Italy: from Gramsci to Pasolini to Negri*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Reinert, Sophus. 2005. "The Italian Tradition in Political Economy." In *The Origins of Development Economics*, edited by K.S. Jomo and Eric Reinert, 24-47. London: Zed Books.
- Roberts, David D. 1987. *Benedetto Croce and the uses of historicism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Robbins, Joel. 2013. "Beyond the Suffering Subject: Toward an Anthropology of the Good." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19: 447-462.
- Rogers, Susan Carol. 1987. "Good to think: The 'peasant' in contemporary France." *Anthropological Quarterly* 60(2): 56-63.
- Roitman, Janet. 2011. "Crisis." In *Political Concepts: A Critical Lexicon (website)*. New York: The New School of Political Research. Accessed 08.12.2020. <https://www.politicalconcepts.org/roitman-crisis/> .
- Roitman, Janet. 2013. *Anti-Crisis*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Rosa, Hartmut. 2013. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*. New York City: Columbia University Press.
- Rosaldo, Renato. 1989. "Imperialist nostalgia." *Representations* 26: 107-122.
- Rösener, Werner. 1992. *Peasants in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Polity Press

- Rota, Gian Arturo. 2014. "Fo, Veronelli, i catari e il Barolo di Monforte." Accessed 08.02.2021. <https://www.veronelli.com/attualita/fo-veronelli-catari-il-barolo-di-monforte.html> .
- Rota, Gian Arturo and Nichi Stefi. 2012. *Luigi Veronelli. La Vita è Troppo Breve per Bere Vini Cattivi.* Milano and Bra: GiuntiEditore/Slow Food Editore.
- Sahlins, Marshall. 1999. "Two or Three Things That I Know about Culture." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 5 (3): 399–421.
- San-Julían-Arrupe, Javier. 2014. "The Institutionalisation of Political Economy in Italy and Spain (1860–1900): a Comparative Approach." *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 21(1): 78-106.
- Sáenz-Navajas, María-Pilar, Eva Campo, Angela Sutan, Jordi Ballester and Dominique Valentin. 2013. "Perception of wine quality according to extrinsic cues: The case of Burgundy wine consumers." *Food Quality and Preference* 27(1): 44-53.
- Saint Bernardine of Siena. 1920. *Sermons*. Selected and edited by Don Nazareno Orlandi. Siena: Tipografia Sociale.
- Salvemini, Alberto M. S. 2014. "The 'Barolo brothers': organizational identity and social relationships as strategic decision-making drivers." *Management Decision* 52(9): 1750-1781.
- Salvioni, Cristina, Roberto Henke and Elisa Ascione. 2013. "The Emergence of New Development Trajectories in Italian Farms." In *Agriculture in Mediterranean Europe: Between Old and New Paradigms (Research in Rural Sociology and Development, Vol. 19)*, edited by Dionisio Ortiz Miranda, Eladio Vicente Arnalte Alegre and Ana Maria Moragues Faus, 207-232. Bingley (UK): Emerald.
- Sánchez Hall, Alison. 2018. *All or none: cooperation and sustainability in Italy's red belt*. New York: Berghahn Books.

- Santori, Paolo. 2020. "Donum, exchange and common good in Aquinas: the dawn of civil economy." *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 27(2): 276-297.
- Schmitt, Carl. 1985[1922]. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, translated by G. Schwab. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Scholte, Bob. 1981. "Critical anthropology since its reinvention". In *The anthropology of pre-capitalist societies*, 148-184. London: Palgrave.
- Scott, James C. 2017. *Against the grain: a deep history of the earliest states*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Scott, James C. 1977. *The moral economy of the peasant: Rebellion and subsistence in Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Scruton, Roger. 2007. "The philosophy of wine." In *Questions of taste: The philosophy of wine*, edited by B. Smith, 1–19. Oxford: Signal Books.
- Scruton, Roger. 2013. *I Drink Therefore I Am: A Philosopher's Guide to Wine*. London: Continuum.
- Sellers, Ricardo and Veronica Alampì-Sottini. 2016. "The influence of size on winery performance: Evidence from Italy." *Wine Economics and Policy* 5(1): 33-41.
- Sen, Amartya. 2010. "Adam Smith and the contemporary world." *Erasmus Journal for Philosophy and Economics* 3(1): 50-67.
- Shanin, Theodor. 1973. "The nature and logic of the peasant economy 1: A Generalisation." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 1(1): 63-80.
- Shanin, Theodor. 1987[1971]. *Peasants and Peasant Societies*. Second edition. London: Penguin Books.

- Shanin, Theodor. 2009. "Chayanov's treble death and tenuous resurrection: an essay about understanding, about roots of plausibility and about rural Russia." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 36(1): 83-101.
- Sigaud, Lygia. 2002. "The vicissitudes of the gift." *Social Anthropology* 10(3): 335-358.
- Silverman, Sydel F. 1968. "Agricultural Organization, Social Structure, and Values in Italy: Amoral Familism Reconsidered." *American anthropologist* 70(1): 1-20.
- Silverman, Sydel F. 1971. "The Italian Land Reform: Some Problems in the Development of a Cultural Tradition." *Anthropological Quarterly* 44(2): 66-77.
- Silverman, Sydel. 1979. "The peasant concept in anthropology." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 7(1): 49-69.
- Singleton, Vicky and John Law. 2013. "Devices as rituals: Notes on enacting resistance." *Journal of Cultural Economy* 6(3): 259-277.
- Sitney, P. Adams. 1995. *Vital Crises in Italian Cinema*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Slatkin, Laura. 2004. "Measuring Authority, Authoritative Measures: Hesiod's Works and Days." In *The Moral Authority of Nature*, edited by Daston Lorraine and Vidal Fernando, 25-52. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Slobodian, Quinn. 2018. *Globalists: the end of empire and the birth of neoliberalism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

- Slow Food. 1989. *Slow Food Manifesto*. Signed by delegates from 15 countries in 1989. Accessed February 11, 2021. <https://www.slowfood.com/about-us/key-documents/>
- Smith, Adam. 1937. *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. New York: Modern Library.
- Smith, Barry. C. (Ed.). 2007. *Questions of taste: The philosophy of wine*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Smith Maguire, Jennifer. 2018. "The taste for the particular: A logic of discernment in an age of omnivorousness." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 18(1): 3-20.
- Sofia, Zoë., 2000. "Container technologies." *Hypatia* 15(2): 181-201.
- Soldati, Mario. 2017. *Vino al vino*. Florence: Guinti Editore S.p.A. / Bompiani.
- Sotte, Franco. 2006a. "Imprese e non-impreses nell'agricoltura italiana." *Politica agricola internazionale*, 1: 13-30.
- Sotte, Franco. 2006b. "Quante sono le imprese agricole in Italia?" *Agriregionieuropa* 2(5)
- Spitzer, Leo. 1963. *Classical and Christian ideas of world harmony: prolegomena to an interpretation of the word "Stimmung"*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.
- Stacul, Jaro. 2007. "Understanding neoliberalism: Reflections on the 'end of politics' in northern Italy." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 12(4): 450-459.
- Star, Susan L. 1999. "The Ethnography of Infrastructure." *American Behavioral Scientist* 43(3): 377-391.
- Sternsdorff-Cisterna, Nicolas 2013. "Space and terroir in the Chilean wine industry." In *Wine and Culture: Vineyard to Glass*, edited by Rachel Black and Robert Ulin, 50-66. London: Bloomsbury.

- Stewart, Charles. 2017. *Dreaming and historical consciousness in island Greece*.  
Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Stewart, Charles. 2016. "Historicity and anthropology." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 45(1): 79-94.
- Stewart, Charles. 2017. "Uncanny history: temporal topology in the post-Ottoman world" *Social Analysis* 61(1): 129-142.
- Stirrat, Roderick L. 1989. "Money, Men and Women", in *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, edited by Maurice Bloch and John Parry, pp. 94–116. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 1980. "No nature, no culture: The Hagen case." In *Nature, culture and gender*, edited by Carol P. MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern, 122–174. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 1985. "Kinship and economy: constitutive orders of a provisional kind." *American ethnologist* 12(2): 191-209.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 1988. *The gender of the gift: problems with women and problems with society in Melanesia (Studies in Melanesian Anthropology ; 6)*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 1990. "Artefacts of history: Events and the interpretation of images." In *Culture and history in the Pacific*, edited by J. Siikala, 22-44. Helsinki: Finnish Anthropological Society.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 1992. *After Nature : English Kinship in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 1995. "Nostalgia and the new genetics". In *Rhetorics of Self-making*, edited by Debbora Battaglia, 97-120. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Strathern, Marilyn. 2005. *Partial connections*. Walnut Creek: Rowman Altamira.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 2011. "Binary license." *Common Knowledge* 17(1): 87-103.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 2017a. "Gathered fields: A tale about rhizomes." *Anuac* 6(2): 23-44.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 2017b. "Naturalism and the Invention of Identity." *Social Analysis* 61(2): 15-30.
- Strathern, M. 2017c. Persons and partible persons. In *Schools and styles of anthropological theory*, edited by Matei Candea, 236-46. London: Routledge.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 2019. "A clash of ontologies? Time, law and science in Papua New Guinea." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 9 (1): 58–74.
- Svašek, Maruška. 2007. *Anthropology, art and cultural production*. London: Pluto Press.
- Swinburn, Robert. 2013. "The Things that count: Rethinking Terroir in Australia." In *Wine and Culture: Vinyard to Glass*, edited by Rachel E. Black and Robert C. Ulin, 33-50. London: Bloomsbury.
- Taussig, Michael. 1978. "Peasant economics and the development of capitalist agriculture in the Cauca Valley, Colombia." *Latin American Perspectives* 5(3): 62-91.
- Taussig, Michael. 1980. *The devil and commodity fetishism in South America*. Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press.
- Taussig, Michael. 1984. History as sorcery. *Representations* 7: 87-109.
- Taussig Michael. 1987a. "The Rise and Fall of Marxist Anthropology." *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 21(August): 101–13.
- Taussig, Michael. 1987b. "History as commodity in some recent American (anthropological) literature." *Food and Foodways* 2(1): 151-169.

- Taussig, Michael. 2010. "The corn-wolf: Writing apotropaic texts." *Critical Inquiry* 37(1): 26-33.
- Taussig, Michael. 2018. *Palma Africana*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Taylor, Paul Michael and Cesare Marino. 2019. "PAOLO MANTEGAZZA'S VISION: The Science of Man behind the World's First Museum of Anthropology (Florence, Italy, 1869)." *Museum Anthropology* 42(2): 109-124.
- Teil, Geneviève and Antoine Hennion. 2004. "Discovering quality or performing taste? A sociology of the amateur." In *Qualities of food*, edited by Mark Harvey, Andrew McMeekin and Alan Warde, 19-37. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Teil, Geneviève. 2012. "No Such Thing as Terroir?: Objectivities and the Regimes of Existence of Objects." *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 37 (5): 478–505.
- The Epic of Gilgamesh: A New Translation. 1999. Translated with an introduction by Andrew George. London: Penguin.
- Theodossopoulos, Dimitrios. 2005. *Trouble with turtles*. Paperback edition. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books
- Theodossopoulos, Dimitrios. 2016. *Exoticisation Undressed: Ethnographic Nostalgia and Authenticity in Emberá Clothes*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Tillmann-Healy, Lisa M. 2003. Friendship as method. *Qualitative inquiry* 9(5): 729-749.
- Todd, Cain. 2014. *The philosophy of wine: a case of truth, beauty and intoxication*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Thomassen, Bjørn, & Rosario Forlenza. 2016. "Christianity and political thought: Augusto Del Noce and the ideology of Christian Democracy in post-war Italy." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 21(2): 181-199.



- Trautmann, Thomas R. 1992. "The Revolution in Ethnological Time." *Man* 27(2): 379-397.
- Trentin, Filippo. 2013. "'Organizing Pessimism': Enigmatic Correlations between Walter Benjamin and Pier Paolo Pasolini." *Modern Language Review* 108(4): 1021-1041.
- Tribe, Keith. 1978. *Land, labour and economic discourse*. London: Routledge.
- Tronto, Joan. 1993. *Moral Boundaries, a Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*. New York: Routledge
- Trubek, Amy B. 2008. *The taste of place: A cultural journey into terroir*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Tsing, Anna L. 2015. *The mushroom at the end of the world: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Twede, Diana. 2012. "The birth of modern packaging: Cartons, cans and bottles." *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing* 4 (2): 245-272.
- Ulin, Robert C. 1996. *Vintages and Tradition. An Ethnohistory of Southwest French Wine Cooperatives*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Ulin, Robert C. 2002. "Work as cultural production: labour and self-identity among southwest French wine-growers." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 8(4), 691-712.
- Ulin, Robert C. 2007. "Writing about Wine." In *Wine, Society, and Globalization*, edited by Gwyn Richard Campbell and Nathalie Guibert, 43-62. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ulin, Robert C. 2013. "Terroir and Locality: An Anthropological Perspective." In *Wine and Culture: Vinyard to Glass*, edited by Rachel E. Black and Robert C. Ulin, 67-84. London: Bloomsbury.

- Unwin, Tim. 1996. *Wine and the Vine. An Historical Geography of Viticulture and the Wine Trade*. New York: Routledge.
- Urupia. n.d. “Urupia” <https://www.laterratrema.org/vignaioli-e-agricoltori/puglia/urupia/>. Accessed February 11, 2021.
- Van Aken, Mauro. 2014. La vita sociale della vite. Campo di senso e frontiere in vigna. *SM Annali di San Michele* 25: 159-182.
- Van Bavel, Balthassar J. 2008. “The organization and rise of land and lease markets in northwestern Europe and Italy, c. 1000–1800.” *Continuity and Change* 23(1): 13-53.
- Van der Ploeg, Jan D. 2008. *The new peasantries: struggles for autonomy and sustainability in an era of empire and globalization*. London: Earthscan.
- Van der Ploeg, Jan D. 2014. “Peasant-driven agricultural growth and food sovereignty.” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 41(6): 999-1030.
- Van der Ploeg, Jan D. 2018. “Differentiation: old controversies, new insights.” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 45(3): 489-524.
- Vargas-Cetina, Gabriela. 2011. “Corporations, cooperatives, and the state: examples from Italy.” *Current Anthropology* 52(3): 127-3. Accessed 18 May 2021
- Veronelli, Luigi. 1999. Lettera ai giovani estremi. A: Rivista anarchica. N. 251. Available at <http://www.arivista.org/riviste/Arivista/251/7.htm>. Accessed 18 May 2021.
- Veronelli, Luigi. 2004. Propongo una lista. In *A: rivista anarchica* 33.295. Available at <http://www.arivista.org/?nr=393&pag=79.htm>. Accessed 18 May 2021.
- Veronelli, Luigi and Pablo Echaurren. 2003. *Le parole della terra*. Viterbo: Stampa alternativa/Nuovi Equilibri.

- Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. 2004. "Perspectival anthropology and the method of controlled equivocation." *Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 2(1): 3-22.
- Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. 2015. *The relative native: Essays on Indigenous conceptual worlds*. Chicago: Hau Books.
- Von Dietze, Constantin. 1937. "Peasantry". In *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* Vol. XI-XII, edited by Edwin R. A. Seligman and Alvin Johnson, 48-53. New York: The Macmillian Company.
- Wagner, Roy. 1986. *Symbols that stand for themselves*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wagner, Roy (2001). *An anthropology of the subject: holographic worldview in New Guinea and its meaning and significance for the world of anthropology*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- White, Lynn. 1967. "The historical roots of our ecologic crisis." *Science* 155(3767): 1203-1207.
- Williams, Raymond. 1973. *The country and the city*. London: Hogarth.
- Wilson, James E. 1998. *Terroir: The role of geology, climate and culture in the making of French wines*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wolf, Eric R. 1955. "Types of Latin American peasantry: a preliminary discussion." *American anthropologist* 57(3): 452-471.
- Wolf, Eric R. 1966. *Peasants*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Wolf, Eric R. 1982. *Europe and the people without history*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Woodward, Kath. 2008. "Hanging out and hanging about. Insider/outsider research in the sport of boxing." *Ethnography* 9(4): 536-560.

- Yanagisako, Sylvia J. 2002. *Producing culture and capital: family firms in Italy*.  
Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Zamagni, Vera. 1993. *The Economic History of Italy 1860–1990*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Zamagni, Stefano. 2012. “Globalization: Guidance from Franciscan Economic Thought and ‘Caritas in Veritate’”. *AICCON Working paper* 104.
- Zamponi, Lorenzo. 2019. “Direct Social Action, Welfare Retrenchment and Political Identities. Coping with the Crisis and Pursuing Change in Italy.” *Partecipazione e conflitto* 12(2): 382-409.
- Zangheri, Renato. 1976. “Movimento contadino e storia d'Italia. Riflessioni sulla storiografia del dopoguerra.” *Studi Storici* 17(4): 5-33.
- Zangheri, Renato. 1992. “I socialisti italiani e la questione agraria.” *Studi Storici* 33(2/3): 263-283.
- Zinn, Louise Zinn. 2015. “An introduction to Ernesto de Martino's relevance for the study of folklore.” *The Journal of American Folklore* 128(507): 3-17.